

Ezekiel's Message Against Edom and to the Mountains of Israel

35:1-36:15

35:1 And it happened—YHWH's word (came) to me, saying: 35:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, place / set your face against Mountain Seiyir, and prophesy over / against it! 35:3 And you shall say to it, In this way YHWH spoke: Look at Me—towards / against you, Mountain Seiyir! And I will stretch out My hand over / against you; and I will give / make you a devastation and a waste / horror! 35:4 Your cities I will make a waste! And you will be a devastation! And you will know that I (am) YHWH! 35:5 Because (of it) being for you a long-lasting enmity, and you hurled down Israel's children upon / to (the) hands of a sword / power of a sword at a time of calamity, at a time of iniquity's end. 35:6 Therefore, (as) I live—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—that for blood I will make you (singular), and blood will pursue you! If you did not hate blood—and blood will pursue you! 35:7 And I will give / make Mountain Seiyir into a devastation, and a devastation; and I will cut off from it one passing through and one returning! 35:8 And I will fill its mountains (with) its pierced-corpses. Your hills and your valleys and all your channels / stream-beds--sword-pierced-corpses will fall into them. 35:9 Devastations for long-lasting time I will give you; and your cities will not be inhabited--and you will know that I (am) YHWH. 35:10 Because of your saying, The two nations / peoples and the two lands will belong to me, and we will possess it [sic.]; and YHWH was there. 35:11 Therefore, as I live, (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--and I will do / act according to your anger and according to your jealousy, by which you did / acted from / out of your hatred against them--and I will be known among them just as I will judge you (singular). 35:12 And you will know that I (am) YHWH. I heard all your contemptuous speech / blasphemies which you spoke concerning / against Israel's mountains, saying they are desolated--they were given to us for devouring! 35:13 And you made great over / against Me with your (plural) mouth (singular); and you multiplied your (plural) words upon / against Me—I, I heard. 35:14 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: As all the land / earth rejoices, I will make you (singular) a devastation! 35:15 Like your (singular) rejoicing to / at (the) house of Israel's inheritance because it was a devastation--so / in this way I will do to you (singular)! You will be / become a devastation, Mountain Seiyir! and all Edhom, all of it! And they will know that I (am) YHWH!

Consolation for the Mountains of Israel (36:1-15)

36:1 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, prophesy to Israel's mountains, and you shall say: Mountains of Israel, hear / listen to YHWH's word! 36:2 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Because the enemy said concerning you (plural), Aha! And long-lasting hills / high places have become a possession for us! 36:3 Therefore prophesy, and you shall say: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Because in / on because of making desolate and trampling you (plural) all around, to cause you (plural) to become a possession of a remnant / rest of the nations; and you were brought up on (the) tongue's speech, and an evil report of people. 36:4 Therefore, mountains of Israel, hear my Lord YHWH's word: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: to the mountains, and to the hills, and to the channels / ravines / wadis; and to the valleys

and to the devastations made desolate; and to the cities, the ones deserted that became a source of plunder and mocking / derision to a remnant of the nations which are all around. 36:5 Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Surely with (the) fire of My jealousy I have said concerning (the) remnant of the nations, and concerning Edhom, all of it--who gave My land to them(selves) for a possession with whole-hearted rejoicing, with contempt of (their) innermost being, in order to cast it out for the plunder. 36:6 Therefore prophesy concerning (the) land of Israel, and you shall say to the mountains and to the hills, to the channels / ravines / wadis and to the valleys: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look at Me--in My jealousy, and in My wrath, I have spoken, because you (plural) have borne (the) reproach of nations; 36:7 therefore in this way my Lord YHWH said: I, I have lifted My hand [in an oath]: Surely the nations which are all around you, they will bear their reproach! 36:8 And you, mountains of Israel, will sprout your branches and will bear your fruit for My people Israel--because they have drawn near to the coming (home)! 36:9 Because look at Me, to / for you (plural)! And I will turn towards you; and you will be worked / tilled and you will be sown. 36:10 And I will multiply humanity upon you [Israel's mountains], all Israel's house, all of it! And the cities will be inhabited, and the desolations / ruins will be rebuilt! 36:11 And I will multiply upon you humanity and animal(s), and they will multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you (plural) to be inhabited, like your former times; and I will do good, more than your first times! And you will know that I (am) YHWH. 36:12 And I will cause humanity to walk upon you--My people Israel. And they will inherit / possess you; and you will be for them, My people, for an inheritance / possession; and you will not again bereave them / make them childless. 36:13 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Because of (it) being said to you (plural, the mountains), You are devouring humanity, and you were bereaving your people / nation of children, 36:14 therefore humanity you will not again devour; and you will certainly not bereave your people / nation again! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 36:15 And I will not cause to be heard by you again (the) reproach / insult of the nations; and (the) insult of people you will not bear again. And your nations / peoples will not cause stumbling again. (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

Message Against Edom (35:1-36:15)¹⁹⁰⁶

1906

In a passage deeply reminiscent of the **Scroll of Obadiah**, Ezekiel delivers the Divine message of destruction against Edom, Israel's perpetual enemy.

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After denouncing the evil shepherds of the past and promising ideal rulership as the first step along the path of restoration, Ezekiel proceeds to the next obstruction which must be removed if a restored Israel is to prosper...

“All the nations which oppressed Israel and retarded his progress must vanish from the stage of history. Edom, in particular, the arch-enemy of Israel, had forfeited his right to national existence, and his fall is an essential preliminary to Israel's final redemption and the universal recognition of [YHWH's] sovereignty. The prophet Obadiah proclaimed the same message with striking emphasis: ‘And
(continued...)

¹⁹⁰⁶(...continued)

saviors shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's' (**Obadiah 21**).” (P. 235)

Reimer entitles **35:1-36:15** “The Mountains of Edom and Israel.” He comments that “In so highly structured a [Scroll] as **Ezekiel**, it seems odd that an oracle against a foreign nation should appear outside the collection in **chapters 25-32**. However, that collection is itself highly structured, and it is clear that the prophecies against Mount Seir (Edom) in **chapter 35** are a preface to the address to the mountains of Israel in **36:1-15**, and these two passages are best regarded as a single unit in two parts.” (P. 1556)

Matties states that “After asserting Divine sovereignty and reclaiming the people as [YHWH's] rightful subjects, this series of oracles reclaims the land as [YHWH's] rightful domain. The juxtaposition of **35:1-15**, an oracle against the mountains of Edom, and **36:1-15**, an oracle against the mountains of Israel, accentuates the question of who owns the land. The emphasis on the mountains both contrast with the judgment against the mountains in **chapter 6** and focuses attention on the whole land rather than on Jerusalem alone.” (P. 1208)

Darr, in an overview of **chapters 35-36**, states that these two chapters “consist of a judgment oracle against Mt. Seir (the land of Edom)...followed by an announcement of salvation to the mountains of Israel. As in **chapter 34**, so also here, Ezekiel's God promises to reverse a negative situation. Edom especially has mocked Israel and set its sights on Yahweh's land. Now God vows to carry out a brutal retribution against Israel's foes. Beyond their punishment, however, lies a glorious future for Israel's mountains (land) and God's people, who ‘will soon come home’ (**36:8**). Mount Seir will become a desolation and a waste, but the mountains of Israel will be tilled, sown, and fertile. Edom's mountains, hills, valleys, desolate wastes, and deserted towns will no longer suffer plunder and ridicule. Mount Seir will become a ‘perpetual desolation’; its decimated cities will never be reinhabited. Israel's land, including its ‘ghost towns,’ will teem with human beings and animals. Despite their diametrically different futures, both nations will fulfill God's larger purpose: each will come to recognize and acknowledge Yahweh as the unrivaled Divine Sovereign Who controls all of history.” (P. 319)

Reimer entitles **35:1-15** “Against Mountr Seir.” He comments that “Mount Seir (**verse 2**) is identified with Edom (**verse 15**) much as Mount Zion is identified with Judah. An oracle against Edom appears in **25:12-14**...and its theme is echoed here. Edom's excesses against the stricken Judah (which inspired such animosity) are registered and judged. (Compare also the [Scroll] of **Obadiah**.) There is also considerable overlap of language with Ezekiel's earlier oracle against the ‘mountains of Israel’ in **Ezekiel 6:1-7, 11-14**...In this passage, the ‘recognition formula’ (**35:4, 9, 12, 15**)...punctuates a sequence of four related sayings. The key words ‘waste’ and ‘desolation’ recur throughout the passage, translating at least four Hebrew terms.” (P. 1556)

(continued...)

35:1 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And it happened—YHWH’s word (came) to me, saying:

35:2 בֶּן־אָדָם שִׁים פְּנֶיךָ עַל־תֵּר שַׁעִיר

Son of Adam / Humanity, place / set your face against Mountain Seiry,¹⁹⁰⁷

¹⁹⁰⁶(...continued)

Reimer comments on **35:1-4** that “The first oracle is little more than a bare announcement of [YHWH’s] opposition to Mount Seir and His intention to destroy it. “Mount Seir” was not a single peak but rather the highland region southeast of the Dead Sea.” (P. 1556)

Matties states that “the oracle against Mount Seir (in Edom, located southeast of the Dead Sea) divides into four panels. The judgments against Israel in **chapter 6** are now applied to Edom.” (P. 1208)

Darr comments that “‘Seir’ is an ancient epithet; it is attested already in the fourteenth-century B.C.E. Amarna tablets. Originally, it may have referred to the wooded slopes of mountains lying east of the Arabah, Edom’s western border. In the present text, however, as well as in **Genesis 32:4; 36:8**, and **Numbers 24:18**, Seir functions as a synonym for the entire land of Edom, which lay south of the Dead Sea and stretched from the Zered Brook (its northern boundary) almost to the Gulf of Aqabah in the south. According to **Deuteronomy 2:12, 22**, Seir was inhabited by Horites until the descendants of Esau displaced them and seized the land for themselves....

“The **Hebrew Bible** contains a number of scathing ecoriations of Edom (e.g., **Amos 1:11;12; Isaiah 34:5-17; Jeremiah 49:7-22; Malachi 1:2-5**). Several, including **Obadiah 11-14, Psalm 137:7**, and **Lamentations 4:21-22**, charge Edom with gloating over Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 B.C.E., looting, refusing and even killing Judean refugees, and / or landgrabbing.” (P. 320)

¹⁹⁰⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The original home of Edom was the mountainous country of Seir east of the Arabah. The term *mount Seir* is also used for the entire territory inhabited by the Edomites which extended westward to the south of Judea.” (P. 235)

Hilmer notes that “Edom (**verse 15**), [was] Israel’s relative (Jacob and Esau being twins, **Genesis 25:21-30**) and constant enemy, from whom brotherhood was sought but seldom found (compare **Amos 1:11** [Esau ‘pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually’; but we also remember the story of Esau’s attempt to treat Jacob as a brother, and Jacob turning away, **Genesis 33**. The fault was not solely Esau’s!]. Edom had to be dealt with before Israel could find peace.” (P. 1275)

(continued...)

וְהִנְבֵּא עָלָיו:

and prophesy over / against it!

35:3 וְאָמַרְתָּ לּוֹ כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

And you shall say to it, In this way YHWH spoke:

הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ הַר־שַׁעִיר

Look at Me—towards / against you, Mountain Seiyr!

וְנִטְיִיתִי יָדִי עָלֶיךָ

And I will stretch out My hand over / against you;

וְנָתַתִּיךָ שְׂמָמָה וּמְשָׁמָה:

and I will give / make you a devastation and a waste / horror!¹⁹⁰⁸

35:4 עָרֶיךָ חֲרָבָה אֲשִׁים

Your cities I will make a waste!

¹⁹⁰⁷(...continued)

We think not; all Israel had to do was to repent and serve YHWH. YHWH would have taken care of the enemies. Hilmer is wrong, we think, in stating that Israel would find peace by taking care of Edom! The passages Hilmer refers to, **Ezekiel 25:12** and **Isaiah 63:1-6** depict YHWH disposing of Israel's enemies, not Israel's "taking care" of them!

And we say, America will not find peace by "taking care of" China, or Russia, or North Korea (or whatever enemy). America will only find peace by returning to YHWH, by repentance from our pride and false worship of Power, Possessions and Pleasure, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, serving all peoples as "suffering servants"!

¹⁹⁰⁸

Matties notes that "the indictment [of Edom in **35:5-9**] echoes the ancient rivalry between Jacob and Esau (**Genesis 25:22-23; 27:41-45; 32:4-22; 33:1-16; Amos 1:11-12**; compare **Deuteronomy 23:7**). Edom participated in Israel's destruction (**verse 5**), an action described in more detail in **Obadiah 10-14**. Because they did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed would be their lot." (Pp. 1208-09)

וְאַתָּה שְׁמֹמָה תִּהְיֶה

And you will be a devastation!

וַיִּדְעַתְּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And you will know that I (am) YHWH!¹⁹⁰⁹

35:5¹⁹¹⁰ יַעַן הָיְוֹת לְךָ אֵיבַת עוֹלָם

Because (of it) being for you a long-lasting enmity,¹⁹¹¹

1909

Rabbi Fisch comments that “So grievous will the desolation be that the Edomites will detect in it the work of God.” (P. 235)

1910

Reimer comments on **35:5-9** that “The familiar ‘because...therefore’ structure of indictment sets out the key charges against Edom (**verse 5**) and details the judgment (**verses 6-9**). Edom is treated here much as Israel was in **chapter 6**.” (P. 1556)

1911

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “a hatred of old.” He comments that the hatred was “towards Israel. Edom’s enmity goes back to the relationship between his ancestor Esau and Jacob.” Other translations have “a perpetual hatred or enmity.” (P. 235) See **Amos 1:11-12**.

1.11 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke--

עַל־שְׁלֹשָׁה פְּשָׁעֵי אֲדוֹם וְעַל־אַרְבַּעַה

For three transgressions of Edom, and for four

לֹא אֲשִׁיבֵנּוּ

I will not turn it back!

עַל־רִדְפוֹ בַחֶרֶב אָחִיו

For his pursuing his brother with the sword;

וַשְׁחַת רַחֲמָיו

and he destroyed his compassions.

