

**Marvelous, Comforting Vision-Story of National Restoration--
the Valley of Dry Bones Will Come to Life;
the Formerly Divided People Will Become One Nation
Under YHWH's Servant "David,"
and YHWH's Dwelling-Place Will Be in their Midst! (37:1-28)
National resurrection (37:1-14)**

37:1 YHWH's hand was upon me; and He brought me forth by YHWH's Spirit. And He gave me rest / set me in the middle of the valley. And it was full of bones. 37:2 And He caused me to cross over upon them, around, around. And look--exceedingly many (bones), upon the valley's surface. And look--(they were) exceedingly dry! 37:3 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, will these bones live? And I said, My Lord YHWH, You knew! 37:4 And He said to me, Prophecy over these bones! And you shall say to them, the bones, the dry ones, Hear / listen to YHWH's Word! 37:5 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to the these bones: Look--I am bringing on you (plural) a Spirit / spirit, and you will live! 37:6 And I will give to you (plural) sinews; and I will cause flesh to come up on you; and I will spread skin over you, and I will give / place spirit / Spirit in you, and you will live! And you will know that I (am) YHWH! 37:7 And I prophesied, just as I was commanded. And there was a voice / sound as I prophesied, and look--a shaking, and (the) bones drew near, bone to its bone. 37:8 And I saw, and look--upon them (were) sinews, and flesh went up; and skin spread upon them from above. But (there was) no Spirit / spirit in them. 37:9 And He said to me, Prophecy to the Spirit / spirit, Prophecy, Son of Adam / Humanity! And you shall say to the Spirit / spirit, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: From four Spirits / spirits, winds, come, the Spirit / spirit / wind! And breathe in these the slain ones, and let them live! 37:10 And I prophesied, just as He commanded me. And the Spirit / spirit came on / into them, and they lived! And they stood upon their feet, a great army, exceedingly, exceedingly! 37:11 And He said to me, Son of Adam / Humanity, these bones--they (are) all Israel's House. Look--(they are) saying, Our bones grew dry, and our hope perished. As for us, we are cut off! 37:12 Therefore, prophecy! And you shall say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look, I am opening your graves! And I will raise you up from your graves, My people! And I will bring you to (the) ground / land of Israel! 37:13 And you (plural) shall know that I (am) YHWH, when I open your graves, and when I raise you up from your graves, My people! 37:14 And I will give / place My Spirit upon you (plural), and you will live! And I will cause you to rest upon your ground / land; and you will know that I (am) YHWH, I spoke, and I will do (it)--(it is) a saying of YHWH!

National Reunification (37:15-28)

37:15 And YHWH's word was / came to me saying: 37:16 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, take for yourself one tree / stick, and write upon it For Judah, and for Israel his companions; and take one tree / stick, and write upon it for Joseph, a tree / stick of Ephraim and

all Israel's House, his companions. 37:17 And bring them near, one to one for yourself, for one tree / stick. And they will become ones / united in your hand. 37:18 And just as (the) children of your people speak to you, saying: Will you not declare / explain to us what these (are / mean) to you? 37:19 Say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look—I am taking Joseph's stick which (is) in Ephraim's hand; and Israel's tribes, his companions, and I will give / place them upon him / it, Judah's stick; and I will make them into one stick. And they will be one in My hand! 37:20 And the sticks upon which you write (will be) in your hand, for their eyes. 37:21 And say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look—I am taking Israel's children from between / among the nations where they went; and I will gather them from (all) around, and I will bring them into their ground / land. 37:22 And I will make them into one nation in the land, in Israel's mountains; and one king will belong to all of them for king. And they will not again be two nations; and they will not be divided again, to two kingdoms again. 37:23 And they will not defile themselves again with their idols and with their disgusting things and with all their transgressions; but / and I will save them from / out of all their dwelling-places, in which they sinned. And I will cleanse them, and they will be Mine for a people, and I, I will be theirs for a God! 37:24 And My servant David—king over them, and one shepherd will belong to all of them. And by My judicial decisions they will walk, and My statutes they will keep, and they will do them. 37:25 And they shall dwell upon the land which I gave to My servant, to Jacob, in which your fathers dwelt; and your children and their children until long-distant time; and they shall dwell upon it, and David My servant (will be) a prince for them to long-lasting-time! 37:26 And I will cut / make for them a covenant of peace, a long-lasting covenant will be with them. And I will give (it) to them, and I will multiply them. And I will place My sanctuary in their midst to long-lasting-time! 37:27 And My tent will be over them, and I will be theirs for a God; and they will be Mine for a people. 37:28 And the nations shall know that I (am) YHWH, Who is setting-apart / consecrating Israel, when My set-apart place / sanctuary (is) in their midst for long-lasting-time!

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2014

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 37** “Vision of the Dry Bones and the Symbol of Unity.” He comments that “The prophecy of Israel’s regeneration is illustrated in the most graphic manner by a vision [our ‘vision-story’] concerning the rebirth of the nation. The prophet finds himself in a valley full of scattered dry bones. Under the vivifying effect of the Spirit of God the bones knit together and are covered with sinews, flesh and skin. Ultimately the breath of life is infused into them and they stand up a great

(continued...)

National resurrection (37:1-14)²⁰¹⁴

²⁰¹⁴(...continued)

host. No more inspiring message could have been communicated to the despairing exiles to revive their national will to live...

In the second half of the chapter (**verses 15-28**) Ezekiel by a symbolic act predicts the reunion of the two kingdoms which will be ruled by one king of the house of David. The purified and restored Israel will never again be uprooted from their soil, but they shall dwell therein, they and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and David My servant shall be their prince for ever (**verse 25**).” (P. 246)

Hilmer states that this chapter is “One of Ezekiel’s major visions. Surprisingly no date is given (as in **1:2; 8:1; 40:1**), but the event must have occurred sometime after 586 B.C.E.” (P. 1278)

Darr comments that “**Verses 1-14**, often referred to as the vision of the valley of dry bones, are arguably the most famous passage in all the **Scroll of Ezekiel**...This is the third of Ezzekiel’s four visionary reports (the others appear in **1:1-3:15, 8:1-11:25, and 40:1-48:35**)...

“The image is of a battlefield whose slain never received proper burial, but were left to decay (and be ravaged by birds and beasts) where they fell. Having led Ezekiel around these piles of bones, Yahweh asks him a question: ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ (**verse 3**). The prophet’s response is enigmatic, ‘O Lord God, You know.’ Yahweh then orders Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones (as if they had ears to hear). In response to the prophet’s words, the bones are re-membered, bound by sinews, refleshed, covered with skin, and animated by the spirit...

“Yahweh instructs the prophet to inform his audience that their present situation and consequent despair will be transformed. God will open their graves, bring them forth from those graves, and return them to their homeland...**Verse 14**, like **36:27**, affirms that the Lord will place ‘My Spirit’ within the people and they shall live, reestablished on their own soil.” (Pp. 338-339)

2014

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-14** “The Vision of Israel’s Resurrection.”

This vision-story must have come to Ezekiel following the destruction of Jerusalem, although it is not dated. The valley filled with dry bones symbolizes Jerusalem and Israel's total devastation and destruction that she had experienced in the Assyrian and now the Babylonian invasions and exile. Israel's condition is absolutely hopeless--she is dead, and has been dead for a long time! But new life can enter into the dry bones if the word of YHWH is proclaimed to the hopelessly dead people. Ezekiel sees this very thing happening in a symbolic vision-story--and then he gives the powerfully comforting message that YHWH is going to accomplish just such a marvelous "re-creation" (compare **Genesis 2:7**) for his fallen people, placing his Spirit within them, and restoring them to their land!

(continued...)

²⁰¹⁴(...continued)

Reimer comments that “This vision[-story], Ezekiel’s third in the [**Scroll**] (see **1:1** [we think there are many more ‘vision-stories’ than 3]), is one of the most famous passages in **Ezekiel**...While it stands on its own as a powerful statement of [YHWH’s] power to re-create the community, the context is significant...The promised gift of new heart and spirit (**36:26-27**) left questions hanging (i.e., how can this be? And can it be true for us?). **Chapter 37** addresses these questions...The vision itself is reported in **verses 1-10** with vivid power. The landscape is filled with bleached bones to which Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy. As he does, the bones are restored to life...

