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BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both "word-for-word" and "dynamic equivalent" translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens' Analytical Key to the Old Testament in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson's Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of "You Can Understand the Bible" Series is "The Helps for Translators Series" from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled "A Handbook on _____."

III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew's limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

- 1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
- 2. The Dead Sea Scrolls

3. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing) But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D. 900's) see "The Reliability of the Old Testament Text" by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67. The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18th century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15th century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14th century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are:

- 1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
- 2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
- 3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
- 4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
- 5. Maccabean coins and seals
- 6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
- 7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (triconsonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

- 1. number—singular, plural, dual
- 2. gender—masculine and feminine (no neuter)
- 3. mood—indicative, subjunctive, imperative (relation of the action to reality)
- 4. tense (aspect)
 - a. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

"The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure" (p. 36).

- S. R. Driver, A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew, describes it as,
 - "The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense" (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. From Exegesis to Exposition, defines this verbal form as:

"views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context" (p. 86).

- b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.
- J. Wash Watts, A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament, says:

"All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete" (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. From Exegesis to Exposition, says:

"It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on" (p. 89).

- c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
- d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
- e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.

- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
 - 1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
 - 2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
 - 3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
 - 4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
 - 5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
 - 6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
 - 7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal* - *Niphal; Piel* - *Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

Voice or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	Qal	Hiphil	Piel
MIDDLE PASSIVE	Niphal	Hophal	Pual
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	Niphal	Hiphil	Hithpael

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp.354-359.

R. H. Kennett, A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses, has provided a needed warning:

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, 'tense' shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student

should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew's mind.

The name 'tenses' as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew 'tenses' do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term 'state' to both nouns and verbs, 'states' would be a far better designation than 'tenses.' It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form" (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us, "There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars' reconstruction of

semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew" (p. 128).

- C. MOODS (MODES)
 - 1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
 - 2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
 - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
 - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), first person IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
 - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), third person IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
 - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule* These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
 - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu* Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).
- D. *Waw* Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a "supposed" ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.
 - 1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.

- 2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
- 3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the waw before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of waw often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of waw places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the waw's addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The waw PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the waw IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

"As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

- 1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
- 2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence" (p. 103).
- E. INFINITIVE There are two kinds of INFINITIVES
 - 1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are "strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb 'to be' being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone" J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*" (p. 92).
 - INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are "related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship" (p. 91).
 J. Weingreen, A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew, describes the construct state

as:

"When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state" (p. 44).

- F. INTERROGATIVES
 - 1. They always appear first in the sentence.
 - 2. Interpretive significance
 - a. *ha* does not expect a response
 - b. *halo'* the author expects a "yes" answer

NEGATIVES

- 1. They always appear before the words they negate.
- 2. Most common negation is *lo*'.
- 3. The term '*al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
- 4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning "in order that. . .not," is used with INFINITIVES.
- 5. The term 'en is used with PARTICIPLES.
- G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES
 - 1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
 - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
 - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)

- c. something which is possible or ever probable (THIRD CLASS)
- d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
- 2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
 - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by:
 - (1) *'im*
 - (2) *ki* (or '*asher*)
 - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
 - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICIPLE *lu* or *lule*
 - c. the more probably condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
 - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses '*im* as an introductory PARTICLE

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
АКОТ	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version

NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- E. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley East Texas Baptist University June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide

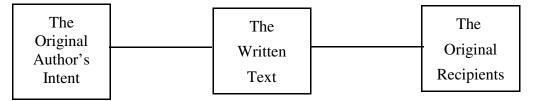
truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.

- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophesies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 - 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 - 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 - 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 - 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 - 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 - 6. the words chosen to present the message
 - 7. parallel passages

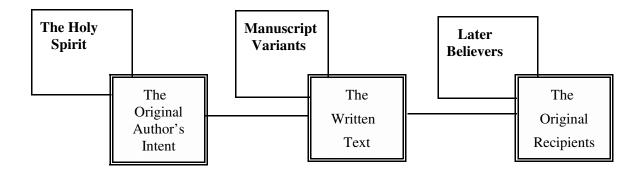
The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

- II. Inappropriate Methods
 - A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
 - B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
 - C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
 - D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/ theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
 - E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

- 1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context
- 2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary work usage
 - c. genre
- 3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages
 - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

- A. The first reading cycle
 - 1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - 2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
 - 3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
 - 4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature
- B. The second reading cycle
 - 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
 - 2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
 - 3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
- C. The third reading cycle
 - 1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
 - 2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events
 - 3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
 - 4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
 - 1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- 2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
- 3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
- 4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- 5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is <u>not</u> inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

"The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible *as God's word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

"No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

VI. This Commentary's Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:

- 1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
- 2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
- 3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
- 4. Today's English Version (TEV)
- 5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 - 1. literary context
 - 2. historical, cultural insights
 - 3. grammatical information
 - 4. word studies
 - 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
 - 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
 - 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 - 3. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 - 4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
 - 1. manuscript variations
 - 2. alternate word meanings
 - 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 - 4. ambiguous texts

Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.

G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. It is named after its chief spokesman, the prophet and priest (from Zadok), Ezekiel.
- B. His name (BDB 306) meant "God strengthens," "may God make strong," or even possibly, "God is strong."

II. CANONIZATION

- A. This book had difficulty being accepted into the Jewish yearly cycles of liturgy because
 - 1. Ezekiel's temple and procedures are different from those of Moses (i.e., compare Num. 28:11 with Ezek. 46:6)
 - 2. the vivid visionary language, especially chapters 1, 8, and 10
 - 3. the glory of YHWH and His Spirit leaves Jerusalem and moves to the exiles in Babylon (i.e., 10:1-2,18-22; 11:22-25)
- B. Rabbi Hananiah ben Hezekiah of the rabbinical school of Shammai (the conservative school), is said to have used 300 jars of oil (i.e., staying up late) in order to reconcile Ezekiel with Moses (cf. *Shabb.* 14b; *Menahuth* 45a; *Hagigah* 13a).
- C. Jewish tradition said that when Elijah returned before the coming of Messiah (cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5), he would solve the contradictions between Ezekiel and Moses (cf. *Menah* 45a).

III. GENRE

- A. This book contains many genres
 - 1. apocalyptic (chaps. 1, 8-10, 38-39, and possibly 40-48)
 - 2. prophecy (chap. 37, esp. vv. 4,9,12)
 - 3. parables (chaps. 17:2; 20:49; 24:3)
 - 4. lament poetry (chaps. 19; 26:17-18; 27:4-9,25-36; 28:2-23; 30:2-19; 31:2-9; 37:2-8,12-15)
 - 5. dramatic symbols (chaps. 4-5,12,24)
 - 6. allegory (chaps. 16,23)
 - 7. visions (chaps. 1-3, 8-11, 40-48)
- B. Ezekiel composed most of his messages in written form. They were not given orally, as were Isaiah's and Jeremiah's. They are very structured.

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. The authorship of the book has never been doubted. The entire book, except for 1:2-3, is written in the FIRST PERSON, SINGULAR (autobiographical, cf. 4:14; 9:8; 11:13). However, much of the FIRST PERSON, SINGULAR is direct speech from YHWH.
- B. Jewish tradition, *Baba Bathra* 15a, said, "the men of the Great Synagogue wrote Ezekiel and the Twelve." As we have seen in other books the word "wrote" means edited or compiled.

- C. Josephus' *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 10.5.1, said that Ezekiel wrote two books. This may refer to the characteristic structure of many of the Hebrew prophets because their books easily divide into two halves (note Isaiah 1-39 & 40-66; Daniel 1-6 & 7-12; Zechariah 1-8 & 9-14 and Ezekiel 1-32 & 33-48). In the first part the historical setting is the author's day. In the second part of the book the setting is the future. This may be the reason why Josephus stated he wrote two books.
- D. It is written from Babylon (cf. 1:1; 3:11,15; 11:24), but Ezekiel is taken to Jerusalem several times in visions (cf. 8:3; 11:1; 40-48).
- E. All we know about the prophet Ezekiel is from his book. He is not mentioned anywhere else in the OT.
 - 1. he was born about 623 B.C. in Jerusalem
 - 2. he was a priest of the line of Zadok, 1:3
 - 3. he was married but had no children, 24:16-18
 - 4. he was taken captive when he was twenty-five years old in 597 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar II along with King Jehoiachin, 1:1; 33:21; I Kgs. 24:14-16
 - 5. he was exiled to a Jewish settlement not far from the city of Nippur on a man-made irrigation canal, Chebar, 1:1,3, called Tel-Abib, 3:15
 - 6. he preached at least twenty-two years, 1:1-2; 29:17
 - 7. he was a strong but compassionate prophet, 9:8; 11:13; 24:16
- F. His priestly training deeply affects his visions. He is particularly interested in the evil of the current temple (8-11) and the purity of the new temple (40-48).