וַיִּטְרַף לְעַד אָפוֹ

And his anger tore unendingly,

וְעַבְרָתוֹ שְׁמֵרָה נֹצֵחַ:

and his wrath he kept perpetually!

(continued...)

וַתִּגַּר אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

and you hurled down Israel's children

עַל־יְדֵי־חֶרֶב

upon / to (the) hands of a sword / power of a sword

בְּעֵת אִידָם בְּעֵת עֶוֹן קֵץ:

at a time of calamity,¹⁹¹² at a time of iniquity's end--¹⁹¹³

35:6 לָכֵן חַי־אֲנִי

Therefore, (as) I live--

נֶאֱמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

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

¹⁹¹¹(...continued)

1.12 וְשַׁלַּחְתִּי אֵשׁ בְּתִימָן

And I will send fire on / against Teman,

וְאָכְלָה אֲרָמְנוֹת בְּצָרָה:

and it will devour Botsrah's fortresses!

Hilmer comments that the ancient hostility began “with Jacob’s deception of Isaac for Esau’s blessing (**Genesis 27**; see especially **verse 41** [Esau’s intention to kill Jacob after Isaac’s death]) and continuing later (**Numbers 20:14-21** [Edom’s refusal to let Israel pass through her land on their route from Egypt to Canaan]; **2 Samuel 8:13-14** [David’s killing 18,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt, followed by his putting garrisons of Israelite troops throughout Edom]; **1 Kings 9:26-28** [Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-Geber in the land of Edom; no sign of hostility here]).” (P. 1275)

¹⁹¹²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Edomites aided the Babylonians in their campaign which destroyed the Judean State (**Obadiah 11-14**).” (P. 235)

Hilmer notes that this included Edom’s looting of Jerusalem in that Babylonian campaign of 586 B.C.E. (P. 1275)

¹⁹¹³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “the iniquity of the end” is “The iniquity which completed their full measure of guilt and brought about their punishment. The phrase occurred in **Ezekiel 31:30**.

כִּי־לְדָם אֶעֱשֶׂה

that for blood I will make you (singular),

וְדָם יִרְדֹּפֶךָ

and blood will pursue you!¹⁹¹⁴

אִם־לֹא דָם שָׂנֵאתָ

If you did not hate blood—

וְדָם יִרְדֹּפֶךָ:

and blood will pursue you!¹⁹¹⁵

35:7 וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־הַר שֵׁעִיר לְשִׁמְמָה וּשְׁמָמָה

And I will give / make Mountain Seiyr into a devastation, and a devastation;

1914

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Because Edom had shed the blood of Israelites, his blood would be shed.” (P. 236)

1915

The last half of **verse 6** is given varying translations:

King James, “sith [old English for ‘since’] thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.”

Tanakh, “I swear that, for your bloodthirsty hatred, blood shall pursue you.”

New Revised Standard, “since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed shall pursue you.” **New International**, same;

New Jerusalem, “I swear it; you have incurred guilt by shedding blood, and bloodshed will pursue you.”

Rahlfs, εἰ μὴν εἰς αἷμα ἥμαρτες καὶ αἷμά σε διώξεται, “If indeed you sinned toward / against blood, and blood will pursue you!”

We wonder if this passage played on the mind of Jesus, and led to the statement attributed to him in **Matthew 26:52**, “all who the sword, will perish by the sword.” Compare **Genesis 9:6** and **Isaiah 3:11**.

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Because Edom had shed the blood of Israelites, his blood would be shed.” (P. 236)

וְהִכַּרְתִּי מִמֶּנּוּ עֶבֶר וְשׁוֹב:

and I will cut off from it one passing through and one returning!¹⁹¹⁶

35:8 וּמְלֵאתִי אֶת־הָרִיו חַלְלֵיו

And I will fill its mountains (with) its pierced-corpse.

גְּבְעוֹתֶיךָ וְגֵאוֹתֶיךָ וְכָל־אֶפְיָקֶיךָ

Your hills and your valleys and all your channels / stream-beds--

חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב יִפְּלוּ בָהֶם:

sword-pierced-corpse will fall into them.¹⁹¹⁷

35:9 שְׁמָמוֹת עוֹלָם אֶתְּנֶךָ

Devastations for long-lasting time I will give you;¹⁹¹⁸

וְעָרֶיךָ לֹא (תִּישְׁבְּנָה) [תִּשְׁבְּנָה]

and your cities will not be inhabited--¹⁹¹⁹

1916

Rabbi Fisch comments that it is “a Hebrew idiom whereby two opposites denote totality. The slaughter of the Edomites is complete.” (P. 236)

1917

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Wherever they flee for safety they will be overtaken and slain by their enemies.” (P. 236)

1918

Hilmer notes that Edom’s long-lasting desolation means Edom is “to experience no restoration like Egypt’s (see **Ezekiel 29:13-16** [where Ezekiel predicts Egypt will be restored to her homeland after 40 years of captivity].” (P. 1275)

1919

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” תִּישְׁבְּנָה, “be inhabited”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” תִּשְׁבְּנָה, “be returned, reinhabited.”

(continued...)

וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and you will know that I (am) YHWH.

35:10¹⁹²⁰ יֵעַן אֲמַרְךָ

Because of your saying,

אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַגּוֹיִם וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי הָאָרְצוֹת לִי תִהְיֶינָה

The two nations / peoples and the two lands¹⁹²¹ will belong to me,

וִירְשֶׁנָּהּ

and we will possess it [sic.];¹⁹²²

¹⁹¹⁹(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In contrast to Egypt whose refugees will return to their land (**Ezekiel 29:14**), Edom is to remain desolate for ever.” (P. 236)

¹⁹²⁰

Reimer comments that in **35:10-12a** “Edom’s land-grab is condemned. ‘Two nations’ refers to Israel and Judah as separate kingdoms (see **37:15-28**). Punishment is presented as poetic justice: just as Edom treated Israel and Judah, so it will be treated in turn. The assertion in **35:10** that ‘[YHWH] was there’ moderates the claims of those who portray Yahweh as having abandoned the land of promise (see **11:23**) for the land of the exiles. This land remains [YHWH’s].” (P. 1556)

Matties states that in **verses 10-12a** “a second indictment highlights Edom’s greed after Judah’s depopulation. Notable is the aside in **verse 10b** that [YHWH] was there. Contrary to expectation, deportation and destruction of the temple did not imply [YHWH’s] departure from the land. [YHWH] refuses to be localized.” (P. 1209)

¹⁹²¹

Hilmer notes that what Edom means by two nations / people and the two lands is “Israel and Judah.” (P. 1276)

¹⁹²²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Not only did Edom have a hand in the overthrow of Israel, but also claimed the right to take possession of his territory.” (P. 236)

וַיְהִי שָׁם הַיְהוָה:

and YHWH was there.¹⁹²³

35:11 לִכְן חַי־אֲנִי

Therefore, as I live,¹⁹²⁴

נֹאֵם יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

וְעָשִׂיתִי כַּאֲפֶךָ וְכַקְּנֵאתֶךָ

and I will do / act according to your anger and according to your jealousy,¹⁹²⁵

אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ מִשְׂנֵאתֶיךָ בָּם

by which you did / acted from / out of your hatred against them--

וְנֹדַעְתִּי בָּם כַּאֲשֶׁר אֲשַׁפֵּטֶךָ:

and I will be known among them just as I will judge you (singular).

1923

Both the Hebrew text and its Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) have this last line as “and YHWH was there.” But English translations commonly have “although / whereas the Lord was there.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Though God had ejected His people from the land and His Divine Presence departed from it (**Ezekiel 11:23**), yet He was still there in the sense that the land was His and He alone had the right to dispose of it.” (P. 236)

1924

Again we state that this is a Divine oath, “as I live” in the mouth of YHWH.

1925

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Edom will be fully requited for the malicious feelings he displayed to Israel...By punishing the Edomites for their misdeeds towards Israel, God will be recognized as the Protector of His people.” (P. 237)

Hilmer states that this is “retributive justice based on **Genesis 9:6**, ‘Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His Own image.’” (P. 1275)

35:12 וַיִּדְעַתְּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And you will know that I (am) YHWH.

שָׁמַעְתִּי | אֶת־כָּל־נֹאצוֹתֶיךָ

I heard all your contemptuous speech / blasphemies¹⁹²⁶

אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ עַל־הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

which you spoke concerning / against Israel's mountains,

לֵאמֹר | (שְׁמֹמָה) [שְׁמֹמִין]

saying they are desolated--¹⁹²⁷

לָנוּ נִתְּנוּ לְאֹכְלָהּ:

they were given to us for devouring!¹⁹²⁸

1926

Reimer comments on **35:12b-15** that “The theme of derisive speech picks up one of the main issues from **chapter 25**. As there, so here the speech is more than simply taunting a vanquished people. [YHWH] is Himself the object of insult, and this is unacceptable. The sole mention of the name Edom comes in **35:15**.” (P. 1556)

Matties comments on this same section, stating that “The unit begins with an assertion that [YHWH] has heard the enemy’s rapacious verbal claims to the land. Judah’s desolation (**verse 12b**) now becomes Edom’s desolation (**verses 12, 14, 15**; see also **verses 4, 7 and 9**). **Verse 15** refers, for the first time in **Ezekiel**, to Israel’s land as its *inheritance* (see also **36:12** and often in **chapters 44, 46 and 47**). The land belongs to [YHWH], and Israel is its keeper.” (P. 1209)

1927

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” שְׁמֹמָה; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” שְׁמֹמִין, changing the text from singular to plural.

1928

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The mountains of Israel belonged to God; therefore the words used by Edom about them were blasphemous.” (P. 237)

35:13 וַתִּגְדִּילוּ עָלַי בְּפִיכֶם

And you made great over / against Me¹⁹²⁹ with your (plural) mouth (singular);

וַהֲעַתְּרִתֶּם עָלַי דְּבָרֵיכֶם

and you multiplied your (plural) words upon / against Me–

אֲנִי שָׁמַעְתִּי:

I, I heard.¹⁹³⁰

35:14 כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

כְּשִׂמְחַ כָּל-הָאָרֶץ

As all the land / earth rejoices,

שָׁמָּה אֶעֱשֶׂה-לָךְ:

I will make you (singular) a devastation!¹⁹³¹

1929

Hilmer's translation has "you boasted against me." He says to to compare **Obadiah 12** ['do not boast on the day of distress']; **Zephaniah 2:8** [Moab made boasts against Israel], **10** [Moab taunted and boasted against YHWH of Armies' people]." (P. 1276)

1930

Darr comments that "The descendants of Esau will discover, to their doom, that Yahweh has indeed heard their abusive speech against the mountains of Israel. Again, Ezekiel ostensibly quotes their very words: 'They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour.' Israel's land is, in their opinion, fair game and easy prey. But their endless boastings are an affront to Yahweh because derision of the land of Israel taunts its true Owner." (P. 323)

1931

Rabbi Fisch comments that "According to Kimchi, this verse is the antecedent to the following. That is to say, all the world will rejoice over Edom's desolation as Edom rejoiced over Jerusalem's desolation. This interpretation agrees with that given by Davidson who translates: 'to the rejoicing of the whole earth, I will make thee desolate.'" (P. 237)

35:15 כְּשִׂמְחַתְךָ לְנַחֲלַת בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל

Like your (singular) rejoicing to / at (the) house of Israel's inheritance

עַל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמְמָה

because it was a devastation--¹⁹³²

כֵּן אֶעֱשֶׂה־לְךָ

so / in this way I will do to you (singular)!

שָׁמְמָה תִּהְיֶה הַר־שַׁעִיר

You will be / become a devastation, Mountain Seiyr!

וְכָל־אֶדְוֹם כֻּלָּהּ

and all Edhom, all of it!

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH!¹⁹³³

1932

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Edom’s guilt consisted in his gloating over the destruction of what was a Divine gift, intended to be an everlasting inheritance of Israel. Therefore he incurred the penalty of having his own land desolated.” (P. 237)

1933

Darr reflects that “When too many people claim ownership of too little land, conflict is inevitable. One need not master ancient Near Eastern history to recognize the truth of this observation. We confront it routinely in newspapers and magazines, and on television, radio, and the internet. Often-times, hatred and violence are linked with religious beliefs. *We* own this land because *God* gave it to *us*, and competing claimants are not only *our* enemies but also *God’s* foes...

We can understand...that neighboring nations, jockeying for limited land, develop visceral and long-lived animosities. Hungry for prime real estate and revenge, each generation refuels the feud, until resolution seems well-nigh impossible. In such situations, people take up weapons *and* the pen, expressing with the latter a range of sentiments both hopeful and ugly. In a day when moderns increasingly recognize the importance of profound respect and cooperation among the nations inhabiting this tiny planet, however, biblical oracles which suggest that the solution to international conflict is the extermination of one’s enemies are troubling indeed...

(continued...)

Consolation for the Mountains of Israel (36:1-15)¹⁹³⁴

¹⁹³³(...continued)

In many cases, it seems, moderns are no closer to recognizing the importance of profound respect and cooperation among the nations than were the peoples of Ezekiel's day; and they are all too ready to hurl both insults and artillery at their enemies. An uncritical reading of ancient Israel's oracles against foreign nations seems to endorse such an approach, for they unabashedly affirm that Yahweh not only sanctions the butchery of Israel's foes, but also is 'Himself' the Death-Dealer. The same Deity Who quashed the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel for their sins turns now to their neighbors with murderous rage.