“The vision receives a double interpretation in **verses 11-14**. The primary meaning relates directly to the exiles’ despair (**verse 11**) and concludes the vision in **verse 14**. **Verses 12-13** transpose the metaphor to a graveyard and contain one of the few hints of resurrection in the **Old Testament**.” (P. 1559)

Yes! And we add, when you read the **Hebrew Bible**, you will soon begin to see that for YHWH, death is not the final end. The dead go to *sheol*, the grave, the unseen world of the dead, where they continue to live a “shadowy existence.” But YHWH, Who holds death and *sheol* in His mighty hands, can recall the dead from the grave / the unseen world of the dead. Judah and northern Israel have presumably “died,” with their destruction by the Assyrians and now the Babylonians. But death is not the final word. The final Word is spoken by YHWH through His prophet—it is a Word that brings life from the dead, a Word concerning “resurrection”! As Hilmer puts it, “Ezekiel now received a message of hope, where he had previously heard [YHWH’s] word of judgment.” (P. 1278) Oh yes! Ezekiel, the most extreme “prophet of doom” in the **Hebrew Bible**, is now given an unequalled vision and message of hope, vibrant hope in the face of death and despair. The prophet of doom has become the prophet of hope!

Compare the equally powerful and compelling vision-story in **Ezekiel 47**, concerning the “River of Life” that flows from the new temple down into the Dead Sea, bringing renewal of life and fruitfulness to the “deadest place on earth”! What a powerful message of life and hope, in the midst of death! How I hope we can begin to share in Ezekiel’s vision-stories, as we live in the grasp of the pandemic Covid 19, or in the fear of a Third World War as I write these words! Death is not the final word. YHWH God is planning to “swallow up death forever”—see **Isaiah 25**.

Matties comments on **verses 1-14** that “The vision of the bones is set in a valley (see also **Ezekiel 3:22**) to where Ezekiel is driven by the Spirit of [YHWH] (**verse 1**; compare **Ezekiel 1:3; 8:1**). The text includes a vision (**verses 1-10**) and its interpretation (**verses 11-14**). The entire unit responds to the citation of **verse 11** by illustrating the transition from death to life. The impulse for life is YHWH’s Breath / Spirit (**verses 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14**)...

(continued...)

37:1 הִיָּתָה עָלַי יַד־יְהוָה

YHWH's hand was upon me;²⁰¹⁵

וַיּוֹצֵאֵנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה

and He brought me forth by YHWH's Spirit.²⁰¹⁶

וַיְנַיְחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבְּקָעָה

And He gave me rest / set me in the middle of the valley.²⁰¹⁷

²⁰¹⁴(...continued)

“The vision depicts a battlefield, representing dead Israel after the Babylonian invasion (**verses 1-2**). The question to Ezekiel draws a tentative response (**verse 3**). He throws the question back. The question is not about afterlife or resurrection as much as it concerns whether it is possible to return to the world of the living. Even more, it is not about resurrection of the individual, but about whether a dead people can become alive again...

“After responding to instructions (**verses 4-7**), Ezekiel observes corpses with no spirit (Hebrew *ruach*) (**verse 8**). A second command to the breath causes the corpses to live (**verses 9-10**). The two-stage resuscitation may reflect the two phases recounted in **Genesis 2:7**. Or it may reflect the process of prophetic ministry. Just as the prophet has begun the work of gathering the people, so the prophetic word will continue to inaugurate the new life-giving transformation accomplished by [YHWH's] Spirit...

“The citation about death and hopelessness gives way to an interpretation that equates life in the land (*on your own soil*) with life empowered by [YHWH's] Spirit. The revised recognition formula (**verse 14b**) emphasizes the inevitability of the Divine purpose (see also **36:36**).” (P. 1211)

²⁰¹⁵

See **Ezekiel 1:3** for this matter of YHWH's Hand being on Ezekiel.

²⁰¹⁶

Hilmer notes that this phrase, רוּחַ יְהוָה, **ruach YHWH**, “Spirit of YHWH” is “used elsewhere in **Ezekiel** only in **11:5**; usually simply ‘the Spirit,’ as in **8:3; 11:1, 24**.” (P. 1278)

²⁰¹⁷

Rabbi Fisch states that this valley was “probably the same valley where he saw a vision in the earlier days of his career (**Ezekiel 3:22**).” (P. 246)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ πεδίου, “in (the) midst of the plain / field.”

(continued...)

וְהָיָא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת:

And it was full of bones.²⁰¹⁸

37:2 וְהֶעֱבִירָנִי עֲלֵיהֶם סָבִיב | סָבִיב

And He caused me to cross over upon them, around, around.²⁰¹⁹

וְהִנֵּה רַבּוֹת מְאֹד עַל-פְּנֵי הַבְּקָעָה

And look—exceedingly many (bones), upon the valley’s surface.²⁰²⁰

²⁰¹⁷(...continued)

Reimer states that “The vast landscape of dry bones suggests the aftermath of battle, the ultimate outcome of the judgment of **chapter 6**.” (P. 1559)

Eichrodt states that “The valley plain, which has been a place where judgment had to be suffered, now becomes the place where Yahweh triumphs over death and serves as an impressive symbol in which to clothe the great turning-point in Ezekiel’s message.” (P. 507)

²⁰¹⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “There is a discussion in the **Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 92b)** whether the prophet’s account of the dry bones in the valley was an allegory or something which he saw [could not a prophet have seen an allegory?]. With regard to the latter view, several suggestions are made as to the identity of the persons who were resurrected. One opinion is that they were the Ephraimites who miscalculated the duration of the Egyptian bondage, left the country thirty years before the appointed time of the release, and were slain in the wilderness.” (P. 246)

And we note that this kind of speculation, completely unrelated to the biblical text, is typical for Talmudic interpretation of the **Hebrew Bible**. If you think you will become a student of the **Hebrew Bible** by reading the **Babylonian Talmud**, you will be greatly disappointed.

²⁰¹⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Rashi holds that because Ezekiel was debarred from contact with the dead, being a *kohen* (descendant in the male line from Aaron), he was not set down inside the valley among the bones but on the outer edge of the valley. Kimchi disputes this interpretation on the ground that on another occasion (compare **Ezekiel 5:1**) Ezekiel, though a *kohen*, was ordered to shave his head and beard, an act forbidden to a priest; and it is expressly stated in the preceding verse *and set me down in the midst of the valley*. His view is that the matter of contracting ritual defilement did not arise with Ezekiel, since the experience was not actual and only a vision.” (P. 247)

²⁰²⁰

(continued...)

וְהָנָה יְבֹשׁוֹת מְאֹד:

And look–(they were) exceedingly dry!²⁰²¹

37:3 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי

And He said to me,

בֶּן־אָדָם הֲתַחְיֶינָה הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

Son of Adam / Humanity, will these bones live?²⁰²²

וַאֲמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ:

And I said, My Lord YHWH, You knew!²⁰²³

37:4²⁰²⁴

²⁰²⁰(...continued)

Eichrodt comments that “The prophet is led around the plain, and can see nothing but dry bones, which leads him to an overwhelming realization that this is the place where death holds triumph.” (P. 507)

²⁰²¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The flesh had gone completely, depicting how forlorn was the hope of the nation’s revival.” (P. 247)

Hilmer states it was “a great many bones,” symbolizing “the whole community of exiles.” They were “very dry,” meaning they had been “long dead, far beyond the reach of resuscitation.” (P. 1278)

²⁰²²

Reimer states that this question “anticipates the exiles’ own self-perception (**verse 11**): total hopelessness. It also introduces one of the key words in the passage: the verb ‘to live’ appears in **verses 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 14**. Ezekiel’s response leaves the outcome to [YHWH’s] sovereignty.” (P. 1559)

²⁰²³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “It is beyond human power to make the bones live. Only God, if He so will, can do it.” (P. 247)

²⁰²⁴

Reimer comments on **37:4-6** that “[YHWH] commands Ezekiel to do what seems pointless (‘prophesy over these bones,’ **verse 4**), and includes the promise that He will perform the impossible (**verses 5-6**)—bring them back to life. The key to ‘resuscitation’ is stated in **verse 5**: ‘breath’ is the
(continued...)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הַנְּבֵא עַל־הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

And He said to me, Prophecy over these bones!²⁰²⁵

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם הָעֲצָמוֹת הַיְבֵשׁוֹת

And you shall say to them, the bones, the dry ones,

שְׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה:

Hear / listen to YHWH's word!

37:5 כֹּה אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה לְעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to the these bones:

הִנֵּה אֲנִי מְבִיא בְכֶם רוּחַ

Look—I am bringing on you (plural) a Spirit / spirit,²⁰²⁶

²⁰²⁴(...continued)

Hebrew רוּחַ, **ruach**, the same word used for ‘the Spirit’ in **verse 1**, and which appears seven more times in the vision.” (P. 1559)

Eichrodt comments that “Even death does not set a limit to the manifestation of [YHWH’s] power...But this resignation in face of the human aspect of death, which accords with the attitude towards death hitherto current in Israel, is now shot through by the certainty bursting all the limitations of human thought, of a miracle performed by [YHWH] which He, the Lord over life and death, makes known to His messenger by drawing him into the first beginnings of this unheard-of event and giving him a decisive part to play in it...For he is to speak the authoritative prophetic word by means of which the bones are to be once again transformed into living [human beings].” (P. 508)

²⁰²⁵

Hilmer notes that “Ezekiel had previously prophesied to inanimate objects (mountains, **6:2; 36:1**; forests, **20:47**) and now prophesied to lifeless bones and the ‘breath’ (**verse 9**).” (P. 1278)

Darr comments that “Yahweh commands Ezekiel, a spectator to this point, to prophesy to the bones, calling them to attention and demanding that they ‘hear the Word of the Lord.’” (p. 340)

²⁰²⁶

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “I will cause breath to enter into you,” and he comments that “After the bones had been covered with sinews, flesh and skin, God will put breath into them, as stated in the
(continued...)