V. DATE

- A. He was born about 623 B.C. in Jerusalem.
- B. Ezekiel is one of the seventh century prophets: Jeremiah, Daniel, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah.
- C. During the period of the rise of Neo-Babylonian power under Nabopolassar and the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II, God spoke through these prophets in different localities.
 - 1. Daniel was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 B.C. He was exiled to the palace in Babylon, Dan. 1:1.
 - 2. Ezekiel was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. along with 8,000 to 10,000 craftsmen, soldiers, and King Jehoiachin and his family, II Kgs. 24:14-16. They were settled in a refugee camp by the Canal Chebar.
 - 3. Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem until the death of Gedaliah (cf. 582 B.C.).
- D. Ezekiel dates his prophecies (which influenced Haggai [cf. 1:1,15; 2:1,10,20] and Zechariah [1:1; 7:1]). These dates show that the book is not in chronological order. However, if you isolate the oracles against the surrounding nations (i.e., chapters 25-32) the rest are in a chronological sequence.

		<u>Day</u>	<u>Month</u>	Years of Jehoiachin's exile
1.	a vision, 1:1	5	4	30 (?)
2.	a vision, 1:2	5	4	5 (593 b.C.)
3.	a word from YHWH	12	4	5 (593 b.c.)

4.	a vision, 8:1	5	6	6 (592 b.c.)
5.	elder's questions, 20:1	10	5	7 (591 b.c.)
6.	siege of Jerusalem began,			
	24:1 (cf. II Kgs. 25:1)	10	10	9 (588 b.c.)
7.	oracle against Tyre, 26:1	1	?	11 (586 в.с.)
8.	oracle against Egypt, 29:1	12	10	10 (587 b.c.)
9.	oracle against Egypt, 29:17	1	1	27 (571 в.с.)
10.	oracle against Egypt, 30:20	7	1	11 (586 в.с.)
11.	oracle against Egypt, 31:1	1	3	11 (586 в.с.)
12.	oracle against Egypt, 32:1	1	12	12 (585 b.C.)
13.	oracle against Egypt, 32:17	15	(12 from 32:1)	12 (585 b.C.)
14.	fall of Jerusalem, 33:21	5	10	12 (585 b.C.)
15.	a vision of new Jerusalem,			
	40:1	10	1	25 (573 в.с.)

VI. HISTORICAL SETTING

See Appendix Three

VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. Ezekiel's prophecies can be divided into two radically different messages.
 - 1. Before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. his sermons were characterized by a call for repentance (i.e., 14:6,18) because of the coming judgment of God (chaps. 1-32).
 - 2. After the fall of Jerusalem his sermons (for the most part) turned to hope, restoration, and forgiveness (33-48).
- B. Brief Outline
 - 1. His call to ministry, 1-3
 - 2. The sinfulness of the Covenant People and the fall of Jerusalem, 4-24
 - 3. God's judgment on the surrounding nations, 25-32
 - 4. God's promise of restoration of His people, city, and Temple, 33-37
 - 5. Apocalyptic invasion from the north, 38-39
 - 6. A vision of the restored Temple, 40-48

VIII. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. The Jews were suffering because of their own sin, not YHWH's weakness.
- B. Covenant faith has both a corporate and individual aspect. The New Covenant mentioned in Jer. 31:31-34 is basically individual, as are chapters 18 and 33. The New Covenant was also guaranteed by God's action (cf. chapters 36-37). This is the same balance between God's sovereignty and humanity's covenental responsibilities expressed in the NT.
- C. God is faithful to the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and David (II Samuel 7). The Covenant will be reestablished (cf. chapters 37, 40-48). Exile was an act of love (i.e., disciplining parent).
- D. The problems for the Jews are not over, chapters 38-39 (cf. Daniel 7-12). There is an ongoing struggle between the people of God and fallen humanity (Psalm 2).