“What are we to make of this characterization of God as a wrathful and avenging Deity Whose actions are motivated largely by the desire for Self-vindication, and Whose modus operandi is wholesale murder and destruction? This question cannot, I believe, simply be ignored. It demands of us a willingness to honestly wrestle with these canonical texts....We should not be surprised that Ezekiel and other ancient Israelites depicted Yahweh as an Avenging Warrior Whose power and control over the nations was unparalleled by any other Deity. And we can commend Ezekiel for maintaining a steadfast faith in God despite the fact that reality ran roughshod over that depiction. But we should beware of texts that create God in the image of humanity, that attribute to the Lord the basest human beliefs and behaviors. In a world where battles continue to be fought in God's Name, we are responsible for engaging in difficult conversations and making hard choices about those texts. Even as we understand why Ezekiel spoke as he did, we must listen (an active, not a passive, activity) for God's Word in our day.” (Pp. 323-324)

¹⁹³⁴

Rabbi Fisch entitles the entire **chapter 36** “Restoration and Regeneration of Israel.” He comments that “This chapter is the sequel to the preceding chapter; and as Ezekiel had been commanded to prophesy *against mount Seir* (**35:2**), he is now commanded to prophesy *unto the mountains of Israel*.

“His theme is Israel's future, which he began in **chapter 33**. Israel's restoration will be twofold, material and spiritual. Delivered from foreign domination, the land of Israel will undergo a transformation. The desolate hills and valleys will once more be fertile, yielding abundant fruit to their rightful owner, and the forsaken cities will again be inhabited by Israelites as numerous as the sheep formerly brought to Jerusalem on the pilgrim festivals...

“In addition to material prosperity, Israel, after his purification in the furnace of exile, will be attentive to the law of God, and a new spirit will prevail in his midst. [YHWH's] holy name, profaned among the heathens, will be reasserted and His Kingship re-established. ‘The chapter is the brightest in the whole **Scroll**’ (Lofthouse).” (P. 238)

The nations surrounding Israel have laughed the mountains of Israel to scorn; but now YHWH swears that they themselves will suffer scorn, and that he will bring his whole people Israel home to their
(continued...)

¹⁹³⁴(...continued)

mountain-land, where they will no longer hear the taunts of their neighbors, but will share in the kind of fruitfulness and productivity that YHWH God intended in creation (compare **Genesis 1:22, 28**, etc.)

Reimer entitles **36:1-15** “The Mountains of Israel Restored.” He comments that “The judgment of Mount Seir (**chapter 35**)—so reminiscent of [YHWH’s] prior judgment of the mountains of Israel (**chapter 6**) contrasts with the announcement now of restoration in corresponding terms. The address here is fairly consistently to the ‘mountains of Israel’ (**36:1**), and most of the second-person references (‘you’) are plural. A singular reference is occasionally made, however (e.g., to the ‘land (soil) of Israel,’ **verse 6**)...

“Broadly, this oracle sets out an explanation for the wrath that befell the ‘mountains’ (**verses 1-7**), followed by the promise of their restoration (**verses 8-15**). Within that simple division, the structure is complicated.” (P. 1556)

Hilmer states that **36:1-15** is “the comforting counterpart to **chapter 6**. **Verses 1-7** announce punishment for the nations; **verses 8-15** [announce] restoration for Israel.” (P. 1276)

Darr comments that “The punishment that Israel’s mountains have suffered will become Edom’s eternal fate, but Israel’s homeland will experience fully God’s beneficence...Even a casual reader of **Ezekiel 36:1-15** cannot avoid the conclusion that these verses are filled with prophetic formulae. The messenger formula (‘Thus says the Lord God’), for example, appears in **verses 2-7**, and **13**. Ezekiel is four times commanded to prophesy (**verses 1, 3, 6, 8**), and Israel’s mountains are twice summoned to “hear the Word of the Lord’ (**verses 1, 4**).” (P. 325)

Reimer comments on **36:1-7** that “In **verses 1-7** there are a series of nested ‘because’ and ‘therefore’ statements whose relationships are difficult to disentangle, as apparent outcomes simply introduce further grounds. Three factors are intertwined: the encroachment of Israel’s enemies, the desolation of the land, and the wrath of [YHWH]. The enemies come to the fore in **verses 2** and **7**; the situation of Israel is the focus of **verses 3-4** and **6**, and [YHWH’s] wrath is the theme of **verse 5**.” (P. 1556)

Matties states concerning **verses 1-7** that “The enemy’s gloating (**verse 2**) introduces an announcement that reiterates the victimization of the land (**verses 3-5**) and a sentence of judgment (**verses 6-7**). The theological key to [YHWH’s] response is the Divine passion for the land (**verses 5, 6**). [YHWH] speaks (**verse 6**); imperial power will not have the last word.” (P. 1209)

¹⁹³⁵

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-7** “Redemption of the Land of Israel.”

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

הַנְּבִיא אֶל-הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ

prophecy to Israel's mountains,¹⁹³⁶ and you shall say:

הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר-יְהוָה:

Mountains of Israel, hear / listen to YHWH's word!

36:2 כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

יֵשֶׁן אָמַר הָאֹיִב עֲלֵיכֶם הָאֵח

Because the enemy said concerning you (plural), Aha!¹⁹³⁷

וּבְמֹת עֹלָם לְמוֹרְשָׁה הֵיְתָה לָנוּ:

And long-lasting hills / high places have become a possession for us!¹⁹³⁸

1936

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophecy of Israel’s salvation follows immediately that of the fall of Edom, because the latter was necessary for the former to take place (Kimchi).” (P. 238)

1937

See **Ezekiel 25:3** and **26:2**.

1938

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The term *bamoth* (high places) in the mouth of a Hebrew prophet normally denotes idolatrous altars; but as used by the *enemy* it is a designation for the holy land in general on account of its hilly character. It occurs in the sense of ‘heights’ in **Deuteronomy 32:13**; **Micah 3:12**...[The enemy has claimed] they are ours in possession.” (P. 238) Compare **Ezekiel 35:10**.

Reimer states that “The claim to the ancient heights points back to the intended dispossession of Israel’s land, judged in **chapter 35**.” (P. 1556)

Hilmer notes that by the “ancient heights” (his translation), is meant “the promised land, of which the elevated region between the Jordan Valley and the Mediterranean coast was the central core.” (P. 1276)

(continued...)

36:3 לִכְן הַנְּבֵא וְאָמַרְתָּ

Therefore prophesy, and you shall say:

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

יַעַן בִּלְעֵן שְׁמוֹת וְשִׂאף אֶתְכֶם מִסְבִּיב

Because in / on because¹⁹³⁹ of making desolate and trampling you (plural) all around,

לְהִיֹּתְכֶם מִזְרָשָׁה לְשִׂאֲרֵית הַגּוֹיִם

to cause you (plural) to become a possession of a remnant / rest of the nations;¹⁹⁴⁰

וַתַּעֲלוּ עַל־שִׁפְת לְשׁוֹן

and you were brought up on (the) tongue's speech,

וְדַבַּת־עַם:

and an evil report of people--

36:4 לִכְן הָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמָעוּ דְבַר־אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Therefore, mountains of Israel, hear my Lord YHWH's word:

¹⁹³⁸(...continued)

Darr states that “Ezekiel wishes...to alert the addressees (ostensibly the mountains of Israel, but actually the exiles) that God knows of the indignities the land has suffered in the aftermath of its Divinely authored destruction. Yahweh, not the nations, was responsible for Judah's desolation. Ezekiel never wavers on that point. But subsequent to God's just punishment of Israel, the nations have reveled in its downfall and seized its land. Their responses dishonor both the land and Yahweh.” (P. 326)

¹⁹³⁹

For this double occurrence of יַעַן, “because,” compare **Leviticus 26:43. English Standard Version** translates by “precisely because.” Our other English translations and the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) pay no attention to the double “because.”

¹⁹⁴⁰

Hilmer states that the “remnant / rest of the nations” means “All the nations that in the past had conquered parts of Israel—until finally they took full possession.” (P. 1276)

כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

לְהָרִים וְלַגְּבוֹת וְלַאֲפִיקִים

to the mountains, and to the hills, and to the channels / ravines / wadis;

וְלַגְּאֵי וְלַחֲרָבוֹת הַשְּׂמָמוֹת

and to the valleys and to the devastations made desolate;

וְלָעָרִים הַנְּעֻזֹּבוֹת

and to the cities, the ones deserted

אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְבִזָּה וְלִלְעָג

that became a source of plunder and mocking / derision

לְשֵׂאֲרֵית הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר מְסָבִיב:

to a remnant of the nations which are all around--

36:5 לְכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

אִם־לֹא בְּאֵשׁ קִנְאָתִי דִּבַּרְתִּי

Surely¹⁹⁴¹ with (the) fire of My jealousy¹⁹⁴² I have said

1941

The phrase אִם־לֹא, literally “if not,” occurring after an oath, either expressed or implied, expresses either an emphatic negative, or as here, an emphatic affirmative. See **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, p. 50 column a.

1942

Rabbi Fisch quotes Davidson concerning YHWH’s “jealousy,” that it means “injured Self-consciousness; it is the reaction of [YHWH’s] sense of Himself against the injurious conduct of Edom and the nations in relation to Him or that which is His (compare ‘My land’).” (P. 239)

Hilmer translates by “My burning zeal,” and comments that “[YHWH] was personally offended by the ridicule of the nations because it was His special land they were mocking and plundering (see ‘My (continued...)’)

עַל־שְׂאֲרֵי־הַגּוֹיִם

concerning (the) remnant of the nations,

וְעַל־אֶדְוֹם כָּלָא

And concerning Edhom,¹⁹⁴³ all of it--

אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־אֶת־אֶרְצוֹ לָהֶם לְמִוְרָשָׁה

who gave My land to them(selves) for a possession

בְּשִׂמְחָה כָּל־לֵב־בְּשִׂאֵט נִפְשׁ

with whole-hearted rejoicing, with contempt of (their) innermost being,

לְמַעַן מִגְרָשָׁה לְבוֹז׃

in order to cast it out for the plunder.¹⁹⁴⁴

36:6 לָכֵן הִנְבֵּא עַל־אֶרְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Therefore prophesy concerning (the) land of Israel,

¹⁹⁴²(...continued)

land' later in the verse)." (P. 1276)

¹⁹⁴³

Hilmer states that "Edom is singled out because of their long-standing hostility to Israel (see **chapter 35**, especially **verses 2** and **5**)."

¹⁹⁴⁴

This last line of **verse 5** is given varying translations:

King James, "to cast it out for a prey."

Tanakh, "for pasture and for prey."

New Revised Standard, "because of its pasture, to plunder it."

New International, "so that they might plunder its pastureland."

New Jerusalem, "to despoil its pastureland."

Rahlfs, τοῦ ἀφαιεῖσθαι ἐν προνομίῃ, "to cause to disappear in foraging."

Rabbi Fisch comments that "Their whole purpose was to deprive Israel of his homeland and to render him defenseless against his enemies. This is the interpretation given by most Jewish commentators, but the Hebrew does not naturally bear it. Malbim takes *migrash* in its usual sense (see on **Ezekiel 27:28**), and the meaning may be 'that its open country should be for spoil.'" (P. 239)

וַאֲמַרְתָּ לְהַרִּים וְלַגְּבְעוֹת

and you shall say to the mountains and to the hills,

לְאֶפְיָקִים וְלַנְּאִיּוֹת

to the channels / ravines / wadis and to the valleys:

כֹּה־אָמַר | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הִנְנִי בְּקִנְאָתִי וּבַחֲמָתִי דִּבַּרְתִּי

Look at Me—in My jealousy, and in My wrath, I have spoken,¹⁹⁴⁵

יַעַן כָּל־מַת גּוֹיִם נִשְׂאָתֶם:

because you (plural) have borne (the) reproach of nations;¹⁹⁴⁶

36:7 לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

therefore in this way my Lord YHWH said:

אֲנִי נִשְׂאָתִי אֶת־יָדִי

I, I have lifted My hand [in an oath]:¹⁹⁴⁷

1945

Darr comments that “In these verses, Israel’s God is no dispassionate arbiter of justice, but a Deity Who Speaks in ‘My jealous wrath,’ Who is on the scene, and Who will not permit the nations’ insults of Yahweh’s land and honor to continue...God lifts the Divine Hand in oath that these nations will themselves suffer insults, experiencing the same desolation that Israel endured. An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.” (P. 327)

1946

Rabbi Fisch comments that this means “The shame inflicted upon Judea by the nations in their derision and intrusion.” (P. 240)

1947

See **Ezekiel 20:5**.

אִם־לֹא הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לְכַם מִסְבִּיב

Surely¹⁹⁴⁸ the nations which are all around you,

הִפְּוּהוּ כָּל־מִתְּוֹם יִשְׂרָאֵל:

they will bear their reproach!¹⁹⁴⁹

36:8¹⁹⁵⁰

1948

Here again, the phrase אִם־לֹא, “if not,” occurs. Again, here it means “Surely!”

1949

Rabbi Fisch comments that “They will experience the humiliation which they had inflicted upon the Judeans.” (P. 240)

Matties comments on **36:8-15** that “[YHWH] now declares blessing on the mountains of Israel. By using language of fruitfulness and blessing, echoing **Genesis (1:22, 28; 9:1, 7)**, the mountains will again be home to ‘My people Israel.’ The typical ‘I am against you’ is transformed to ‘I am for you’ as [YHWH] declares an intention to turn favorably toward the mountains (**verse 9**; see also **Leviticus 26:9**). The declaration that [YHWH] will bring about more goodness than ever before hints at a new creation, a new paradise (**verse 11**; see also the declaration of goodness in **Genesis 1**). By repeating the important word *inheritance* from **35:15**, the character of the mountains themselves is transformed (**verse 12**) so as to become hospitable to [YHWH’s] people Israel. Thus the curse against the mountains (**chapter 6**) is reversed (**verses 13-15**).” (P. 1209)

1950

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 8-15** “Repopulation and Prosperity of the Land.”