וְחַיִּיתֶם:

and you (plural) will live!

37:6 וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם גְּדִים

And I will give to you (plural) sinews;

וְהֵעַלְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בָּשָׂר

and I will cause flesh to come up on you;

וְקָרַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם עוֹר

and I will spread skin over you,

וְנָתַתִּי בְּכֶם רוּחַ

and I will give / place spirit / Spirit on you,

וְחַיִּיתֶם

and you will live!²⁰²⁷

וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And you will know that I (am) YHWH!²⁰²⁸

²⁰²⁶(...continued)

next verse. Apparently, the final stage in the process of giving life to the bones is mentioned first to bring out the purpose of the scene.” (P. 247)

Darr comments that the breath or spirit entering the dry bones “will be accomplished through a four-fold process. First, God will lay sinews upon them, binding bone to bone. Second, Yahweh will cause flesh to come upon them. Third, skin will cover the flesh. This sequencing of events reverses the process by which bodies decompose. Finally, God will infuse them with breath (or ‘spirit’). As a consequence of these procedures, , the bones will live; more importantly the Lord’s larger purpose will be accomplished: the revived people will know and acknowledge Who Yahweh is.” (P. 340)

²⁰²⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Perhaps the intention is that the physical and political rehabilitation of the people will be completed by their spiritual revitalization.” (P. 247)

²⁰²⁸

(continued...)

37:7 וּנְבִיאִי כַאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי

And I prophesied, just as I was commanded.

וַיְהִי-קוֹל כְּהִנָּבְאִי

And there was a voice / sound as I prophesied,

וַהֲנִה-רָעַשׁ

and look—a shaking,²⁰²⁹

וַתִּקְרְבוּ עֲצָמוֹת עֶצֶם אֶל-עֲצָמוֹ:

and (the) bones drew near, bone to its bone.²⁰³⁰

37:8²⁰³¹

²⁰²⁸(...continued)

It is a religious fact, that whenever people experience the coming of new life through the prophetic message, filled with the powerful ethical teaching of the prophets, they come to know YHWH. Nothing else can explain the experience, other than the reality of YHWH and His Word. There is nothing like this in the other religions of the ancient Near East, as far as I know.

²⁰²⁹

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "a noise...a commotion." He comments that "The noise (literally 'sound') grew into a commotion by the coming together of the bones to form human frames." (P. 248)

²⁰³⁰

Eichrodt comments on **verses 7-8** that "As in the account of how the first man was made, this leads to the production of complete human forms, but without as yet bringing them to life. [YHWH] must, once again, breathe in the breath of life, before they can really be brought back to life on earth." (P. 508)

Darr states that "Ezekiel reports that he prophesied as commanded—to exceedingly dramatic effect. He hears a sound, a quaking or rattling...The process commences as bones approach each other, bone to its appropriate bone, to constitute skeletons (**verse 7**). Suddenly, they are stitched together by sinews, flesh has come upon them, and they are covered with skin!...The bones have become bodies but, Ezekiel observes, the bodies are lifeless, for there is no breath (*ruach*) within them." (P. 340)

²⁰³¹

Reimer states that "The first phase of prophesying results in the rebuilt bodies, which lack 'breath.' So far this activity only yields corpses—but it is still a necessary first step." (P. 1559)

וְרָאִיתִי וְהִנֵּה-עֲלֵיהֶם גְּדִים וּבֶשֶׂר עָלָה

And I saw, and look–upon them (were) sinews, and flesh went up;²⁰³²

וַיִּקְרַם עֲלֵיהֶם עוֹר מִלְּמַעְלָה

and skin spread upon them from above.

וְרוּחַ אֵין בָּהֶם:

But (there was) no Spirit / spirit in them.²⁰³³

37:9²⁰³⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי הַנְּבִיא אֶל-הַרוּחַ

And He said to me, Prophecy to the Spirit / spirit,

הַנְּבִיא בֶן-אָדָם

Prophecy, Son of Adam / Humanity!²⁰³⁵

2032

Rabbi Fisch comments that “flesh came up...Upon the sinews. ‘Ezekiel prepares the way for the description of the actual coming of the breath with distinct literary art’ (Lofthouse).” (P. 248)

2033

Hilmer notes that “This visionary re-creation of [YHWH’s] people recalls the two-step creation of man in **Genesis 2:7**, where man was first formed from the dust and then received the breath of life.” (P. 1278)

2034

Reimer comments on **37:9-10** that “The second phase of prophesying is addressed to the breath (or wind or spirit / Spirit; Hebrew רוּחַ, **ruach**, which can take all three meanings). The coming of the wind / breath / spirit / Spirit that gives life powerfully alludes to [YHWH’s] creative work in **Genesis 2:7**. [יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, YHWH Elohim / God] creates, and [יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, YHWH Elohim / God] re-creates.” (P. 1559)

2035

Darr comments that “Now, in an act unanticipated in **verses 5-6**, Ezekiel is twice commanded to prophesy again, summoning ‘the breath’ or ‘the spirit’...’Wind’ is yet another meaning of *ruach*, and the four winds (or the winds that blow from the four compass points–i.e., all winds) appear to be the powerful source of the *ruach* Ezekiel must summon.” (P. 340)

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־הַרוּחַ

And you shall say to the Spirit / spirit,

כֹּה־אָמַר | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

מֵאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת בָּאֵי הַרוּחַ

From four Spirits / spirits, winds, come, the Spirit / spirit / wind!²⁰³⁶

וּפָתִי בְהַרוּגִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיְחִיּוּ:

And breathe in these the slain ones, and let them live!²⁰³⁷

37:10 וְהִנְבֵּאתִי כַּאֲשֶׁר צֻוֵּנִי

And I prophesied, just as He commanded me.

וַתָּבוֹא בָהֶם הַרוּחַ וַיְחִיּוּ

And the Spirit / spirit came on / into them, and they lived!

וַיַּעֲמֵדוּ עַל־רַגְלֵיהֶם

And they stood upon their feet,

חֵיל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד־מְאֹד:

a great army, exceedingly, exceedingly!

2036

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "come from the four winds, O breath." He comments that "The breath of life which had departed from the bodies is thought of as having been dispersed in all directions, and is summoned to return from wherever it may be. Or, as Davidson comments: 'The wind from the four corners of the heavens is but a symbol of the universal life-giving Spirit of God.'" (P. 248)

2037

Darr comments that "The verb 'to breathe' in **verse 9** is from the root *naphach*. That same verb appears in **Genesis 2:7** to describe how God, having formed a human body from the soil, breathed into its nostrils the breath of life...Ezekiel prophesies as commanded. The breath or wind enters the corpses and they come alive. More, they stand up on their feet, 'a vast army.'" (Pp. 340-341)

37:11 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי׃

And He said to me,

בֶּן-אָדָם הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה

Son of Adam / Humanity, these bones--

כָּל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה

they (are) all Israel's House.²⁰³⁸

הֲנֵה אֹמְרִים יִבְשׁוּ עֲצָמוֹתַיִנוּ

Look--(they are) saying, Our bones grew dry,

וְאִבְדָּה תְקִוַּתֵּנוּ׃²⁰³⁹

and our hope perished.

נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ׃

As for us, we are cut off!²⁰⁴⁰

2038

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verse 11** that it begins “The interpretation of the vision. These dried bones are a representation of the entire people of Israel, both the northern and southern kingdoms, destroyed and desolate, bereft of vitality.” (P. 248)

Darr states that “At its outset, Yahweh ‘decodes’ the extraordinary events Ezekiel has just witnessed with a simple equation: ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel’...Here, as elsewhere (see, e.g., 36:10), the prophet thinks not just of the fallen kingdom of Judah, but also of Israel’s northern kingdom, destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E.” (P. 341)

2039

Rabbi Fisch’s translation is “our hope is lost.” He explains that this means hope “of ever again being a living nation. The words, with the addition of the negative, were made the theme of Imber’s Hatikvah [‘The Hope’], the Jewish national anthem.” (P. 248)

2040

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The subject is the survivors of the two kingdoms, scattered and in exile. They have lost the semblance of nationhood as fleshless bones can no longer be regarded as human beings.” (P. 248)

(continued...)