EZEKIEL 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
			Ezekiel's First Vision of God (1:1-7:27)	
The Vision of Four Figures	Ezekiel's Vision of God	Superscription	God's Throne	Introduction
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3
		The Call of Ezekiel (1:1-3:27)		
		The Throne Chariot Vision		The Vision of the Chariot of Yahweh
1:4-14	1:4-14	1:4-14	1:4-9	1:4-12
			1:10-12	
			1:13-14	1:13-14
1:15-21	1:15-21	1:15-21	1:15-21	1:15-25
1:22-25	1:22-25	1:22-25	1:22-25	
1:26-28	1:26-28	1:26-28a	1:26-28a	1:26
				1:27-28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

^{*}Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 1-3 are a literary unit which functions in several major ways.
 - 1. Ezekiel's initial vision of YHWH in Babylon
 - 2. Ezekiel's sense of YHWH's call to the prophetic ministry
 - 3. The images and visions continue in chapter 8
 - 4. The holiness of God, symbolized in the portable throne chariot (the imagery of the Ark and a chariot are linked in I Chr. 28:18) and its surprising appearance apart from the temple in Jerusalem
- B. YHWH still wants a holy people to reflect His person to the nations! This revelatory people will be those taken into exile, not the ones left in Judah.

Israelites have always put too much emphasis on Jerusalem, as Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 shows.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

¹Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth *day* of the fourth month, while I was by the river Chebar among the exiles, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. ²(On the fifth of the month in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile, ³the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and there the hand of the LORD came upon him.)

1:1 "in the thirtieth year" This seems to relate to the age of the prophet (because vv. 2-3 are a parenthesis, possibly by an editor, to clear up any misunderstanding of v. 1. The two dates [i.e., v. 1 and vv. 2-3] refer to the same time). This theory goes back to Origen. Thirty years of age was the time that priests began their ministry in the Temple (cf. Num. 4:3, 23, 30, 39, 43, 47). However, they began their training five years earlier (cf. Num. 8:23-25). Their length of service was to age fifty. This fits the length of Ezekiel's prophetic ministry (cf. 40:1). Ezekiel understood this vision as his call to the prophetic ministry.

• "on the fifth *day* of the fourth month" See Introduction, Date, D.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CALENDARS				
Canaanite (I Kgs. 6:1,37-38; 8:2)	Sumerian - Babylonian (Nippur Calendar)	Hebrew (Gezer Calendar)	Modern Equivalents	
Abib ("greenheads" of barley)	Nisanu	Nisan	March - April	
Zin (spring brilliance)	Ayaru	Iyyar	April - May	
	Simanu	Sivan	May - June	
	Du-uzu	Tammuz	June - July	
	Abu	Ab	July - August	
	Ululu	Elul	Aug Sept.	
Ethanim (permanent water sources)	Teshritu	Tishri	Sept Oct.	
Bul (rains on produce)	Arah-samna	Marcheshvan	Oct Nov.	
	Kislimu	Chislev	Nov Dec.	
	Tebitu	Tebeth	Dec Jan.	
	Shabatu	Shebat	Jan Feb.	
	Adaru	Adar	Feb March	

• "by the river Chebar" We know from archeological discoveries that this was a man-made irrigation canal from the Euphrates River, making a loop from near the city of Babylon, through the city of Nippur (cf. Ps. 137:1) and on to Erech (in all, about 60 miles).

• "among the exiles" Ezekiel's' specific ministry was to the Jews who were in exile, primarily those of Judea, but also the Northern Ten Tribes. Jeremiah's ministry was to those Jews left in Palestine, while Daniel's ministry was to the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar in the capital of Babylon. See Introduction, Date, C.

• "the heavens were opened" The VERB (BDB 834, KB 986, *Niphal* PERFECT) denotes YHWH revealing Himself to Ezekiel. This phrase is parallel to "the windows of heaven were opened."