Reimer comments on **verses 8-15** that “‘But you’ signals a transition: although the address has been to the ‘mountains of Israel,’ now the focus is on Israel’s promising future, rather than its bleak, enemy-ridden past...As in the ‘covenant of peace’ (**34:25-30**), the prosperity of people is bound up with the bounty of the land. **Verses 8-11** of **chapter 36** present a series of blessings, reminiscent of the restoration of **Job 42** as the new exceeds the old. The people themselves become the focus of **Ezekiel 36:12**, reiterating right ownership (compare **verse 2**).” (P. 1557)

Darr states that “Heretofore, Ezekiel has addressed Israel’s mountains with two apparent goals: first, to assure the addressees (rhetorical and real) that Yahweh knows of the greedy land aspirations and mockery of Israel’s surrounding enemies, of which Edom is the paradigmatic example; second, to reassure those addressees that their desolation and humiliation are about to end. The true Owner of Israel’s homeland will ensure that these foes experience both the destruction and the consequent disparagement (continued...) ”

וְאַתֶּם הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And you, mountains of Israel,

עֲנַפְתֶּם תִּתְּנוּ

will sprout your branches

וּפְרִיכֶם תִּשְׂאוּ

and will bear your fruit¹⁹⁵¹

לְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

for My people Israel--

כִּי קָרְבוּ לְבֹא:

because they have drawn near to the coming (home)!¹⁹⁵²

36:9 כִּי הִנְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם

Because look at Me, to / for you (plural)!¹⁹⁵³

¹⁹⁵⁰(...continued)

that Israel has endured. Now, however, Ezekiel begins to speak not of reparation, but of refructification, repopulation, and the repair of the land's reputation. The exiles, here called 'my people,' are returning soon; and in preparation for their arrival, Israel's mountains will become verdant, their trees bearing fruit for the returnees' nourishment." (P. 327)

1951

Hilmer states that the branches and fruit are "signs of productivity (see **Ezekiel 17:8, 23**) and [YHWH's] restored favor (see **Leviticus 26:3-5** [if Israel obeys YHWH, she will enjoy productivity]; to be contrasted with Edom's desolation in **35:3, 7** and **15**." (P. 1276)

1952

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "they are at hand to come." He comments that "in prophetic perspective the end of the exile is not far off." (P. 240)

1953

Rabbi Fisch comments that YHWH's words, "I am for you" are "the opposite of *I am against you* (**Ezekiel 35:3**, said of Mount Seir). [YHWH's] favor will again be bestowed upon the land of Israel and its desolate soil will become exceedingly fruitful." (P. 240)

(continued...)

וּפְנִיתִי אֵלֵיכֶם

And I will turn towards you;¹⁹⁵⁴

וְנַעַבְדֶתֶם וְנִזְרַעְתֶּם:

and you will be worked / tilled and you will be sown.

36:10 וְהִרְבִּיתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אָדָם

And I will multiply humanity upon you [Israel's mountains],

כָּל-בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל כֻּלָּהּ

all Israel's house, all of it!¹⁹⁵⁵

וְנִשְׁבְּוּ הָעָרִים

And the cities will be inhabited,

וְהַחֲרָבוֹת תִּבְנֶינָה:

and the desolations / ruins will be rebuilt!¹⁹⁵⁶

¹⁹⁵³(...continued)

Hilmer's translation has "I..will look on you with favor." He comments to compare **Leviticus 26:9** ['I will turn to you and make you fruitful...'] "for the identical clause in a similar context."

1954

Darr comments that the phrase, 'I will turn My Face to you' echoes the covenant blessing of **Leviticus 26:9** and is the antithesis of 'hide My Face from you' (see, e.g., **Ezekiel 39:29; Isaiah 59:2**). But while the blessings of **Leviticus 26** are contingent upon Israel's obedience vis-a-vis its covenant obligations, here the blessings are promised unconditionally to the mountains of Israel. They will be tilled and sown." (P. 327)

1955

Rabbi Fisch states that this means "The two kingdoms will be restored to the land. Their reunion is the theme of the latter part of the next chapter." (P. 240)

Hilmer comments that "In this chapter (as in **37:15-23**) Ezekiel is speaking of the restoration of all Israel." (P. 1276)

1956

(continued...)

36:11 וְהִרְבִּיתִי עֲלֵיכֶם אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה

And I will multiply upon you humanity and animal(s),

וּרְבוּ וּפְרוּ

and they will multiply and be fruitful.¹⁹⁵⁷

וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם כְּקִדְמוֹתֵיכֶם

and I will cause you (plural) to be inhabited, like your former times;

וְהִטַּבְתִּי מִרֵאשִׁיתֵיכֶם

and I will do good, more than your first times!¹⁹⁵⁸

¹⁹⁵⁶(...continued)

Darr comments that “**Verse 10** states emphatically that the population of Israel’s homeland will be wonderfully restored. The unequivocal ‘the whole house of Israel, all of it’ extends God’s promise not only to the population of the former southern kingdom and their offspring, but also to the descendants of the Northern Israelites deported by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E...Cities will again teem with inhabitants, and the ruined places will be rebuilt. God will multiply not only human beings but also animals upon Israel’s mountains...These ideal conditions will exceed anything Israel has ever experienced. ‘Then,’ the Lord says, identifying the larger purpose underlying the transformation of Israel’s land, ‘you shall know that I am Yahweh.’” (P. 327)

¹⁹⁵⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that the phrase “increase and be fruitful” is “a reminiscence of **Genesis 1:22, 28.**” (P. 240)

Hilmer agrees, stating that this is “identical terminology to the Divine blessing at creation (**Genesis 1:22, 28**; see **Genesis 8:17; 9:1, 7**) and the subsequent covenant blessing (see **Genesis 17:6; 35:11; 48:3-4; Exodus 1:7.**” (P. 1276)

¹⁹⁵⁸

The language is slightly different, but the meaning is the same—YHWH is the Restorer of Fortunes, the Returner of Captivities—see end-note 7.

Rabbi Fisch comments that “While their numbers will be restored to their former strength, their prosperity will exceed that of bygone days.” (P. 241)

וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And you will know that I (am) YHWH.¹⁹⁵⁹

36:12 וְהוֹלַכְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם אָדָם

And I will cause humanity to walk upon you--¹⁹⁶⁰

אֶת־עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

My people Israel.¹⁹⁶¹

וַיִּרְשׁוּךָ

And they will inherit / possess you;

וְהָיִיתָ לָהֶם אֶת־עַמִּי לְנַחֲלָה

and you will be for them, My people, for an inheritance / possession;

וְלֹא־תוֹסֵף עוֹד לְשַׁכַּלְמָם:

and you will not again bereave them / make them childless.¹⁹⁶²

1959

Hilmer states that the words, “Then you will know that I am [YHWH]” are “words of recognition, used throughout the [Scroll of Ezekiel] to express [YHWH’s] revelation through judgment. Here, they point to [YHWH’s] Self-disclosure in salvation...compare 34:30.” (P. 1276)

1960

Hilmer notes that “The mountains of Israel are still being addressed.” (P. 1276)

1961

Rabbi Fisch comments that in the words “I will cause men to walk upon you,” the prophet “is still addressing the mountains. The desolate and forsaken mountains will once again be traversed by their rightful owners.” (P. 241)

1962

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The havoc caused by war, pestilence and famine will not recur.” (P. 241)

Hilmer comments that “The mountains are poetically pictured as having contributed to the depopulation brought on by the exile. This may refer to the fact that Palestine contained the Canaanites (continued...) ”

36:13¹⁹⁶³ כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

יֵעַן אֲמַרִים לְכֶם

Because of (it) being said to you (plural, the mountains),

אֲכַלְתֶּם אָדָם (אֲתִי) [אֲתִי]

You¹⁹⁶⁴ are devouring humanity,

וּמִשְׁכַּלְתֶּם (גוֹיִךְ) [גוֹיִיךְ] הַיִּיתִי:

and you were bereaving your people / nation¹⁹⁶⁵ of children,¹⁹⁶⁶

36:14 לֹכֵן אָדָם לֹא־תֹאכְלִי עוֹד

therefore humanity you will not again devour;

¹⁹⁶²(...continued)

and their religious centers [‘high places’], which had led Israel astray and so brought [YHWH’s] wrath down on His people (see **Ezekiel 6:3**.)” (Pp. 1276-77)

¹⁹⁶³

Reimer comments on **36:13-14** that “The identity of the ‘mountains’ with the ‘land’ is seen here; the you of **verse 13** is plural, but the you addressed in **verse 14** is feminine singular, referring to the land (soil) of Israel (**verse 6**). The long history of unsettled relationship between people and land will no longer hold in [YHWH’s] restoration—a vision to sustain future hope.” (P. 1557)

¹⁹⁶⁴

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” אֲתִי; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” אֲתִי, correcting the text’s spelling.

¹⁹⁶⁵

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” גוֹיִיךְ; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” גוֹיִיךְ, changing from singular to plural.

¹⁹⁶⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The hostile neighbors alleged that the land of Israel destroyed its inhabitants. The Canaanites, the original population, had perished, and now the Israelites were undergoing a similar fate. Compare **Numbers 13:32** where the spies reported of Canaan it is land that eats up the inhabitants thereof.” (P. 241)

וּמִשְׁכַּלְתָּ (גוֹיִךָ) [גוֹיִךָ] לֹא (תִּכְשַׁלִּי-) [תִּשְׁכַּלִּי] עוֹד

And you will certainly not bereave¹⁹⁶⁷ your people / nation¹⁹⁶⁸ again!¹⁹⁶⁹

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

וְלֹא־אֲשַׁמֵּיעַ אֵלֶיךָ עוֹד כְּלַמַּת הַגּוֹיִם 36:15¹⁹⁷⁰

And I will not cause to be heard by you again (the) reproach / insult of the nations;

וְחִרְפַּת עַמִּים לֹא תִשְׂאִי־עוֹד

and (the) insult of people you will not bear again.¹⁹⁷¹

(וְגוֹיִךָ) [וְגוֹיִךָ] לֹא־תִכְשַׁלִּי עוֹד

and your nations / peoples will not cause stumbling again.

1967

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” תִּכְשַׁלִּי, “you (feminine singular) will (not) be caused to stumble”; and second the *qere*, “to be read,” תִּשְׁכַּלִּי, “you (feminine singular) will (not) be bereaved.” This is a change in the wording of the original Hebrew text.

1968

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” גוֹיִךָ; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” גוֹיִךָ, changing from singular to plural.

1969

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Israel’s experience on his return will disprove the allegation.” (P. 241)

1970

Darr states that “**Verse 15** contains three Divine promises: never again will Yahweh cause the land to hear the insults of the nations; it will never again bear the disgrace of the peoples; and it will no longer cause its nation to stumble (or perhaps, bereave its nation of its children).” (P. 328)

1971

See **verse 6**.

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.¹⁹⁷²

1972

Darr reflects that “Having reassured Israel’s homeland that its enemies will be targets of God’s ‘hot jealousy’ and ‘jealous wrath,’ Yahweh now speaks tenderly (rare in the **Scroll of Ezekiel!**) of its restoration and rehabilitated reputation and of the impending return of ‘My people Israel.’ It is interesting to read such a text and to recognize what, for its ancient Near Eastern author, constituted an idyllic existence: a homeland fertile, cultivated, and filled with inhabitants, animal and human, all reproducing at impressive rates; ruined cities rebuilt and reinhabited; a deep knowledge and acknowledgment of the God Who creates and sustains these conditions; a reputation that commands the respect of others. One wonders if Ezekiel’s audience dismissed his assurances as so much hyperbole, or if they derived from them some comfort that conditions would improve during their lifetimes, and that full realization of God’s promises would transpire some day.

“We too can long for such an existence, yet despair that it is not possible. Many people around our world are living in exile with little chance of returning home. Crops still fail on account of drought or infestation; and unlike the inhabitants of the ancient world, we are threatened by the pesticides and other chemicals used to keep critters away. Overpopulation is a perduring problem in many parts of the planet, with consequences for us all. Cities can become hotbeds of violence and poverty. The list goes on and on.

“Texts like **Ezekiel 36:8-15** can inspire hope in us, but we—like the prophet’s original audience—cannot sit back and wait for God to fulfill them. When at last the exiles returned to their homeland, they did not find the paradisiacal conditions promised them by Ezekiel, and to an even greater degree by the anonymous prophet we call Second Isaiah (**Isaiah 40-55**). No, after completing the long trek home, they had to deal with endless and complex problems: cities still lying in ruins; a severely eroded population; with opponents who did not welcome them back, thank you; famine; etc. By the same token we, while longing for a better world and praying ‘Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven,’ must be willing to tackle our problems in intelligent, compassionate, and sustained ways.