²⁰⁴⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch's translation is "we are clean cut off," and he states that "They compared themselves to limbs severed from the body, never again to be united in a living organism." (P. 249)

Hilmer states that this is "A sense of utter despair, to which the vision offers hope." (P. 1278)

Darr states that "The Lord does not deny that the exiles' deadly despair is real. Rather Yahweh describes, in both metaphorical and literal language, what will be done to transform their lives." (P. 341)

2041

Hilmer states that "The imagery shifts from a scattering of bones on a battlefield...to a cemetery with sealed graves." (P. 1278)

Reimer comments on **verses 12-13**, "I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people.' The vision of national revival is transposed into the metaphor of a cemetery, which seems to be related to the experience of exile (**verse 12b**)...By using this language, Ezekiel also contributes to **Old Testament** teaching on resurrection. Although clear statements of bodily life after death are not common in the **Old Testament**, one of the clearest comes in **Daniel 12:2-3**,

1 וּבַעֲתָהּ הִיא יַעֲמֹד מִיְכָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל

And at that time he shall arise, Michael the great prince,

הָעֹמֵד עַל-בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ

the one standing over your people's children.

וְהָיְתָה עֵת צָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִהְיְתָה

And It will be a time of a tight place / distress which has not been / happened

מִזֵּהְיוֹת גּוֹי עַד הָעֵת הַהִיא

from a nation's being until that time.

וּבַעֲתָהּ הִיא יִמָּלֵט עַמֶּךָ

And at that time your people will be delivered / escape,

כָּל-הַנִּמְצָא כָתוּב בַּסֵּפֶר:

everyone that is found written in the scroll.

2 וְרַבִּים מִיֹּשְׁנֵי אֲדָמַת-עָפָר יִקְיִצּוּ

And many from those sleeping (in) ground's dust will awake,

אֵלֶּה לְחַיֵּי עוֹלָם

these to long-lasting lives / life,

וְאֵלֶּה לְחַרְפוֹת

and these to the reproaches,

(continued...)

²⁰⁴¹(...continued)

לְדַרְאוֹן עוֹלָם:

to long-lasting abhorrence.

3 וְהַמְשַׁבְּלִים יִזְהָרוּ כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ

And the ones having understanding will shine like the brightness of the extended sky;

וּמְצַדִּיקֵי הַרְבֵּי

and those causing the many to be righteous,

כְּכּוֹכְבִים לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

like the stars for long-lasting time and perpetuity!

“In addition, there were hints in earlier texts that prepared the way. The influence of a number of these texts is immediately apparent in the **New Testament**, including:

Isaiah 26:19,

יַחֲיוּ מֵתֵיךָ

Your dead ones will live!

נִבְלָתִי יִקְוֶמוּן

My corpse—they will arise!

הִקְיִצּוּ וְרִנְנוּ שְׂכְנֵי עֶפְרָ

Awake! And shout for joy, those dwelling (in the) dust!

כִּי טַל אֹרֶת טֶלֶד

Because (of) dew of lights, your / Your dew!,

וְאֶרֶץ רְפָאִים תִּפֹּל:

And (the) land of departed spirits will fall!

Hosea 6:1-2,

1 לָכוּ וְנָשׁוּבָה אֶל־יְהוָה

Come! And let us return to YHWH!

כִּי הוּא טָרַף וַיִּרְפָּאנוּ

Because He, He tore (us in pieces), and He healed / will heal us;

יָד וַיַּחְבֵּשְׁנוּ:

He struck (us), and He bound / will bind us up!

2 יַחֲיֵנוּ מֵיָמִים

He will revive us / give us life after two days;

בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יִקְמוּנוּ

on the third day He will cause us to stand,

(continued...)

²⁰⁴¹(...continued)

וְנַחֲיָה לְפָנָיו:

and we will live before Him!

Hosea 13:14,

מִיַּד שְׂאוֹל אֶפְדֶּם

From sheol's / (the) / underworld's / grave's grasp I will ransom them!

מִמּוֹת אֲנָאֵלִים

from death I will redeem them!

אֵיךְ דְּבַרְיֶךָ מוֹת

Where (are) your plagues / pestilences, death?

אֵיךְ קִטְבְּךָ שְׂאוֹל

Where (is) your destruction, grave / underworld?

נָחַם יִסְתָּר מֵעֵינָי:

Will compassion be hidden from my eyes?

Darr comments that “**Verse 11** pivots between the preceding vision account (**verses 1-10**) and what follows (**verses 12-14**). At its outset, Yahweh ‘decodes’ the extraordinary events Ezekiel has just witnessed with a simple equation: ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel.’ Here, as elsewhere (see e.g., **36:10**), the prophet thinks not just of the fallen kingdom of Judah, but also of Israel’s northern kingdom, destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. God then calls Ezekiel’s attention to a three-line lament circulating among the people: ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely’...The despondency experienced by Ezekiel’s fellow exiles in the aftermath of Judah’s collapse was expressed by means of a quotation already in **33:10**: ‘Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?’...

“Here, the first line of their lament is ‘Our bones are dried up,’ expressing a sentiment that may well have inspired Ezekiel’s metaphorical vision in **verses 1-10**. Among Israel’s didactic literature, that same sentiment is expressed in the second line of a proverb: ‘A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones’ (**Proverbs 17:22**). The author of **Proverbs 15:30** affirms that ‘a cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones’ (**NIV**). **Proverbs 3:7-8** instructs: ‘Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to you bones’ (**NIV**). Within the **Scroll of Psalms**, ‘bones’ appears in expressions of praise (‘All my bones shall say, O Lord, who is like You?’ (**Psalms 32:10a**)). But they also appear in petitionary prayers. The psalmist of **31:10** laments both emotional and physical distress (‘For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my iniquity, and my bones waste away’, while the author of **Psalms 102:3** sighs, ‘For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace.’

(continued...)

לְכִן הַנְּבִיא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם

Therefore, prophesy! And you shall say to them,²⁰⁴²

כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱדַבְרֵנִי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתֵחַ אֶת-קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם

Look, I am opening your graves!²⁰⁴³

וְהֵעֵלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם מִקְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם עִמִּי

And I will raise you up from your graves, My people!

וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל-אֲדַמַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And I will bring you to (the) ground / land of Israel!

37:13 וַיִּדְעֻם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה

And you (plural) shall know that I (am) YHWH,

²⁰⁴¹(...continued)

“The second line of the exiles’ lament acknowledges an utter absence of hope...while the third line uses the verb meaning ‘to be cut off’ or ‘destroyed’...Striking examples of this usage appear in **Psalm 88:3-5; Isaiah 53:8-9** and **Lamentations 3:54-55**. Hence, the third line of the people’s lament presages [a sign or warning that (something, typically something bad) will happen] the figurative language of **verses 12-13**, which depicts the exiles not as scattered pile of dessicated bones lying on the ground, but as buried corpses which Yahweh brings up from below the ground.” (Pp. 341-342)

²⁰⁴²

Darr states that “Yahweh now commands Ezekiel to utter a public prophecy. In the following oracle...God speaks first of opening the people’s graves and then of bringing them up from those graves. Obviously, the lamenting exiles are no more dead and interred than they are dried bones spread across the plain of the Euphrates. Here, as in **verses 1-10**, the prophet wields the power of metaphor to persuade his audience, and his readers, to accept a new perception of their reality. Finally, Yahweh will bring them back to the land of Israel. The verbs translated ‘bring up’ and ‘bring back’ evoke thoughts of a new exodus.” (P. 342)

²⁰⁴³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Figuratively the *graves* are the foreign countries where they are languishing in captivity.” (P. 249)

בַּפְתַּחִי אֶת־קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם

when I open your graves,

וּבְהֶעָלֹתִי אֹתְכֶם מִקְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם

and when I raise you up from your graves,

עַמִּי:

My people!²⁰⁴⁴

37:14²⁰⁴⁵ וְנָתַתִּי רוּחִי בְכֶם

And I will give / place My Spirit upon you (plural),²⁰⁴⁶

וְחַיִּיתֶם

and you will live!

2044

Rabbi Fisch comments that “When the miracle of Israel’s national revival is performed, the people’s faith in God will be firmly established.” (P. 249)

2045

Reimer comments on **37:14** that “[Here] the fundamental lesson of the vision is repeated: when the Spirit is present, [YHWH’s] people are enabled to ‘live.’ This is the only basis on which hope can be held out to the despairing community.” (P. 1559)

We say, the fundamental lesson of the vision is, “Listen to YHWH’s prophets!” Their message, even though characterized by riddles / enigmas, contains YHWH’s Word—which imparts life and light to those who walk in darkness! Get away from the newspapers and television sets, and read Israel’s prophets! Talk with fellow believers about their message, seek to understand its meaning. Seek YHWH in prayer, asking for His guidance. In time you will begin to understand the power and the beauty of the prophetic message! It will give you and your community life from the dead!