“In our attempts to address ecological problems and disasters, we do well to remember that God cares about this world. In our present passage, Yahweh addresses Israel’s homeland with reassurances and promises. ‘See now,’ the Lord says, ‘I am for you; I will turn to you.’ Ezekiel was focused squarely upon Israel’s homeland. But, as the psalmist declares, ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it’ (**Psalm 24:1 NIV**) When we waste and contaminate our natural resources, we offend God the Creator.” (P. 329)

Summary of Ezekiel's Theology (36:16-38)¹⁹⁷³

36:16 And YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying: 36:17 Son of Adam / Humanity, (the) House of Israel—they (were) dwelling upon their ground; and they made it unclean / defiled it by their way and by their deeds, like the menstruating woman's uncleanness, their way became before Me! 36:18 And I poured out My wrath upon them, over / for the blood which they poured out upon the land / earth, and by their idols / blocks of wood they defiled it! 36:19 And I scattered them in the nations, and they were scattered (synonym) in the lands, according to their way, and according to deeds, I judged them! 36:20 And he (Israel) came to the nations where they came; and they profaned My set-apart Name, when (it was) said to / of them, These (are) YHWH's people, and from his land they went forth! 36:21 And I spared / had compassion for My set-apart name, which they profaned—(the) House of Israel—in the nations where they came! 36:22 Therefore, say to Israel's House, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Not for your sake am I acting, House of Israel—but rather for My set-apart Name which you profaned in the nations where you came! 36:23 And I will set-apart / consecrate My great Name, the one profaned in the nations, Which you defiled in their midst. And the nations will know that I (am) YHWH-- (it is) a saying of YHWH--when I am set-apart / consecrated among you (plural), in their eyes. 36:24 And I will take you from the nations, and I will gather you from the lands; and I will bring you to your ground / land. 36:25 And I will sprinkle upon you clean water, and you will be clean, from all your uncleannesses and from your idols / blocks of wood, I will cleanse you! 36:26 And I will give to you a new heart; and a new spirit / Spirit I will give / place in your midst. And I will take away (the) heart of stone from your (plural) flesh. And I will give to you a heart of flesh! 36:27 And My Spirit I will place in your midst; and I will make (it so that) in My statutes you will walk, and My judicial decisions you will keep / observe; and you will do

1973

Darr states in an overview of **verses 16-38** that this oracle “immediately emphasizes what God’s motivation for impending acts is not (‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act’) and what it is (‘for the sake of My holy Name’). Yahweh will gather the dispersed from the nations, return them to their land, purify them, and remove their ‘stony’ hearts, replacing them with a ‘heart of flesh.’ Moreover, God will infuse them with God’s Own Spirit and render them utterly incapable of violating the Lord’s statutes and ordinances. Nothing is said about either human contrition or the people’s loss of freedom to choose between good and evil. Returned to ‘the land that I gave to your ancestors,’ the Israelites will resume their life as God’s covenant people (**verse 28**) without fear of famine and its consequent disgrace. **Verse 31** expresses a thought found previously in **Ezekiel 20:43**: back in their homeland, the people will remember their long-lived history of iniquity and loathe themselves for their sinfulness (see also **16:16-63**). **Verse 32** reiterates **verse 22**: God will not act for Israel’s sake...[However] so great will be their transformation that passers-by will place Israel’s territory on par with the mythical garden of Eden and acknowledge Yahweh’s power and sovereignty...God intends to make the people as numerous as the flocks of sacrificial animals gathered in Jerusalem for festivals in former times.” (P. 330)

(them)! 36:28 And you will live in the land which I gave to your fathers; and you will be Mine, for a people; and I, I will be yours, for a God! 36:29 And I will save / deliver you from all your uncleanness; and I will call to the grain, and I will multiply it; and I will not give / place upon you a famine. 36:30 And I will multiply the tree's fruit, and the field's produce / fruit, in order that you will not take up again (the) reproach / shame / disgrace of famine in the nations. 36:31 And you will remember your evil ways and your deeds which were not good; and you will feel loathing in yourselves for your iniquities, and for your abominations / disgusting deeds. 36:32 Not for your sake I am acting--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--let it be known to you--be ashamed, and be humiliated for your ways, House of Israel! 36:33 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: In (the) day of My cleansing you from all your iniquities--and I will save / deliver the cities, and the desolate places will be rebuilt. 36:34 And the land that was made desolate will be worked / cultivated, instead of when it was a desolation in the eyes of all passing through. 36:35 And they will say, The land--this one, that was desolated, became like a garden of Eden / delight! And the wasted and the desolated, and the thrown down cities--made inaccessible / fortified shall be inhabited! 36:36 And the nations that are left remaining, surrounding you, shall know that I, YHWH, rebuilt the thrown down; I re-planted the desolated! I YHWH, I said (it), and I will do (it)! 36:37 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: I will again be sought for / by Israel's House, to do for them--I will multiply them like the flock of humanity! 36:38 Like a flock of set-apart people, like a flock of Jerusalem at her appointed places / times; so shall the cities, the ones wasted, (be) filled (with) a flock of humanity; and they shall know that I (am) YHWH!

Summary of Ezekiel's Theology (36:16-38)¹⁹⁷⁴

1974

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 16-38** "Moral Purification of Israel." (P. 241)

Hilmer states that these verses "summarize all that Ezekiel prophesied concerning Israel." (P. 1277)

The scattering of Israel among the nations was YHWH's Own action, because of Israel's uncleanness--its shedding of blood, and worship of idols. But now--not because of Israel's goodness, because she has continued to profane YHWH's name among the nations--YHWH will act for the sake of His Name, and bring His people back to the land of Israel. None of this is said because YHWH does not care for Israel--obviously He does, deeply and permanently! But what He is about to do, Israel does not deserve, and has not earned by her own merit (compare **Deuteronomy 9:4-6**)!

The biblical teaching concerning Divine grace and mercy is rooted in just such statements as this. YHWH Himself will sprinkle them with clean water, and they will be clean; He will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them. When that happens, the people of Israel will genuinely turn back to YHWH, and despise their evil ways and wicked deeds! And in that time, the land that has become desolate and devastated will become like the Garden of Eden! In **Ezekiel 18:31**, YHWH declared that
(continued...)

¹⁹⁷⁴(...continued)

Israel was responsible herself for effecting this change; but as is shown by this passage, what YHWH requires He gives! That is the nature of His unswerving goodness to His people! For the teaching of this passage, compare **Psalm 51:5-11**:

⁵ Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.

⁶ You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Reimer entitles **36:16-38** “Restoration for the Sake of [YHWH’s] Name.” He comments that “This key passage sets out in concentrated form Ezekiel’s entire theology. It is one of the primary restoration passages, though it also contains an analysis of human failure that calls for Divine judgment. It carries forward some ideas from the preceding ‘mountain’ oracles, in particular the joint restoration of land and people, and the silencing of blasphemous taunts...Far overshadowing these, however, are the towering claims of the supremacy of a holy God, YHWH. The impurity of [YHWH’s] people impelled Him to scatter them (**verses 16-21**). This in turn led to derision (**verse 20**), so in order to vindicate His reputation, [YHWH] was moved to act on behalf of His people (**verses 22-32**). The restoration of the land of Israel silences the nations, compelling them to recognize the true God [YHWH] **verses 33-36**), just as the flourishing of Israel confirms their recognition of their Own God [YHWH] (**verses 37-38**).” (P. 1557)

Reimer entitles **36:16-21** “State of Impurity.” He comments that “With **verse 15** ending on the note of reproach being lifted, this return to scrutinize Israel’s failings initially jars. However, this account of Israel’s impurity is the basis on which [YHWH’s] intervention to restore His people must be understood...The metaphor of menstrual impurity (**verse 17**; see **Leviticus 15:19-30**) is likewise jarring, but Ezekiel uses it for at least two reasons: (1) it accords with his earlier portrayals of the abandoned child (**Ezekiel 16**) and the sisters (**chapter 23**); and (2) it emphasizes Israel’s defiling the sacred. That is, the activity used as a metaphor for Israel’s sin is not a criminal or moral failure so much as a willful disregard of the holiness of [YHWH]...However, the judgment itself (**36:18-19**) resulted in [YHWH’s] holiness being yet further profaned (**verse 20**). So [YHWH] looked now to His Own interests (**verse 21**).” (P. 1557)

Matties comments on **36:16-38**: “This section is a high point in the [**Scroll**], presenting Ezekiel’s theology of peoplehood, which is rooted in the profound priority of [YHWH’s] honor. The passage begins with a survey of Israel’s history (**verses 16-21**), followed by an oracle of transformation (**verses 22-32**), and two declarations of [YHWH’s] intentions (**verses 33-36, 37-38**). The text confirms the covenantal commitment of **Leviticus 26:42-45**.” (P. 1210)

(continued...)

36:16 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

36:17 בֶּן־אָדָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם

Son of Adam / Humanity, (the) House of Israel—they (were) dwelling upon their ground;

וַיִּטְמְאוּ אוֹתָהּ בְּדַרְכָּם וּבַעֲלֵילוֹתָם

and they made it unclean / defiled it by their way and by their deeds,

כְּטִמְאַתְ הַנְּדָה

like the menstruating woman's uncleanness,

הִיְתָה דַרְכָּם לִפְנֵי:

their way became before Me!¹⁹⁷⁵

36:18 וַאֲשַׁפֵּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם

And I poured out My wrath upon them,

עַל־הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפְכוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ

over / for the blood which they poured out upon the land / earth,

¹⁹⁷⁴(...continued)

Matties comments on **36:16-21** that “This recitation of Israel’s history as a history of defilement echoes the language and concerns of **chapter 20**. [YHWH’s] action is motivated solely by the impulse to preserve the reputation of the Divine character (holy Name, see also **20:9, 14, 22**). In **chapter 20**, the people are said to defile [YHWH’s] honor in the land; here their departure from the land is said to defile [YHWH’s] honor outside the land. How could [YHWH] allow the people to be removed forcibly from their land? And what kind of people would make that necessary? **Verses 20-21**, therefore, highlight the exilic community as those who stand at the threshold of [YHWH’s] new work, which will be grounded only in identification with and restoration of [YHWH’s] holy character.” (P. 1210)

1975

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Metaphorically Israel is compared with a wife and God to a husband. Therefore in the times of unfaithfulness to Him, Israel is spoken of as having the state of a woman in her impurity. She is temporarily avoided by her husband, becoming reunited with him after purification. Similarly, Israel’s banishment from the soil was due to moral impurity, but restoration to his homeland will follow upon purification (Kimchi).” (P. 242)

וּבְגִלּוֹלֵיהֶם טִמְאוּהָ:¹⁹⁷⁶

and by their idols / blocks of wood they defiled it!¹⁹⁷⁶

36:19 וְאֶפְיֵץ אֹתָם בְּגוֹיִם

And I scattered them in the nations,

וַיִּזְרוּ בְּאַרְצוֹת

and they were scattered (synonym) in the lands,

כְּדַרְכֵּם וְכַעֲלִילוֹתָם שְׁפֹטֵתִים:

according to their way, and according to deeds, I judged them!

36:20 וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ שָׁם

And he (Israel) came to the nations where they came,¹⁹⁷⁷

וַיַּחֲלִלוּ אֶת-שְׁמִי קִדְשִׁי

and they profaned My set-apart Name,¹⁹⁷⁸

1976

Rabbi Fisch comments that “the sins of homicide and idolatry were among the chief causes of Israel’s banishment was stressed in **Ezekiel 16:36, 23:37.**” (P. 242)

1977

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “when they came.” But he insists that the text is “literally ‘when he came,’ the subject being *the house of Israel* in **verse 17**. The Rabbis homiletically interpreted the singular verb as referring to God. He, so to speak, went into exile with His people; compare **Isaiah 63:9**, ‘in all their affliction He was afflicted.’” (P. 242) We say, Yes, that will make for good preaching / homiletics. But it isn’t what the text says!

1978

Rabbi Fisch comments that “*they profaned My holy name*” means “by their misdeeds and consequent dispersion they caused the desecration of [YHWH’s] name; because the nations understood Israel’s exile to foreign lands as an indication that God was unable to protect them.” (P. 242)

Hilmer likewise states that “Because Israel had been removed from her land, it seemed to the nations that her God was unable to protect and preserve His people (compare **Numbers 14:15-16; 2** (continued...))

בְּאִמֹּר לָהֶם עִמֵּיהֶנּוּ אֱלֹהִים

when (it was) said to / of them, These (are) YHWH's people,

וּמֵאֶרְצוֹ יֵצְאוּ:

and from his land they went forth!¹⁹⁷⁹

36:21 וְאֶחְזַמְּלָה עַל־שְׁמִי קֹדְשִׁי

And I spared / had compassion for My set-apart Name,

אֲשֶׁר חִלְּלוּהוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

which they profaned–(the) House of Israel–

בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה:

in the nations where they came!

36:22¹⁹⁸⁰

¹⁹⁷⁸(...continued)

Kings 18:32-35; 19:10-12).” (P. 1277)

Darr comments that “The profanation of the Divine Name, which Ezekiel (and Yahweh) takes with the utmost seriousness, here appears as the sole motivation for God’s future dealings with Israel: the Divine reputation must be restored to its previous luster. Ezekiel says nothing to suggest that Yahweh is motivated by love, covenant faithfulness, or mercy for Israel.” (P. 332)

¹⁹⁷⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Though they bore the title of *the people of the Lord*, He could not save them and they were driven from His land.” (P. 242)

¹⁹⁸⁰

Reimer Entitles **36:22-32** “Divine Intervention: A New Spirit.” He comments that “This theologically central passage is often compared to Jeremiah’s ‘new covenant’ text (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**; compare **Jeremiah 32:36-41**)...

“The overtones carried by Jeremiah’s language resonate with political loyalty. Ezekiel’s overtones, by contrast, have to do with ritual purity, as **Ezekiel 36:17-19** bears out...The structure of this passage reinforces its message. The outer verses relate the responses of [YHWH] (**verses 22-23**) and people (**verses 31-32**).

(continued...)

¹⁹⁸⁰(...continued)

“Nested within the next layer are the movements of return and purification brought about in renewal (**verses 24-25, 28-30**). At the heart of the passage is the Divine gift of the new heart and spirit, which enables right response (**verses 26-27**). The physical return was only the beginning of the fulfillment for these prophecies.” (P. 1558)

Matties comments on **36:22-32** that “Framed by the expression *not for your sake* (**verses 22, 32**), this oracle articulates a theology of peoplehood that is rooted in the Divine character. [YHWH’s] reputation will be restored only in the renewal of the faithful covenant community, a moral community wholly devoted to [YHWH’s] instructions and empowered to live by them. When [YHWH’s] character is mirrored in a transformed community, the relational triad of [YHWH]-people-land will have been completely reconstructed. There is no chronological sequence of political restoration and spiritual transformation.” (P. 1210)

Reimer comments on **36:22-23**, with its statement “It is not for your sake.” He states that “The fundamental reason given for [YHWH’s] acting on Israel’s behalf is not grace and mercy (though it is gracious and merciful) but to uphold the sanctity and greatness of [YHWH’s] reputation: ‘but for the sake of My holy name’...

“Although the ‘recognition formula’ (‘will know that I am [YHWH],’ **verse 23**...is used repeatedly throughout the [Scroll] of **Ezekiel**, here its significance is made plain. It is not just that Israel’s God is ‘great’ and ‘holy’; it is also imperative that [YHWH] be given the recognition and respect, indeed the honor, that He is due. To ‘vindicate the holiness of [YHWH’s] great name’ is also to ‘hallow His great name’ (compare **Matthew 6:9**) and is contrasted to ‘profaning His name’ (i.e., treating it and so Him, as not holy).” (P. 1558)

Darr states that “What Yahweh has shared with the prophet must now be made perfectly clear to his fellow exiles: God is not acting for Israel’s sake, but solely for the sake of Yahweh’s holy Name, which the people have profaned by their presence among the nations. This untenable situation will be reversed, God avers, as Yahweh sanctifies ‘My great Name’ and the nations are compelled to recognize and acknowledge the power and sovereignty of Israel’s Deity, manifested before their eyes through God’s dealings with Israel (**verse 23**)...

“As in **Ezekiel 20:41**, so here, Yahweh intends that the nations witness the manifestation of God’s holiness at work in Israel’s history (**verse 23**). **Verses 24-30** describe Yahweh’s restorative plan. First, the Lord will gather the scattered Israelites from all the countries to which they have been dispersed and bring them into their homeland: a new exodus lies ahead!...

“Everything he describes is intended to glorify God’s reputation, and not to cast further doubts about Yahweh’s ability to gather, sustain, and repatriate this people. According to **Ezekiel 36:16-38**,

(continued...)

לְכֵן אָמַר לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל

Therefore, say to Israel's House,

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

Not for your sake am I acting, House of Israel—¹⁹⁸¹

¹⁹⁸⁰(...continued)

Yahweh intends to deal with the problem of Israel's recalcitrance in a quite different way.” (Pp. 332-333)

Matties comments on **36:22-23** that “[YHWH] declares the intention to restore Divine honor. Just as that honor had been profaned through Israel, so that honor will be restored through Israel.” (P. 1210)

1981

Hilmer comments that “Not because [YHWH] did not care for Israel, but because they did not deserve what He was about to do (compare **Deuteronomy 9:4-6**,

4 אַל-תֹּאמַר בְּלִבְבְּךָ

You shall not speak in your heart,

כִּי־תֹרֵף יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֹתָם מִלְּפָנֶיךָ לֵאמֹר

when YHWH your God thrusts them out from before you, saying,

בְּצַדִּיקְתִּי הֵבִיאֲנִי יְהוָה לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

By / because of my right-relationship YHWH brought me to dispossess this land;

וּבְרִשְׁעַת הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה

and by / because of the wickedness of these nations,

יְהוָה מוֹרִישָׁם מִפְּנֵיךָ:

YHWH is dispossessing them before you.

9:5 לֹא בְּצַדִּיקְתְּךָ וּבִישׁוֹר לִבְבְּךָ

Not by your right-relationship and (not) by uprightness of your heart,

אַתָּה בָּא לְרִשְׁתָּ אֶת־אֲרָצָם

did you come to dispossess their land;

כִּי בְּרִשְׁעַת הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה

because by (the) wickedness of these nations,

(continued...)

כִּי אִם־לְשֵׁם־קָדְשִׁי

but rather for My set-apart Name¹⁹⁸²

אֲשֶׁר חִלַּלְתֶּם בַּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאתֶם שָׁם:

which you profaned in the nations where you came!¹⁹⁸³

36:23 וְקִדַּשְׁתִּי אֶת־שְׁמִי הַגָּדוֹל

And I will set-apart / consecrate My great Name,

הַמְּחַלֵּל בַּגּוֹיִם

the One profaned in the nations,

¹⁹⁸¹(...continued)

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹרִישָׁם מִפְּנֶיךָ

YHWH your God is dispossessing them from before you,

וּלְמַעַן הַקִּים אֶת־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְתָּיִךְ

and in order to confirm the word which YHWH swore to your fathers,

לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב:

to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.

9:6 וַיִּדְעַתְּ כִּי לֹא בְצַדִּיקְתְּךָ

And you shall know that (it is) not by your right-relationship

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ

(that) YHWH your God is giving to you this good land, to dispossess it,

כִּי עִם־קִשְׁיָה־עֵרְףְךָ אָתָּה:

because you (are) a hard-necked / stubborn people!

¹⁹⁸²

Hilmer comments that “The reason given in **chapter 20** for the withholding of Divine punishment (see **20:9, 14, 22**) is here given as a reason for Divine restoration.” (P. 1276)

¹⁹⁸³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Israel’s coming salvation is not determined by his merits, but by the necessity to reassert the name of God which, through its association with His people, had been profaned among the nations.” (P. 242)

אֲשֶׁר חִלְלִתֶם בְּתוֹכָם

which you defiled in their midst.

וַיֵּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And the nations will know that I (am) YHWH--¹⁹⁸⁴

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

בְּהַקְדָּשִׁי בְּכֶם לְעֵינֵיהֶם:

when I am set-apart / consecrated among you (plural), in their eyes.¹⁹⁸⁵

36:24¹⁹⁸⁶

1984

Hilmer notes that “The ultimate purpose of [YHWH’s] plans with Israel is that the whole world may know the true God.” (P. 1277) Yes, indeed! We think this is a most important fact to realize. YHWH has universal purposes—and those purposes are centered in the whole world coming to know Him!

1985

Rabbi Fisch comments that “By restoring the exiled Israelites to their homeland [*I will sanctify My great name*]. That will be a demonstration that the captivity was not the effect of [YHWH’s] weakness...God will vindicate the holiness of His name through Israel by the act of redemption.” (P. 243)

It wasn’t because of YHWH’s weakness that Israel went into captivity—it was because of Israel’s sins—which YHWH was punishing. And now YHWH will demonstrate His power, by restoring the nation of Israel to its homeland.

1986

Matties comments on **36:24-30** that “A list of Divine actions include: gathering from the nations (**verse 24**; see also **Deuteronomy 30:4**); cleansing (**verse 25**); transformation of their passion, will and thinking (**verses 26-27**); see also **Ezekiel 11:19-20**; **Deuteronomy 30: 6-8**; **Psalm 51:10**; **Jeremiah 31:31-34**); restoration of covenant relationship (**verse 28**; see also **Ezekiel 14:11**; **37:23, 27**; **Exodus 6:7**; **Jeremiah 31:33**; **Hosea 2:23**; **Zechariah 8:8**); and abundant fruitfulness for the land (**verses 29-30**; see also **Leviticus 26:3-5**)...

(continued...)

¹⁹⁸⁶(...continued)

“Without canceling the admonition of **18:31** that the exilic community get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit, this text places the initiative with [YHWH]. [YHWH] does the heart transplant, and it is [YHWH’s] Spirit that empowers for obedience.” (P. 1210)

Darr states that “Ezekiel’s concern for the Divine reputation cannot wait for human initiative, and repentance is not a prerequisite for Yahweh’s restorative acts...Having returned the people to their land, God will both cleanse them of their past impurity and insure their future compliance...Yahweh will sprinkle purifying water upon them and cleanse them; as a consequence, they will be clean from their impurities and ‘dung pellets,’ the idols they have served. Ezekiel’s language is a mixed metaphor of priestly cleansing rituals and blood sprinkling ceremonies...

“Once the people have been purified from all their inequities, Yahweh will replace their ‘heart of stone’—obstinate, rebellious, unfeeling—with a ‘heart of flesh’ and infuse them with God’s Own Spirit. As a consequence, the Israelites will at last ‘follow My statutes and be careful to observe My ordinances’ (**verse 27b**). This is not turn of heart on the Israelites’ part, but a heart transplant performed unilaterally by Yahweh to insure the people’s utter and unending obedience...

“In **18:31**, by contrast, Ezekiel’s God exhorts the house of Israel: ‘Get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!’ as if human beings were perfectly capable of doing so...

“Purified, transformed, and totally obedient, the people will be able to live ‘in the land that I gave to your ancestors...Here, in effect, God rescues Israel from itself, that is, from the defilement that the people have brought upon themselves...

“Yahweh promises that Israel’s soil will be so fruitful that its inhabitants will experience neither the pangs of hunger nor the insult of nations...Abundant harvests will rule out famine and the consequence disgrace inflicted upon the famished by mocking onlookers.” (Pp. 333-334)

Reimer comments on **36:24-25** that “The restoration of [YHWH’s] reputation first requires the external renovation of His people. [YHWH’s] actions are naturally sequential: gathering and return (**verse 24**) precede cleansing (**verse 25**). Purification with clean water echoes [YHWH’s] earlier cleansing of His people (**16:4, 9**) and once again relates to ritual cleansing in the Mosaic law (compare, e.g., **Leviticus 17:15-16; 22:6; Numbers 19:19-21**)...

“The reference to cleansing by sprinkling for touching a dead body (**Numbers 19:13, 20**), perhaps suggests that the idols of **Ezekiel 36:25** are comparable to dead things...

“Many interpreters see this picture of cleansing by water as the background to Jesus’ words in **John 3:5**, ‘Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God’; compare the

(continued...)

וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הַגּוֹיִם

And I will take you from the nations,

וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל־הָאָרְצוֹת

and I will gather you from the lands;

וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֲדַמְתְּכֶם:

and I will bring you to your ground / land.¹⁹⁸⁷

36:25 וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מֵיִם טְהוֹרִים

And I will sprinkle upon you clean water,¹⁹⁸⁸

וְטַהַרְתֶּם

and you will be clean,

מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל־גִּלְגֻלֵיכֶם

from all your uncleannesses and from your idols / blocks of wood

¹⁹⁸⁶(...continued)

mention of ‘My Spirit’ in **Ezekiel 36:27**. Thus, Ezekiel’s prophecy refers both to outward cleansing by a ceremony and to inward, spiritual cleansing.” (P. 1558)

¹⁹⁸⁷

Hilmer comments that **verse 24** reveals “the first of four stages of restoration in this central passage of **Ezekiel**: return of the exiles.” (P. 1277)

¹⁹⁸⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Since Israel’s evil ways were compared to the uncleanness of woman in her impurity (**verse 17**), the forgiveness of his sins is characterized as purification by cleansing water.” (P. 243)

Hilmer comments that “For sprinkling with water as a ritual act of cleansing see **Exodus 30:19-20** [priestly washing of hands and feet before serving at the altar]; **Leviticus 14:51** [ritual for cleansing defiled Israelite houses]; **Numbers 19:18** [cleansing after being defiled by corpse]; compare **Zechariah 13:1** [a fountain opened for cleansing] and **Hebrews 10:22** [‘let us draw near with a pure heart and our bodies washed with pure water; is this the water of baptism?].” (P. 1277)

אֶטְהַר אֶתְכֶם:

I will cleanse you!

36:26¹⁹⁸⁹ וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ

And I will give to you a new heart,¹⁹⁹⁰

1989

Reimer comments on **verses 26-27** that “[YHWH’s] initiative moves from external to internal with the gift of a new heart and new spirit (see **11:19**; compare **18:31**). The outer purification will be no use without the inner disposition to live rightly before [YHWH] (**36:27**). The connection of ‘water’ (**verse 25**) and ‘Spirit’ (**verse 27**) lies behind **John 3:5**. ‘I will put My Spirit within you’ predicts an effective inward work of [YHWH] in the ‘new covenant.’” (P. 1558)

Hilmer notes that **verses 26-27** contain “‘new covenant’ terminology (see **Jeremiah 31:33-34**,

33 כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרַת אֶת־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם
Because this is the covenant which I will cut with Israel’s house after these days--

נֹאם־יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקִרְבָּם

I gave / placed My *torah* / teaching in their midst,

וְעַל־לִבָּם אֶכְתָּבָנָה

and upon their heart I will write it.

וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָמָּה יְהִיוּ־לִי לְעָם:

And I will be to them for a God, and they will be to Me for a people!

34 וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו

And they will not again teach--each one his neighbor, and each one his brother,

לֵאמֹר דָּעוּ אֶת־יְהוָה

saying, Know YHWH!

כִּי־כֹלָם יֵדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדוֹלָם

Because all of them will know Me--to their least, and as far as their great one--

נֹאם־יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

כִּי אֶסְלַח לְעֹזְנָם וְלַחַטָּאתָם לֹא אֶזְכֹּר־עוֹד:

Because I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will not again remember!” (P. 1277)

1990

(continued...)

וְרוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם

and a new spirit / Spirit I will give / place in your midst.¹⁹⁹¹

וְהִסְרֹתִי אֶת־לֵב הָאֲבָן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם

And I will take away (the) heart of stone from your (plural) flesh.

וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר:

And I will give to you a heart of flesh!¹⁹⁹²

¹⁹⁹⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “This verse is virtually a repetition of **Ezekiel 11:19**,

וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד

And I will give to them one heart;

וְרוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם

And a new spirit I will place in their inward part.

וְהִסְרֹתִי לֵב הָאֲבָן מִבְּשָׂרָם

And I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh;

וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר:

and I will give to them a heart of flesh!” (P. 243)

Also see **Ezekiel 18:31**,

הַשְּׁלִיכוּ מֵעַלְיֹכֶם אֶת־כָּל־פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר פָּשַׁעְתֶּם בָּם

Throw away from upon you all your transgressions by which you transgressed!

וַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם לֵב חָדָשׁ וְרוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה

And make for yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit!

וְלָמָּה תָּמֹתוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And for what reason will you (plural) die, house of Israel?

¹⁹⁹¹

Hilmer says that to “put a new spirit in you” means “Transform your mind and heart. Here and in **11:19** [YHWH] declared that He would bring about the change. In **18:31**...He called on His people to effect the change. What He requires of His people He always provides.” (P. 1277)

¹⁹⁹²

Hilmer notes that “‘Flesh’ in the **Old Testament** is often a symbol for weakness and frailty (**Isaiah 31:3** [the Egyptian’s horses are flesh, not spirit / Spirit]; in the **New Testament** it often stands (continued...)

36:27 וְאֶת־רוּחִי אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם

And My Spirit I will place in your midst;¹⁹⁹³

וְעָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר־בְּחֻקֵי תֵלְכוּ

and I will make (it so that) in My statutes you will walk,

וּמִשְׁפָּטַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ:

and My judicial decisions you will keep / observe;

וְעָשִׂיתֶם

and you will do (them)!¹⁹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁹²(...continued)

for the sinful nature as a God-opposing force (as in **Romans 8:5-8**). Here it stands (in opposition to stone) for a pliable, teachable heart.” (P. 1277)

¹⁹⁹³

Rabbi Fisch comments that what it means is “the holy Spirit of God.” (P. 243)

¹⁹⁹⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Animated with this spirit [the holy Spirit of God], they will willingly observe the laws of God.” (P. 244)

Hilmer states that “[YHWH] bestows His Spirit to enable the human spirit to do His will. **Verses 25-27** are closely paralleled in **Psalm 51:9-13**^{Heb} / **7-11**^{Eng},

9 / 7

תְּחַטְּאֵנִי בְּאַזְבִּיב וְאֶטְהַר

Purify my missing-of-the-mark with hyssop, and I will be clean;

תְּכַבְּסֵנִי וּמִשְׁלֹג אֲלֵבִין:

wash me, and I will be whiter than snow!