2046

Rabbi Fisch comments that “This is the explanation of the *breath* entering the bones to revive them. Israel’s restoration could not be achieved by human power, but only by the Spirit of God.” (P. 249)

וְהִנַּחֲתִי אֶתְכֶם עַל-אֲדָמַתְכֶם

And I will cause you to rest upon your ground / land,²⁰⁴⁷

וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי-אֲנִי יְהוָה

and you will know that I (am) YHWH,

דְּבַרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי

I spoke, and I will do (it)--

נֹאמֵי-יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of YHWH!²⁰⁴⁸

2047

Hilmer holds that the phrase “I will settle you in your own land” makes it clear that “[YHWH] is not speaking here of a resurrection from the dead but of the national restoration of Israel.” (P. 1279) We disagree. We think the language clearly depicts resurrection from the dead, and then depicts those resurrected returning to their homeland. We think it is not “either / or” but “both / and.” What do you think?

Darr states that “Fox suggests that at the time of Ezekiel, his audience would have regarded the notion of corporeal resurrection as ‘basically absurd.’ They, like he, would have answered the rhetorical questions of **Psalm 88:10-12** with the expected ‘No.’ ‘Do You work wonders for the dead? Do the shades rise up to praise You? Is Your steadfast love declared in the grave, or Your faithfulness in Abaddon [‘place of destruction’]? Are Your wonders known in the darkness, or Your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?’ ‘Ezekiel shows the dead rising,’ Fox avers, ‘but not because he believes that actual corpses will do so. Rather he depicts the extreme case of unpredictable salvation in order to enable the people to expect a salvation that though unlikely is yet less radical, the return of the nation from exile.’ (Fox, ‘The Rhetoric of Ezekiel’s Vision of the Valley of Bones,’ p. 186).” (P. 343)

But how does Fox know that Ezekiel even knew or thought like **Psalm 88**, the most pessimistic **Psalm** in the **Hebrew Bible**? We think it just as likely, or even much more likely, that Ezekiel knew hope-filled passages of the **Hebrew Bible**, like **Psalm 23** or **49** or **73**, or **Isaiah 25-26**, etc. etc. What do you think?

2048

Darr reflects that she wishes “to consider not ‘visions of God,’ but ‘God’s vision.’ What does it mean to look at our world, and at ourselves, through God’s eyes?

(continued...)

²⁰⁴⁸(...continued)

“Ezekiel’s fellow deportees lament that they are (as good as) dead. Their hope has perished; and without hope, they might as well be dead. The future, if one can even speak of such, seems as barren as the past years and present experience of exile. Moreover Ezekiel himself has repeatedly insisted in his oracles of condemnation and judgment, that their suffering is Yahweh’s just punishment for a history of unrelenting rebelliousness and sin. Surely in the light of Judah’s collapse, Jerusalem’s destruction, the exiles’ own situation, and Ezekiel’s past denunciations, good news was, for many, hard to hear, well-nigh impossible to envision.

“When, in a vision, Yahweh brought the prophet out to a broad valley and showed him the mounds, all around, of dessicated and dismembered bones, Ezekiel saw them through his own eyes. His answer to God’s question, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’—can be interpreted in at least two ways, either as an absolute affirmative, or as an uncertain throwing of the ball back into Yahweh’s court. ‘O dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord,’ required of Ezekiel a leap of faith. But then, the bones began rattling, coming together to form skeletons; and suddenly, Ezekiel was no longer looking at them through his own eyes. His vision was lifted to a higher plane; now he was viewing them through God’s eyes. The skeletons were clothed with flesh and skin and animated by breath and they stood up on their feet!

“In recounting his vision, Ezekiel challenges his fellow exiles and generation of his readers to view their circumstances not through their own, limited vision, but through God’s Eyes. Can these bones live? Of course not. But look at them through God’s eyes, and watch bones rushing to their appropriate partners. Watch as ligaments bind them together, flesh blankets them, and skin seals them tightly. Watch as God’s Spirit, which heals hopelessness, infuses them, so that they rise up—a great army testifying to the power of Yahweh. Can corpses be brought forth from graves and become living beings again? Absurd! But look through God’s Eyes, and watch them come up, receive God’s Spirit, and return home. When we raise our vision to look beyond what our mundane eyes can see, we watch the impossible happen through God’s Eyes. ‘I can’t believe my eyes,’ we say when we have witnessed an utterly unanticipated and / or seemingly impossible event take place. But we can believe God’s Eyes and, looking through them, glimpse unimagined reasons to keep on hoping, though the desert be dry and dark, and the promised land far away.

“Ezekiel urges his audience to view their situation through the Eyes of a God for Whom all things are possible. And as I reflect on **Ezekiel 37:1-14**, I am reminded of ‘A Hard Death,’ a poem by Amos Wilder. The poem is too long to cite in full, but I share three lines from it: ‘Accept no mitigation [the action of reducing the severity, seriousness, or painfulness of something], But be instructed at the null point [In physics, the ‘null point’ means the point in a field where the field quantity is zero. The field quantity is zero because the two or more opposing forces at the null point cancel each other], The zero breeds new algebras [fixed quantities that do not change].

“Ezekiel’s fellow exiles were at the null point, as good as dead and without hope. Facile words of assurance could not cut through the despair. But Ezekiel invited them to view reality through God’s
(continued...)

National Reunification (37:15-28)²⁰⁴⁹

²⁰⁴⁸(...continued)

Eyes by means of a Divine vision where the zero breeds new and unanticipated algebras.

“The Judeo-Christian tradition brims with accounts of the zero breeding new algebras. Consider, for example, the crucifixion and death of Jesus. Surely, for Jesus’ friends and family—those who had pinned their hopes on him—the cross must have seemed the starkest of ‘zeros,’ the hardest of deaths not only for Jesus, but also for their hopes. And yet, that instrument of scandalous, disgraceful death becomes for Christian of every age a powerful symbol of hope, of life beyond death, of salvation.

“Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel has observed that Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dried bones bears no date because every generation needs to hear in its own time that these bones can live again. Like the exiles of old, we too can at times feel as good (rather, bad) as dead. We are null and void inside. But if we look through God’s Eyes, we can see broader realities, bases for hope. God can sustain us and fill our barren experiences with lively hope. Is it possible? Absolutely not, disbelievers aver. But look with God’s Vision and watch it happen!” (Pp. 343-345)

2049

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 15-28** “The Reunion of the Two Kingdoms.” He comments that “The prediction of national resurrection, as symbolized in the vision of the dry bones, is followed by the symbolic action of the reunion of the two kingdoms to indicate that unity is an essential factor in preserving the life of the nation.” (P. 249)

This is Ezekiel's last vision-story or symbolic action, done to challenge his hearers' curiosity and interest. He takes two separate sticks of wood, one with the name of Judah written upon it, the other with the name of Ephraim written upon it. He is to join the two sticks into one in his hand. The meaning of this is that YHWH has determined to take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone, and bring them back into their own land, uniting them together as one nation under one king, never to be divided again! YHWH's servant "David" will be king over them, their one shepherd (compare **chapter 34**). They will be YHWH's covenant people, living in peace with the Divine sanctuary in their midst!

"...Like a lighthouse, this [reunited people of YHWH] will throw out the bright beams of the true knowledge of [YHWH] into the heathen world. What he had indicated in **5:5ff.** as the duty originally set before Israel, and which she had failed to carry out, is now to be fulfilled... It is the community founded in [YHWH] and sanctified by [YHWH] which is here described as giving light to the Gentiles." (Eichrodt, p. 515)

Reimer entitles **37:15-28** “The Houses of Israel and Judah.” He comments that “The re-creative activity of **verses 1-14** included homecoming (**verses 12, 14**). Although homecoming remains a minor element in the ‘dry bones’ vision, it provides a link to this oracle (**verses 21, 25-26**)—a symbolic action as in **chapters 4-5** but much simpler than those Ezekiel performed earlier in his ministry...

(continued...)

²⁰⁴⁹(...continued)

“The instructions for this bit of street theater are given in **37:16-17**. The reunion of Israel and Judah is another theme that Ezekiel shared with Jeremiah. Compare:

Jeremiah 30:3,

כִּי הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה

Because look–days (are) coming–(it is) a saying of YHWH–

וְשָׁבְתִי אֶת־שְׁבוּת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה אָמַר יְהוָה

and I will return My people Israel’s and Judah’s captivity, said YHWH;

וְהִשְׁבֹּתִים אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם וַיְרִשׁוּהָ:

and I will cause them to return to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they will possess it!

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (which joins the same themes as **Ezekiel 37:15-28**),

14 הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה

Look–days (are) coming–(it is) a saying of YHWH–

וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתִּי

and I will cause to stand the good word which I spoke,

אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל־בֵּית יְהוּדָה:

to Israel’s house(hold) and to / concerning Judah’s house(hold).