10 / 8

תְּשִׂמְעֵנִי שִׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה

Cause me to hear laughter and rejoicing;

תִּגְלַנָּה עַצְמוֹת דְּכִיתָ:

let my bones rejoice which You have crushed!

11 / 9

הַסְתֵּר פְּנֶיךָ מִחַטְּאֵי

Hide Your face from my missing-of-the-mark!

וְכָל־עֲוֹנֹתַי מִחָה:

(continued...)

36:28¹⁹⁹⁵ וַיִּשְׁבְּתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ

And you will live in the land

אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְאֲבֹתֵיכֶם

which I gave to your fathers;¹⁹⁹⁶

וְהִייתֶם לִי לְעָם

and you will be Mine, for a people;

¹⁹⁹⁴(...continued)

And wipe out all my iniquities!

12 / 10

לֵב טָהוֹר בְּרָא-לִי אֱלֹהִים

A clean heart, create for me, O God!

וְרוּחַ נָכוֹן חֲדַשׁ בְּקִרְבִּי:

And an upright spirit, renew within me!

13 / 11

אַל-תִּשְׁלִיכֵנִי מִלְּפָנֶיךָ

Do not cast me away from Your presence!

וְרוּחַ קָדְשְׁךָ אַל-תִּקַּח מִמֶּנִּי:

And Your Set-apart Spirit, do not take away from me!

¹⁹⁹⁵

Reimer comments on **36:28-30** that “With [YHWH’s] people now graced with an inclination to keep faith with [YHWH], so too there will be an enduring habitation of the land (**verse 38**)—this time with no occasion to prove ‘treacherous’ (compare **verses 13-14**). The conjunction of restoration of people and land is a continuing theme through this part of **Ezekiel** (see e.g., **34:25-31**). The restoration of the people to the land is symbolic of, and probably implies the reality of, the return of the people to live in the presence of [YHWH], knowing once again His blessings on their lives (see **36:27**).” (P. 1558)

¹⁹⁹⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “As the consequence of spiritual regeneration, Israel will remain in possession of the land.” (P. 244) Compare **Ezekiel 28:25; 37:25**.

וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

and I, I will be yours, for a God!¹⁹⁹⁷

36:29 וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל טְמֵאוֹתֵיכֶם

And I will save / deliver you from all your uncleannesses;¹⁹⁹⁸

1997

Hilmer notes that the language of this verse is “covenant language.” (P. 1277) Compare **Ezekiel 11:19-20**,

19 וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד

And I will give to them one heart;

וְרוּחַ חַדְשָׁה אֶתֵּן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם

And a new spirit I will place in their inward part.

וְהִסְרֹתִי לֵב הָאֶבֶן מִבְּשָׂרָם

And I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh;

וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב בָּשָׂר:

and I will give to them a heart of flesh!

20 לְמַעַן בְּחַקְתִּי יֵלְכוּ

In order that they may / will walk in My statutes;

וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי יִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשׂוּ אֹתָם

and My judgments they will observe / keep, and they will do them!

וְהָיוּ-לִי לְעָם

And they will be to Me for a people,

וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

And I, I will be to them for a God!

1998

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The nation’s tendency to lapse into sin will be overcome by the power of the new spirit.” (P. 244)

Hilmer states that this means “from cultic and moral defilement (see **verse 25; 37:23**,

25 וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מַיִם טְהוֹרִים

And I will sprinkle upon you clean water,

וְטָהַרְתֶּם

and you will be clean,

(continued...)

וְקָרָאתִי אֶל־הַדָּגָן

and I will call¹⁹⁹⁹ to the grain,²⁰⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹⁸(...continued)

מִכָּל טִמְאוֹתֵיכֶם וּמִכָּל־גְּלוּלֵיכֶם

from all your uncleannesses and from your idols / blocks of wood

אֶטְהַר אֶתְכֶם:

I will cleanse you!

37:23 וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד

And they will not defile themselves again

בְּגִלוּלֵיהֶם וּבִשְׂקֻצֵיהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם

with their idols and with their disgusting things and with all their transgressions;

וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֹתָם מִכָּל מוֹשְׁבֹתֵיהֶם

but / and I will save them from / out of all their dwelling-places,

אֲשֶׁר חָטְאוּ בָהֶם

in which they sinned.

וְטַהַרְתִּי אוֹתָם

And I will cleanse them,

וְהָיוּ־לִי לְעָם

and they will be Mine for a people,

וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים:

and I, I will be theirs for a God!

¹⁹⁹⁹

Hilmer states that “I will call” is “as at the beginning when God called creation into being (compare **Genesis 1:5, 8, 10**).” (P. 1277) We say, No. These verses in **Genesis 1** are not about “calling into being,” but rather naming what has been created.

²⁰⁰⁰

Rabbi Fisch comments that this means God will “summon it [the grain] to appear; God will restore the fertility of the land.” (P. 244) Compare **Ezekiel 34:26-27**,

26 וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָם וְסָבִיבוֹת גְּבַעְתִּי בְרָכָה

And I will give them, and all around My hill, a blessing;

(continued...)

וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֹתוֹ

and I will multiply it;

וְלֹא־אֶתֵּן עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָב׃

and I will not give / place upon you a famine.

36:30 וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֶת־פְּרֵי הָעֵץ

And I will multiply the tree's fruit,

וּתְנוּבַת הַשָּׂדֶה

and the field's produce / fruit,

לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִקַּח עוֹד

in order that you will not take up again

²⁰⁰⁰(...continued)

וְהוֹרַדְתִּי הַגֶּשֶׁם בְּעִתּוֹ

and I will cause the rain-shower to fall in its season—

גִּשְׁמֵי בְרָכָה יִהְיוּ׃

they will be rain-showers of blessing.

27 וְנָתַן עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה אֶת־פְּרִיּוֹ

And the field's tree will give its fruit,

וְהָאָרֶץ תִּתֵּן יְבוּלָהּ

and the land will give its produce;

וְהָיוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם לְבֵטַח

and they will be upon their land in security.

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And they will know that I (am) YHWH,

בְּשִׁבְרֵי אֶת־מִטּוֹת עֲלֵם

when I break (the) bars of their yoke.

וְהִצַּלְתִּים מִיַּד הָעֹבְדִים בָּהֶם׃

And I will deliver them from (the) hand of those enslaving them.

חִרְפַּת רָעֵב בְּגוֹיִם:

(the) reproach / shame / disgrace of famine in the nations.²⁰⁰¹

וּזְכַרְתֶּם אֶת־דַּרְכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים 36:31²⁰⁰²

And you will remember your evil ways

וּמַעַלְלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־טוֹבִים

and your deeds which were not good;

וּנְקַטְתֶּם בְּפָנֵיכֶם

and you will feel loathing in your faces / selves

2001

Compare **Ezekiel 34:29** and **36:15**.

2002

Reimer comments on **36:31-32** that “The response of the renewed people is to see themselves as [YHWH] sees them. ‘Not for your sake’—the assertion of [YHWH] acting for His Own sake repeats and confirms the basis of [YHWH’s] action spelled out already in **verse 22**, thus bracketing this overtly theological account of renewal.” (P. 1558)

Matties states that **verses 31-32** “Echo **20:41-44**, and describe Israel’s response to their own actions when they recognize [YHWH’s] gracious initiative that springs from the impulse to restore the Divine reputation.” (P. 1210)

Darr comments that “Having articulated the various stages of Yahweh’s plan for restoration God turns to what the people’s response will (and ostensibly should) be. Recalling their evil ways and not good dealings, they will ‘loathe themselves’ for their iniquities and abominable deeds...

“How somber and stern is Ezekiel’s ‘good news.’ When Jeremiah, by contrast, speaks of Israel’s restoration, he permits a glimpse of human joy and thanksgiving, and even of Divine love for Israel: ‘Then shall once more be heard the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord: Give thanks to the Lord of Hosts, for the Lord is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!’ (**Jeremiah 33:10-11 NRSV**)

“Ezekiel denies his audience, and his readers, any such glimpse.” (P. 334)

עַל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם וְעַל תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:

for your iniquities, and for your abominations / disgusting deeds.²⁰⁰³

2003

Hilmer comments that “[YHWH’s] undeserved grace leads to recollection and repentance.” (P. 1277) Compare **Ezekiel 6:9**,

וּזְכְּרוּ פְּלִיטֵיכֶם אוֹתִי

And your escapees will remember Me,

בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבוּ-שָׁם

among the nations where they were captured,

אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת-לִבִּי הַזֹּזָה

whose prostituting heart I broke,

אֲשֶׁר-סָר מֵעָלַי

which turned away from Me;

וְאֵת עֵינֵיהֶם הַזֹּנוֹת אַחֲרֵי גְלוֹלֵיהֶם

and their prostituting eyes (went) after their idols;

וְנִקְטְוּ בְּפְנֵיהֶם אֶל-הָרָעוֹת

and they will feel loathing in their eyes to / towards the evils

אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לְכָל תּוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶם:

which they did to / by all their abominations.

Ezekiel 16:63,

לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרִי וּבִשְׁתִּי

so that you will remember and be ashamed,

וְלֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ עוֹד פֶּתַח־וּפִי

and there will not again be for you an opening of mouth,

מִפְּנֵי כָל־מַתָּךְ

because of your insult / reproach,

בְּכַפְרֵי-לֶךְ לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית

when I cover over for you all that you did—

נֹאם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה:

it is a saying of my Lord YHWH!

Ezekiel 20:43,

וּזְכַרְתֶּם-שָׁם אֶת־דַּרְכֵיכֶם

And you shall remember there your ways

(continued...)

36:32 לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי-עֹשֶׂה

Not for your sake I am acting–

נֵאֻם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH–

יִודַע לְכֶם

let it be known to you--

בּוֹשׁוּ וְהִכְלַמוּ

be ashamed, and be humiliated

מִדְרָכֵיכֶם בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

for your ways, House of Israel!²⁰⁰⁴

²⁰⁰³(...continued)

וְאֵת כָּל-עֲלִילוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר נִטְמַאתֶם בָּם

And all your deeds / practices with which you defiled yourselves.

וְנִקְטַתֶם בְּפָנֵיכֶם

And you will feel a loathing in your faces / at yourselves

בְּכָל-רָעוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם:

in / for all your evils which you did / practiced.

Psalm 130:4,

כִּי-עֲמֹךְ הַסְּלִיחָה

Because with You (there is) the forgiveness,

לְמַעַן תִּירָא:

in order that You may be feared / revered!

2004

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Israel must not be complacent about his former misdeeds and imagine that God had pardoned them by His act of redemption. They should be remembered with deeper shame because He has restored the people to the land.” (P. 244)

And we ask, Are we to think YHWH God had redeemed His people, but not pardoned them? What do you think? See **Isaiah 40:1-2,**

(continued...)

²⁰⁰⁴(...continued)

- 1 נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ עַמִּי
Comfort! Comfort My people,
יֹאמֵר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:
says your (plural) God!
- 2 דַּבְּרוּ עַל-לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם
Speak to Jerusalem's heart,
וְקְרְאוּ אֵלֶיהָ
and cry out to her,,
כִּי מְלֵאָה צָבָאָה
that her warfare is full / complete,
כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ
that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,
כִּי לָקְחָהּ מִיַּד יְהוָה כַּפְּלַיִם
that she received from YHWH's hand double (punishment)
בְּכָל-חַטָּאתֶיהָ:
for all her sins!

2005

Reimer entitles **36:33-36** “Land Renewed.” He comments that “As seen in **verses 28-30**, the land enjoys the benefits of the people’s cleansing (**verse 33**). The impact on the land is not simply on its fertility (**verses 34-35**). The cityscape is renewed as well as the landscape (**verse 33**)...

“The mention of Eden (**verse 35**) emphasizes the nature of this act as re-creation (see **28:13**; compare **37:1-14**). One appointed function of Israel’s experience in the land was to show the whole world a restored Edenic life, lived in [YHWH’s] presence and with His blessing.” (P. 1558)

We say, Yes! Ezekiel depicts a “new creation,” a “return to Eden.” But did that happen when the exiles returned to Judah / Jerusalem? No, not at all. Christian interpreters will say the fulfillment of the promise awaits the coming of Jesus the Messiah. But do the followers of Jesus live in a new Eden? Many will claim they do so “spiritually,” but is this what the promise is about? How will you answer our question? Is the answer that when believers die, they are taken to a heavenly Eden / Paradise (like Jesus promised the penitent thief (**Luke 23:43**), where all earthly problems are resolved, and where there is genuine peace / plenty, as seems to be promised in **1 Peter 1:4** or **Psalm 23:6**, that those who have gone through death will dwell in the house of YHWH for length of days? What do you say? However we answer these questions, there can be no doubt as to the reality of the biblical promise of life to believers!

(continued...)

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

בְּיוֹם טָהַרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם

In (the) day of My cleansing you from all your iniquities—²⁰⁰⁶

וְהוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־הָעָרִים

and I will save / deliver the cities,

וְנִבְנוּ הַחֲרָבוֹת:

and the desolate places will be rebuilt.