15 בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּבַעֲתָהּ הִיא

In those days, and at that time,

אֶצְמִיחַ לְדָוִד צִמְחַ צְדָקָה

I will cause to sprout for David a sprout of righteousness;

וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה בְּאֶרֶץ:

and he will do justice and righteousness in the land.

16 בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם תִּשָּׁע יְהוּדָה

In those days, Judah will be saved / delivered,

וִירוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכֹּן לְבֶטַח

and Jerusalem will settle down / dwell securely.

זֶה אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא־לָהּ

And this (is) what he will call to it–

יְהוָה | צְדָקְנוּ:

YHWH (is) Our Righteousness!

Jeremiah 50:4,

50:4 בַּיָּמִים הָהֵמָּה וּבַעֲתָהּ הִיא

In those days, and at that time,

(continued...)

37:15 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's Word was / came to me saying:

²⁰⁴⁹(...continued)

יבֹאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל

Israel's sons / children will come,

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

–(it is) a saying of YHWH--

הֵמָּה וּבְנֵי־יְהוּדָה יַחְדָּו

they and Judah's sons / children together,

הֵלֹךְ וּבְכוֹ' יֵלְכוּ

walking and weeping they will come,

וְאֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם יִבְקְשׁוּ:

and they will seek YHWH their God!

“This action prompts questions from the onlookers (**Ezekiel 37:18**) and sets up two oracles: **verses 19-20** announce the reunification of old northern and southern kingdoms; **verses 21-23** give the renewed nation its moral and political shape. **Verses 24-28** elucidate the second oracle. The closing verses, with their allusions to the temple, provide a bridge to **chapters 40-48**.” (P. 1560)

Matties comments on **verses 15-28**: “The second part of the chapter develops **verses 11** and **14**, explaining [YHWH's] intention to unify the *whole house of Israel on your own soil*. A sign-act (**verses 15-19**) is followed by a summary of restoration expectations (**verses 20-28**)...

“In **37:15-19** the two sticks represent unification of the two kingdoms, Israel (Ephraim / Joseph) and Judah, divided since 922 B.C.E...In **37:20-28** the sign-act gives rise to the anticipated salvation (see also **36:25-30**): return to the land (**verse 21**); one king ruling a unified kingdom (**verse 22**); cleansing from defilement making it possible to be [YHWH's] people again (**verse 23**); the reign of a new David, a servant, who will create conditions in which obedience can flourish (**verses 24-25**; see also **34:23-24**); and a new covenant of peace (see also **16:60**; **34:25**; **Genesis 9:16**; **17:7**) along with restored creational blessing (**verse 26**; see also **Genesis 1:28**). Mention of ‘My sanctuary’ and ‘My dwelling place’ (**verses 26b-27**) anticipates a reversal of **chapters 8-11** (see also **20:40**), prepares for the temple vision of **chapters 40-48**, and reflects a restoration of the Divine intention expressed in **Exodus 29:45-46**. A restored Presence is [YHWH's] work alone, through which the nations will acknowledge [YHWH's] sovereignty (**verse 28**).” (P. 1212)

37:16²⁰⁵⁰ וַאֲתָהּ בֶן-אָדָם קַח-לְךָ עֵץ אֶחָד

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, take for yourself one tree / stick,²⁰⁵¹

וּכְתַב עָלָיו לְיְהוּדָה וּלְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (חֲבֵרִיו) [חֲבֵרִיו]

and write upon it²⁰⁵² For Judah, and for Israel his companions,²⁰⁵³

וּלְקַח עֵץ אֶחָד

and take one tree / stick,

וּכְתוֹב עָלָיו לְיוֹסֵף עֵץ אֶפְרַיִם

and write upon it for Joseph, a tree / stick of Ephraim²⁰⁵⁴

2050

Darr comments that “The description of this sign-act is dominated by references to ‘one’ (אֶחָד, *echadh*); the word appears eight times in **verses 16-19** (once in the plural!) and one time each in **verses 22a, 22b and 24a.**” (P. 346)

2051

Hilmer comments that this is “Ezekiel’s last symbolic act involving a material object (compare **4:1, 3, 9; 5:1.**)” (P. 1279)

2052

Hilmer notes that “**Zechariah 11:7** seems to be based upon this passage in **Ezekiel.**” (P. 1279) We say, Perhaps... but this obscure text in **Zechariah** adds little if anything to our understanding of this text in **Ezekiel**, which is very clear in its meaning.

2053

Rabbi Fisch comments that Ezekiel is to take one stick as “an emblem of the royal scepter, to be inscribed with these words [‘For Judah, and for Israel his companions’]. Judah represented the southern kingdom ruled by a dynasty descended from that tribe; his companions refers to the tribe of Benjamin which joined the tribe of Judah.” (Pp. 249-50)

Perhaps...but the phrase “and for Israel his companions” hardly means “the tribe of Benjamin”! We think the two phrases written on the two sticks explain one another. The one is for Judah, and for all the children of Israel united with him; the other is for Northern Israel, and for all the children of Israel united with him. All the people, in both kingdoms, are the children of Israel. And the fact that both of them are made up of the children of Israel, means they both should and can be united as one kingdom.

2054

(continued...)

וְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל (חֲבֵרָיו) [חֲבֵרָיו]:

and all Israel's House, his companions.²⁰⁵⁵

37:17 וְקָרַב אֲתֶם אֶחָד אֶל-אֶחָד לְךָ לְעֵץ אֶחָד

And bring them near, one to one for yourself, for one tree / stick.²⁰⁵⁶

²⁰⁵⁴(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The northern kingdom was named after Ephraim because its first king was Jeroboam, a descendant of that tribe.” (P. 250)

Reimer comments that “Joseph, as father of Ephraim (see **Genesis 48:5, 8-20**), here represents the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah represents the southern kingdom.” (P. 1560) Compare **Psalm 78:67-68**,

67 וַיִּמָּאֵס בְּאֶהֱל יוֹסֵף

And He [YHWH] rejected Joseph's tent;

וּבְשֵׁבֶט אֶפְרַיִם לֹא בָחַר:

and He did not choose Ephraim's tribe.

68 וַיִּבְחַר אֶת־שֵׁבֶט יְהוּדָה

And He chose Judah's tribe,

אֶת־הַר צִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אָהָב:

Mount Zion which He loved.

²⁰⁵⁵

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” חֲבֵרוֹ, “his companion”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” חֲבֵרָיו, “his companions,” changing the original text's singular noun for the plural.

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The reference is to the other nine tribes which, together with Ephraim, constituted the northern kingdom.” (P. 250)

²⁰⁵⁶

Rabbi Fisch's translation has “into one stick,” and he comments that “He was to hold both sticks together end to end to make them appear as one stick.” (P. 250) Hilmer states that “The sticks may have been miraculously joined, or Ezekiel may have joined the sticks together in his hand.” (P. 1279)

We understand the text to mean simply that Ezekiel took and held the two sticks together, side by side in his hand. No need for miracles here!

וְהָיוּ לְאַחַדִּים בְּיָדְךָ:

And they will become ones / united in your hand.²⁰⁵⁷

37:18 וּכְאֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֶיךָ בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ לֵאמֹר

And just as (the) children of your people speak to you, saying:

הֲלוֹא־תִגִּיד לָנוּ מָה־אֵלֶּה לָּךְ:

Will you not declare / explain to us what these (are / mean) to you?²⁰⁵⁸

37:19 דַּבֵּר אֲלֵהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה׃

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

הִנֵּה אֲנִי לֹקֵחַ אֶת־עֵץ יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר בְּיַד־אֶפְרַיִם

Look—I am taking Joseph’s stick which (is) in Ephraim’s hand,

וְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (חֲבֵרָיו) [חֲבֵרָיו]

and Israel’s tribes, his companions,²⁰⁵⁹

וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָם עָלָיו אֶת־עֵץ יְהוּדָה

and I will give / place them upon him / it, Judah’s stick;

2057

The Hebrew is וְהָיוּ לְאַחַדִּים בְּיָדְךָ, “and they will be for the ones in your hand.” We are guessing that this means “united (as one).”

2058

Hilmer comments that “the symbolic act successfully aroused the people’s curiosity (see **12:9; 21:7; 24:19**).” (P. 1279)

2059

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the kethibh, “what is written,” חֲבֵרוֹ, “his companion”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” חֲבֵרָיו “his companions,” changing the original text’s singular noun for the plural.

וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לְעֵץ אֶחָד

and I will make them into one stick.

וְהָיוּ אֶחָד בְּיָדִי:

And they will be one in My hand!²⁰⁶⁰

37:20 וְהָיוּ הָעֵצִים אֲשֶׁר-תִּכְתֹּב עֲלֵיהֶם בַּיָּד לְעֵינֵיהֶם:

And the sticks upon which you write will be in your hand, for their eyes.

37:21²⁰⁶¹

2060

Rabbi Fisch states that “God explains the meaning of the symbolic act. All the tribes which united with Ephraim to form a separate kingdom will be joined with Judah to constitute a single realm.” (P. 250)

Reimer states that “Although the hopes for a reunion were alive at this time, Israel’s deportation by the Assyrians was already 150 years in the past. It may be that the ‘dry bones’ vision in **verses 1-14** allayed doubts as to the plausibility of this hope.” (P. 1560)

Hilmer comments that “[YHWH] would duplicate Ezekiel’s symbolic act by uniting the two kingdoms separated since Solomon’s death (see **1 Kings 12**). For similar prophecies of the reunion of Israel see **33:23, 29; Jeremiah 3:18; 23:5-6; Hosea 1:11; Amos 9:11.**” (P. 1279)

And we ask, If the ten tribes of Northern Israel had disappeared (that is, becoming the “ten lost tribes”), how is such a unification possible, or thinkable? Obviously Ezekiel believes the ten northern tribes, who have been carried into Assyria, still exist, and are not “lost”—making it still possible for all the twelve tribes of Israel to be reunited. Do you agree?

Darr comments that “As Ezekiel has done, God promises, so Yahweh will take the stick of Joseph (here described as ‘in the hand of Ephraim’) and of the tribes associated with it and conjoin it with the stick of Judah in the Divine hand in order that they become one.” (P. 348)

2061

Reimer comments on **37:21-22** that “This renewed national unity requires a secure national home (**verse 21**). The reunion takes concrete political shape under the rule of ‘one king,’ which is not Ezekiel’s usual title for the Messianic figure (compare ‘prince,’ **verse 25**).” (P. 1560)

(continued...)

וְדַבֵּר אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

And say to them,²⁰⁶² In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הִנֵּה אֲנִי לֹקֵחַ אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Look—I am taking Israel’s children

מִבֵּין הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר הִלְכוּ־שָׁם

from between / among the nations where they went;

וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֹתָם מִסָּבִיב

and I will gather them from (all) around,

וְהֵבֵאתִי אוֹתָם אֶל־אֲדָמָתָם:

and I will bring them into their ground / land.²⁰⁶³

37:22²⁰⁶⁴

²⁰⁶¹(...continued)

Hilmer comments that “Only here [twice] and in **verse 24** is the word ‘king’ used of the future ruler. Usually ‘prince’ is used...and in **chapters 45-48** the ruler in the ideal age is always referred to as ‘prince.’” (P. 1279)

2062

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophet was to explain to the people the meaning of the symbol while holding the two sticks in his hand.” (P. 250) We say, Yes. It is another vision-story / vignette, enacted by the prophet as a sort of “street theater.”

2063

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The reunion of the two kingdoms is to be preceded by the gathering together of the dispersed in foreign countries and their return to Zion.” (P. 251)

2064

Darr comments that “With **verse 22**, the significance of stick conjoining is at last spelled out. Having regathered the Israelites from the nations and returned them to their soil, Yahweh will make them ‘one nation’ in the land...an established political entity, a single state on ‘the mountains of Israel’... Never again will Israel be divided into two nations...All of this single nation will, moreover, be ruled by one king...Never again will they be two nations; never again will they be divided into two kingdoms.” (P. 349)

וְעָשִׂיתִי אֶתְכֶם לְגוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ

And I will make them into one nation in the land,

בְּהַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

in / on Israel's mountains;²⁰⁶⁵

וּמֶלֶךְ אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכָל־לְמַלְכָּם

and one king will belong to all of them for king.

וְלֹא (יִהְיֶה־) [יִהְיוּ־] עוֹד לְשְׁנֵי גוֹיִם

And they will not again be²⁰⁶⁶ two nations;

וְלֹא יִחַצְּבוּ עוֹד

and they will not be divided again,

לְשְׁתֵּי מַמְלָכוֹת עוֹד:

to two kingdoms again.

וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד 37:23²⁰⁶⁷

And they will not defile themselves again

2065

For the mountains of Israel, see **Ezekiel 6:2-3; 34:13** and **36:1**.

2066

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” יִהְיֶה־; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” יִהְיוּ־, “they will be”—instead of the singular “it will be.” This is a change of the original Hebrew text.

2067

Darr comments that “**Verse 23** returns to subjects already encountered in **36:25, 29a**. Never again will the people defile themselves with idolatry and other detestable practices, or by any of their former transgressions...for Yahweh will rescue / deliver them from all their apostasies and cleanse them. Then, they will again become Yahweh’s people, and the Lord will be their God. The old rupture in their covenant relationship, brought on by Israel’s failure faithfully to uphold its obligations, will be repaired.” (P. 349)

בְּגִלוּלֵיהֶם וּבְשִׂקּוּצֵיהֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם

with their idols²⁰⁶⁸ 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,²⁰⁶⁹

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!

37:24²⁰⁷⁰

2068

Hilmer comments that idols were “the old and basic offense (see **6:4**.” (P. 1279)

2069

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Although those who were living among pagan nations had adopted their idolatry, God will restore them to their land, but will also purge them of their heathenism.” (P. 251)

Reimer states that “The life of this nation is consistently moral and pure. The people are enabled to live in this way by [YHWH] (‘I will save them’). The covenant formula appears here and in **verse 27**, one mirroring the other.” (P. 1560)

2070

Reimer comments on **37:24-25** that “The assignment of David as shepherd-king recalls **34:23-24**, there in terms of ‘prince’ (**verse 25**), as well as several passages in **Jeremiah** (e.g., **Jeremiah 23:5**;

(continued...)

וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶם

And My servant David—king over them,²⁰⁷¹

²⁰⁷⁰(...continued)

30:9). Divine enabling to live rightly (**Ezekiel 37:23**) does not exclude moral vigilance on the part of the people but enforces it.” (P. 1560)

²⁰⁷¹

Hilmer comments that “My servant David” is as in **Ezekiel 34:23**. The coming Messianic [note: the text does not say ‘messianic,’ but only predicts a coming king] ruler is called David because he would be a descendant of David and would achieve for Israel what David had—except more fully.” (P. 1279)

It is very easy to understand this prediction as that of a coming militant king who will use the force of arms to regain a position of strength among the other nations—as Jews across the centuries have understood it. What do you think? How could Jesus be the fulfillment of such a prediction? Remember the conversation of Jesus with Pilate as told in **John 18:33-38**,

- 33 Εἰσῆλθεν οὖν πάλιν εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον ὁ Πιλάτος
Therefore Pilate entered into the governor’s residence again,
καὶ ἐφώνησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ·
and called (for) the Jesus and said to him,
σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων;
Are you / you are the King of the Jews? / .
- 34 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς·
Jesus answered,
ἀπὸ σεαυτοῦ σὺ τοῦτο λέγεις
Do you say this of your own accord,
ἢ ἄλλοι εἶπόν σοι περὶ ἐμοῦ;
or did others say it to you about me?
- 35 ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Πιλάτος·
The Pilate answered,
μήτι ἐγὼ Ἰουδαῖός εἰμι;
Am I a Jew?
τὸ ἔθνος τὸ σὸν καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς παρέδωκάν σε ἐμοί·
Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me.
τί ἐποίησας;
What have you done?
- 36 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς·
Jesus answered,

(continued...)

²⁰⁷¹(...continued)

ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου·

My kingdom is not of this world.

εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἦν ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ,

If my kingdom were of this world,

οἱ ὑπηρέται οἱ ἐμοὶ ἠγωνίζοντο [ἂν]

my servants would have been fighting [then],

ἵνα μὴ παραδοθῶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις·

that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

νῦν δὲ ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐντεῦθεν.

But then now, my kingdom is not from here [i.e., from the world].

37 εἶπεν οὖν αὐτῷ ὁ Πιλάτος·

Therefore the Pilate said to him,

οὐκοῦν βασιλεὺς εἶ σύ;

So then you are a king?

ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς·

The Jesus answered,

σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεὺς εἰμι.

You are saying that I am a king.

ἐγὼ εἰς τοῦτο γεγέννημαι

For this purpose I have been born

καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον,

and for this I have come into the world,

ἵνα μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·

so that I might bear witness to the truth.

πᾶς ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς.

Everyone who is being out of the truth listens to my voice.

38 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Πιλάτος·

The Pilate says to him,

τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια;

What is truth?

Καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν πάλιν ἐξῆλθεν πρὸς τοὺς Ἰουδαίους

And having said this, again he went out to the Jews

καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς·

and he says to them,

ἐγὼ οὐδεμίαν εὐρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτίαν.

I, I find no case / reasonable charge for capital punishment in him.