36:34 וְהָאָרֶץ הַנְּשֻׁמָּה תַעֲבֹר

And the land that was made desolate will be worked / cultivated,

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה שְׁמֹמָה

instead of when it was a desolation

לְעֵינֵי כָל־עוֹבֵר:

in the eyes of all passing through.²⁰⁰⁷

²⁰⁰⁵(...continued)

Matties comments on **verses 33-36** that “[YHWH’s] cleansing work leads not only to the repopulation and rebuilding of the land but to a recognition by all passers-by and all nations that this land has become like the Garden of Eden (see also **Isaiah 51:3**).” (P. 1211)

Darr states that “Addressing the issue of Israel’s desolate land, God promises to repopulate the towns, whose ruins will be rebuilt. Moreover, the soil will be tilled, ceasing to be the desolation that has been witnessed by ‘all who passed by.’ The present text reverses Yahweh’s punishment of Judah’s inhabitants as anticipated in **Ezekiel 5:14-16**.” (P. 335)

²⁰⁰⁶

Rabbi Fisch states that “This **verse [33]** and the next [**34**] are antecedents to **verse 35**. Render: ‘and cause the cities to be inhabited...then shall they say.’” (P. 245)

²⁰⁰⁷

(continued...)

36:35 וְאָמְרוּ הָאָרֶץ הַלְיָזוּ הַנְּשָׁמָה

And they will say, The land—this one, that was desolated,

הִיְתָה כְּגַן־עֵדֶן

became like a garden of Eden / delight!²⁰⁰⁸

וְהָעָרִים הַחֲרָבוֹת וְהַנְּשָׁמוֹת וְהַנְּהָרְסוֹת

And the wasted and the desolated, and the thrown down cities—

בְּצוּרוֹת יִשְׁבוּ:

made inaccessible / fortified shall be inhabited!

36:36 וַיֵּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַרוּ סְבִיבוֹתֵיכֶם

And the nations that are left remaining, surrounding you, shall know²⁰⁰⁹

²⁰⁰⁷(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Even the completely devastated places, which were thought by passers-by to be beyond reclamation, will be restored to their former state. Ehrlich construes the verse: ‘shall be tilled—whereas it was a desolation—in the sight of all that pass by.’” (P. 245)

²⁰⁰⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The transformation which had taken place in the holy land will create amazement.” (P. 245)

We wonder if the return of the exiles to Jerusalem / Judah, and their rebuilding their temple and homes there, created amazement on the part of others seeing what had happened. Is there any indication that such a thing happened? We do not know of such.

Modern Jews, living in the State of Israel, with all of its modern industrialization, new methods of farming, the desalination of Mediterranean water, the many scientific advances made in Israel, claim that the promise is being fulfilled today. Is this what Ezekiel was promising? What do you think?

²⁰⁰⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “What has occurred will be recognized as the work of God, not of man.” (P. 245)

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּנִיתִי הַנִּהְרָסוֹת

that I, YHWH, rebuilt the thrown down;

נִטְעַתִּי הַנְּשַׁמָּה

I re-planted the desolated!

אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי

I YHWH, I said (it),²⁰¹⁰

וְעָשִׂיתִי:

and I will do (it)!

36:37²⁰¹¹ כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

עוֹד זֹאת אֶדְרֹשׁ לְבַיַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל

I will again be sought for this by Israel's House,²⁰¹²

2010

Rabbi Fisch comments that “It was predicted by His prophets.” (P. 245)

2011

Reimer entitles **36:37-38** “Populace Increased.” He comments that “The flourishing of the people in terms of a flock recalls the pastoral imagery of **chapter 34** (see also **37:24**). Applying the metaphor to a ‘flock for sacrifices’ (**36:38**) may seem ironic, but the imagery suggests not impending death but festivals and great numbers, all set aside for [YHWH]...”

“‘Then they will know.’ The recognition formula...is a fitting conclusion to a passage in which recognizing the true God [YHWH] is seen to be paramount.” (P. 1559)

Matties likewise comments that “The chapter closes by returning to the flock imagery (**chapter 34**) and by identifying a new openness in [YHWH] to being consulted by the people (see also **Ezekiel 14:3; 20:3**).” (P. 1211)

2012

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Their prayer will be for an increase of population after the severe losses caused by war and exile. That will be one of the principal concerns in the restored nation.” (P. (continued...))

לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהֶם

to do for them--

אַרְבֵּה אֶתֶם כְּצֹאן אָדָם:

I will multiply them like the flock of humanity!

36:38 כְּצֹאן קִדְּשִׁים

Like a flock of set-apart people,

כְּצֹאן יְרוּשָׁלַם בְּמוֹעֲדֶיהָ

like a flock of Jerusalem at her appointed places / times;

כֵּן תִּהְיֶינָה הָעָרִים הַחֲרֻבוֹת

so shall the cities, the ones wasted,

מִלְאוֹת צֹאן אָדָם

(be) filled (with) a flock of humanity;

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and they shall know that I (am) YHWH!²⁰¹³

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Hilmer comments that “Allowing petitions to come to Him again, [YHWH] reversed His earlier refusals to hear (compare **14:3; 20:3** [‘As I live, I will not be inquired of by you, (it is) a saying of YHWH’], **31** [same as **verse 3**]).” (P. 1278)

Darr states that “Heretofore in the Scroll, God has absolutely refused ‘to be inquired’ of by Israel’s elders (**14:3; 20:3, 30**; see also **8:18**). In the future, however, that ban will be lifted; and Yahweh will permit the house of Israel ‘to request’ (*darash*) that its population be increased ‘like a flock.’ This God will do to so great an extent that the streets of the once-ruined towns will teem with human beings as numerous as the flocks of animals for sacrifice that once filled the streets of Jerusalem during festivals (see **2 Chronicles 29:31-36** and **35:7-9**).” (P. 335)

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “The desolate cities of the holy land will teem with inhabitants as Jerusalem was once filled with cattle for sacrifices on the three pilgrim festivals...The fulfilment of [YHWH’s] word will lead to the strengthening of the people faith in Him.” (P. 246)

Darr reflects that “Viewed from a theological perspective, **Ezekiel 36:16-38** is one of the most important passages in the entire **Scroll**. The priest-prophet articulates, in forceful language permeated by priestly thought, a thoroughly theocentric (‘God-centered’) account of: (1) Israel’s defiling past and proportionate punishment; (2) the negative consequences of its punishment for Yahweh’s ‘Name’ (reputation) among the nations, and (3) God’s solution to that intolerable state of affairs.

“Many a modern reader may find the text unsettling, if not distasteful. The analogy between Israel’s defiling impurity and a woman’s menstrual flow imbues the latter—a natural [we say, a God-given] bodily function essential to procreation—with negative connotations. The portrait of an enraged Deity pouring out wrath upon a people, ripping the survivors of Nebuchadrezzar’s siege and assault from their homeland, and scattering them among their conquerors, is troubling, even terrifying. Having apparently failed to anticipate the consequence of deportation for the Divine reputation, that same Deity resolves to reverse the situation. The plan of restoration set out in **verses 24-38** involves regathering the people, returning them to their homeland, purifying them, fructifying their desolate territory, and rebuilding their ruined cities, such that the mocking taunts of neighboring nations are replaced by awestruck acknowledgment of what Yahweh has accomplished. All of this will be done not for the sake of the people themselves, however, but only for the glorification of their God. The statement ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act’ (**verses 22, 32**) does not rule out the possibility that Yahweh cares about Israel. Indeed, Ezekiel elsewhere suggests that God cares deeply about the people (see, e.g., **18:31-32; 33:11**). But here, no such Divine sentiments are permitted. The people will benefit greatly from Yahweh’s restorative acts, but their response should and will be self-loathing—a state of mind that moderns know can inflict extreme psychological and physiological injury.

“Even **verses 26-27**, God’s well-known promise to replace Israel’s stony heart with a heart of flesh and to imbue it with Yahweh’s Own Spirit, can be problematic. Some Jews and Christians will wonder how spiritual transformation is possible without prior human repentance. Would God really purge people of their sins without contrition and confession? [We have asked the same question in Isaiah 40.] And what becomes of human freedom to choose between good and evil if God acts unilaterally to ‘reprogram’ human nature? These verses exhibit, on the one hand, radical despair of Israel’s repentance. For Ezekiel, Israel has from its beginning and throughout its history been rebellious, disobedient, and unfaithful (see, e.g., **Ezekiel 16, 20, and 23**). And the sins of the past are very much present not only among those who have remained in the homeland, but also among his fellow exiles. The prophet may believe that Israel’s future resides with those who were ‘scattered among the nations,’ rather than with those who remained in Judah, but he does not hold them any less culpable of the widespread and ongoing transgressions he describes. From the time of his call through succeeding decades, he has known the

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reality of Israel's 'heart of stone.' The restoration of Yahweh's reputation cannot depend upon or wait for Israel's initiative.

"On the other hand, this text exhibits radical certainty that Israel's agency will cause all nations to vindicate and acknowledge God's holiness, majesty, and authority. Here, as everywhere in his Scroll, Ezekiel insists that God ultimately is in control of history, Israel's and the nations'; and human obduracy will never derail Yahweh's plan to be acknowledged in all God's holiness, power, and glory. Because the nations know that Israel is Yahweh's people and are aware of the losses it has endured, they question and even mock Yahweh's ability to function as an ancient Near Eastern Patron Deity should. What sort of God or Goddess permits a land and its people to be ripped apart so savagely? Is such a Deity worthy of praise? Or should He or She be abandoned, so that loyalty and devotion can shift to a more 'successful' Patron?

"For Ezekiel, the profanation of God's Name creates an untenable situation which must be set right, irrespective of human merit or the lack thereof. Israel's guarantee of restoration is the indissoluble link between God's reputation and Israel's fortunes. For all that Ezekiel has insisted, especially in judgment oracles, that Yahweh's treatment of Israel has been appropriate to its behavior (most recently in **36:19**), in this case, the people's status (their sinfulness, their willingness or unwillingness to repent) is simply irrelevant. Nothing must stand in the way of the sanctification of Yahweh's Name.

"Ezekiel insists that once Yahweh restores, purifies, and transforms Israel, the people will be capable only of obedience. Disobedience has, from Ezekiel's perspective, been Israel's core defect since its days of slavery in Egypt. What is to keep them from continuing their past practices, defiling their native soil, and incurring yet another punishment that imperils Yahweh's reputation? 'So that God's Name never again suffer disgrace,' Greenberg observes, 'Israel's restoration must be irreversible. Such it can be only if Israel be denied the ability ever again to disobey God's law. God's uninterrupted glorification entails the curtailment of human freedom.' (Quoting Greenberg, **Ezekiel 21-37**, p. 735)

"I suspect that modern readers respond to Yahweh's 'curtailment of human freedom' in a variety of ways. Indeed, individuals may find themselves with a divided mind on this topic. On the one hand, we despair (often with good reason) of the prospect that human beings will, in and of themselves, effect radical transformations. This is true not only on a grand scale (global transformation, cultural and social transformation), but also on a personal scale (transformation of the self). The idea that God might so reconfigure human beings that they would simply be incapable of misconduct...has a strong appeal. On the other hand, **verses 26-27** describe a process which leaves its recipients incapable of exercising the freedom to choose between one path and another. No one lives entirely free of prohibitions and restrictions, of course. But is the cost of obedience to God too high in this case? Can one even speak of 'obedience' if the obedient party is constitutionally incapable of being disobedient? Can one affirm with Michael Fox that 'when one has God's Spirit in him he does God's will because he wants to do God's

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will?’ (Michael Fox, ‘The Rhetoric of Ezekiel’s Vision of the Valley of the Bones,’ **Hebrew Union College Annual**, 51, 1980, p. 15)

“In the Commentary, I noted that Ezekiel twice speaks of God’s giving the house of Israel a new heart and a new spirit (**11:19; 36:26**), while elsewhere, he exhorts the house of Israel to ‘Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against Me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?’ (**18:31**) One can understand, I think, why the prophet speaks as he does in each context. Still, when these verses are juxtaposed, we perceive in them a kind of paradox—on the one hand, the call for human responsibility, on the other hand, the assertion that God is in complete control and effects all in terms of salvation. This tension is by no means limited to the **Ezekiel Scroll**. To the contrary, it appears both in [the Apostle] Paul’s letters and in the **Gospels**. Paul, for example, feels comfortable in exhorting the Corinthian believers to ‘clean out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed’ (**1 Corinthians 5:7**). Why, one wonders, is it necessary to ‘clean out the old leaven’ if one is already unleavened? Or again, Paul can tell the Galatians, ‘If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit’ (**Galatians 5:25**; ‘live’ and ‘walk’ are essentially synonyms. The Spirit moves us, but at the same time, we must follow the Spirit). The paradox is even clearer in **Philippians 2:12b-13**, where Paul tells his readers to ‘work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God Who is at work in you both to will and to work of His good pleasure.’ Of this striking but common Pauline paradox Guenther Bornkamm observes: ‘Note that the action is not divided up between God and men, making the two propositions supplementary to each other. Nor is the sense: Bend all your endeavors on this, and God will add His and crown it. Nor: He has made the beginning; see to it that it comes to successful issue. No, each proposition substantiates the other: Because God does everything, you too have everything to do...The believer’s actions derive from God’s act, and the decisions taken by obedience from God’s antecedent decision for the world in Christ. Thus the two come together in equilibrium: to live on the basis of *grace*, but also to *live* on the basis of grace.’ Guenther Bornkamm, **Paul** (New York: Harper and Row, 1971, pp. 201-203) From this perspective, faith is not simply mental assent to doctrine or truth. Rather, it is full participation in the life of God and the church. God’s gracious outreach toward the believer and the believer’s activity toward God coalesce. Each is integral to the other.

“The evangelists also know of the paradoxical relationship between Divine and human willing and actions. In **Luke’s** presentation of the story of the ministering woman (**Luke 7:36-50**), for example, Jesus tells the woman that ‘your sins have been forgiven’ (**verse 48**). But is this forgiveness the consequence of her actions (anointing Jesus’ feet with tears and expensive perfume, and then kissing and wiping his feet with her hair) or the cause of them? The narrator provides no specific clues as to the motivation of the woman’s strange actions. Gap-filling sequential readers may identify the woman as one of the sinners whom the narrative has just characterized as ‘having been baptized with the baptism of John,’ that is, as having repented (**Luke 7:29**). But even this only removes the issue by one step. Why have they repented? The paradox of Divine and human interaction, gift and call, faith and obedience, belief and duty remains.” (Pp. 335-338)