(continued...)

וְרֹעֶה אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם

and one shepherd will belong to all of them.²⁰⁷²

²⁰⁷¹(...continued)

What do you think? Is Jesus a “new David,” intent on building up a kingdom like the old David had, dependent on military power? And what kind of kingdom is a “kingdom of truth”? Would you call it “a spiritual kingdom,” or “an intellectual kingdom”? And if it is, what relationship does it have to earthly kingdoms, such as Rome, or the United States of America? Is its job to speak truth or bear witness to the truth to earthly kingdoms? Did Jesus bear witness to the truth to the earthly kingdom of the Jews during his lifetime on earth? Is it one of the roles of the followers of Jesus to testify to the truth to their earthly governments? We say it is. What do you say?

²⁰⁷²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “While *king* signifies a political ruler, *shepherd* denotes a spiritual leader. The Messiah will combine both offices (Malbim).” (P. 251)

Hilmer states that “As in **34:23** the coming ruler is likened to a shepherd who cares for his flock.” (P. 1279)

We think that in the ancient Near-East, kings were commonly referred to as “shepherds,” and of course the ideal king would care for his people like a shepherd cares for his flock. Compare **John 10:14-16**,

16 Ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ ποιμὴν ὁ καλὸς
I am the good shepherd.
καὶ γινώσκω τὰ ἐμὰ
I know the ones that are mine
καὶ γινώσκουσίν με τὰ ἐμά,
and the ones that are mine know me,
15 καθὼς γινώσκει με ὁ πατὴρ
just as the Father knows me,
καὶ γὰρ γινώσκω τὸν πατέρα,
and I, I know the Father;
καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων.
and I lay down my life for the sheep.
16 καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω
And I have other sheep
ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς αὐλῆς ταύτης·
that are not of this fold / sheep-pen.
καὶ κεῖνα δεῖ με ἀγαγεῖν
And those, it is necessary for me to bring also,

(continued...)

וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי יֵלְכוּ

And by My judicial decisions they will walk,

וְחֻקֹּתַי יִשְׁמְרוּ

and My statutes they will keep,

וַעֲשׂוּ אֹתָם:

and they will do them.

37:25 וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ

And they shall dwell upon the land

אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדִּי לְיַעֲקֹב

which I gave to My servant, to Jacob,²⁰⁷³

אֲשֶׁר יָשְׁבוּ־בָהּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם

in which your fathers dwelt;

וּבְנֵיהֶם וּבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם עַד־עוֹלָם

and your children and their children until long-distant time;

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ הַמָּוָה

and they shall dwell upon it,

²⁰⁷²(...continued)

καὶ τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούσουσιν,

and they will listen to my voice.

καὶ γενήσονται μία ποίμνη, εἰς ποιμῆν.

And they will become flock, (with) one shepherd.

²⁰⁷³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Though Abraham and Isaac were also promised the land, only Jacob is mentioned in this connection because he was the ancestor of Israel alone, whereas the other two patriarchs were also the ancestors of Ishmael and Esau respectively, who were not included in the promise.” (Pp. 251-52) Compare **Ezekiel 28:25**.

וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי נָשִׂיא לָהֶם

and David My servant (will be) a prince for them²⁰⁷⁴

לְעוֹלָם:

to long-lasting-time!

37:26 וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שְׁלוֹם

And I will cut / make for them a covenant of peace,²⁰⁷⁵

בְּרִית עוֹלָם יִהְיֶה אִתָּם

a long-lasting covenant will be with them.²⁰⁷⁶

וְנָתַתִּים וְהִרְבִּיתִי אֹתָם

And I will give (it) to them, and I will multiply them.

2074

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The term *prince* in this context is a designation for the Messiah. Ezekiel frequently uses *prince* for the future ideal ruler in the concluding part of his **Scroll** (Malbim).” (P. 252)

2075

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In the coming age Israel will be blessed with harmony both physically and spiritually.” (P. 252) Compare **Ezekiel 34:25**, with its footnote.

2076

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The covenant of peace to be made with Israel will never again be broken. This assurance indicates that the prophecy of the restoration and reunion of the kingdoms relates to the Messianic era.” (P. 252)

Reimer comments that “The ‘covenant of peace’ (see **34:25**) and [long-lasting] covenant (see **16:60**) appeared individually earlier in **Ezekiel**. Here they come together to provide the charter for the renewed nation. The joining of these covenants also combines political life and the natural world, as if people and land are in symbolic unity.” (P. 1560)

Hilmer notes that the phrase “Long-lasting / everlasting covenant” occurs “16 times in the **Old Testament**, referring at times to the Noahic covenant (**Genesis 9:16**), the Abrahamic (**Genesis 17:7, 13, 19**), the Davidic (**2 Samuel 23:5**) and the ‘new’ (**Jeremiah 32:40**). Compare the covenant with Phinehas (**Number 25;12-13**).” (P. 1279)

וּנְתַתִּי אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכְכֶם

And I will place My sanctuary in their midst²⁰⁷⁷

לְעוֹלָם:

to long-lasting-time!

37:27²⁰⁷⁸ וְהָיָה מִשְׁכְּנִי עֲלֵיהֶם

And My tent will be over them,²⁰⁷⁹

וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים

and I will be theirs for a God;

וְהָמָּה יִהְיוּ־לִי לְעָם:

and they will be Mine for a people.

37:28 וַיִּדְעוּ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה

And the nations shall know that I (am) YHWH,

2077

Hilmer comments that YHWH's placing His sanctuary among them would be "as He had done before. This word is further developed in Ezekiel's vision of the future age, in which the rebuilt sanctuary [we say 'new sanctuary'] would have central position (**chapters 40-48**).” (P. 1279)

2078

Reimer comments on **37:27-28** with its Divine statement 'My dwelling-place shall be with them' that "The oracle's conclusion emphasizes the centrality of [YHWH's] presence to the renewed people, the greatest of all blessings by far. The 'dwelling place' (Hebrew *mishkan*) recalls the wilderness tabernacle. The sanctuary (Hebrew *miqdash*; see **verse 26**) points rather to the temple, in particular the renewed temple, which will occupy Ezekiel's attention in **chapter 44**." (P. 1560) We say, in **chapters 40-48**.

2079

Rabbi Fisch comments that "The Divine Presence will abide in the midst of Israel for ever, and the reciprocal relationship between God and His people will be firmly established. In the opinion of Kimchi, the preposition *over*, instead of the usual 'among them,' signifies that the Presence of God would inspire them with awe. He cites the Hebrew idiom, 'fear shall be *over them*, or *upon them*.'" (P. 252)

מִקְדָּשׁ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל

Who is setting-apart / consecrating Israel,

בְּהֵיֹת מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְעוֹלָם:

when My set-apart place / sanctuary (is) in their midst for long-lasting-time!²⁰⁸⁰

2080

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The sanctification of Israel will manifest itself to the world in his national prosperity and spiritual achievement. ‘The ideas in this verse lead naturally over to the episode of Gog’s invasion, the issues of which so remarkably illustrate them’ (Davidson).” (P. 252)

Darr states that Ezekiel “speaks of Israel’s future in terms which must have struck his audience as absurd. Perhaps his fellow exiles could—at the extremes of their imaginations—hope that they might one day return to their homeland and become an independent nation again. But how could they possibly envision a future that included the descendants of those northern Israelites who were driven into exile by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E.? And how could they possibly envision a future so utopian that nothing would go wrong forever?...

“Ezekiel promises that every dream his audience and readers could imagine will come true. Did some shun his optimism? ‘That Ezekiel, always speaking of things that could not possibly happen.’ ‘Good old Ezekiel, trying to corral our hopes with picture-perfect possibilities. Life is not like that, Ezekiel. Reality is hard; we’ve known that for decades now. Why tempt us with “pie in the sky” perfection?’

“But faith is like that. Faith summons us beyond the possible to what might be. In **Ezekiel 37:1-14**, the prophet invited his audience and readers to look through God’s Eyes, such that even the dead might be revived. Here, he does much the same. By means of a sign act, dictated by God, Ezekiel portrays the impossible becoming possible. The scattered tribes of Israel can be reunited. The homeland can be reclaimed. The covenant can be renewed. The nations can be overwhelmed by what Yahweh has accomplished...

“Surely some thought the prophet to be crazy—a madman living in an unreal reality. Others may have caught a glimpse of his reality and perceived in Ezekiel’s description of the future a basis for hope. Where do we stand? We pray, ‘Your Kingdom come, Your will be done.’ But do we really believe in such a possibility? For some, faith is belief in things seen...But for others, faith is belief in things unseen. We, like Jacob at Jabbok (**Genesis 32:22-32**), wrestle with our uncertainties, are wounded, and demand a blessing. We live in the expectation that the impossible is plausible, all evidence to the contrary.” (Pp. 350-351)