- 1. for judgment, Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Isa. 24:18
 - a. flood of water
 - b. no water
- 2. for agricultural blessings, II Kgs. 7:2,19; Mal. 3:10
- 3. here, for revelatory vision

In ancient cosmology reality is described as

- 1. heaven above (sun and moon, stars, God's throne, i.e., the three heavens)
- 2. heaven above the earth (as a dome with windows)
- 3. the earth (dwelling place of physical life)
- 4. *Sheol* (the place of the dead) below

■ "I saw visions of God" There is a paradox in the Bible between those who claim to have seen God and the specific statements that no one can see God and live. Apparently it is possible to see visions of deity, but not to gaze intently on His form and especially His face (compare Exod. 24:11,12; Num. 12:8; Isaiah 6; Revelation 4 with Exod. 33: 20-23; John 1:18; 6:46; I Tim. 6:16; I John 4:12).

The word "vision" (BDB 909 I) is first used in Gen. 46:2, where it is parallel with "in visions of the night," which may imply

- 1. a dream (cf. Gen. 20:3,6; 31:10,11,24; 37:6,8,9,10.20)
- 2. a special trance

In Num. 12:6 it relates to God's call to prophets (cf. I Sam. 3:15; Dan. 10:16; Ezek. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2). It is inferior to His face-to-face revelations to Moses (cf. Num. 12:8; Deut. 34:10). Still, it was divine revelation. These words are not Ezekiel's words, nor or the visions his imagination. YHWH is revealing His personal presence with the exiles!

It is also interesting that the very same Hebrew letters also mean "sight" or "appearance." This meaning is far more common than "vision." A few times the two meanings, "vision" and "appearance," overlap (i.e., Ezek. 8:4; 11:24; 43:3[thrice]; Dan. 8:16,27; 9:23; 10:1).

1:2 All of the book of Ezekiel is in the FIRST PERSON except 1:2,3, which seem to be a later scribal or editorial addition to explain the date of v. 1. Note the parenthesis in NASB.

It must be admitted that moderns do not know when, who, or how the OT books were produced. It is a faith assumption and biblical claim that they are uniquely from God (inspiration) through selected human instruments (authors, editors, and scribes).

Verse 2 reflects II Kgs. 24:14, which makes the date either 592 or 593 B.C. Ezekiel was exiled when he was 25 years old, but did not begin his ministry until five years later.

• "King Jehoiachin" See Appendix: Kings of the Divided Kingdom."

1:3 "the word of the LORD came" This is the repeated formula (cf. 1:3; 3:16; 6:1; 7:1) denoting divine revelation. It remains uncertain how the revelation came.

- 1. verbal
- 2. imagery
- 3. main truths and Ezekiel chooses the genre

But what is sure, it was YHWH's revelation, not Ezekiel's.

• "to Ezekiel the priest" Ezekiel was from the priestly line of Zadok (cf. II Sam. 8:17; 15:24-36), while Jeremiah was from the priestly line of Abiathar (cf. I Sam. 22:20-23; II Sam. 8:17; 15:24-36), who was exiled to Anathoth by Solomon (cf. I Kgs. 2:26-27,35).

• "son of Buzi" This person (BDB 100) is mentioned only here in the OT. It seems to be related to the Hebrew root meaning

- 1. despise (BDB 100 I)
- 2. contempt (BDB 100 II)
- 3. a proper name (uncertain meaning)
 - a. second son of Nahor, Abrahams' brother, Gen. 22:21, possibly related to a tribe of Arabia mentioned in Jer. 25:23
 - b. a person of the tribe of Gad, I Chr. 5:14

The very fact that nothing else is known about Buzi implies that he was well known to the original recipients.

■ "the Chaldeans" Herodotus (450 B.C.), *Hist. I*, uses this term to refer to an ethnic group (cf. II Kgs. 24:1-4; Dan. 5:30), as well as a priestly class (cf. Dan. 2:2; 3:8; 4:7; 5:7,11), whose usage goes back to Cyrus II. Even before this, Assyrian records used the term (BDB 505) in an ethnic sense (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1113). Also read the good discussion of the possibility of a confusion of two similar terms (i.e., Kal-du vs. Kasdu) in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 14-15 or Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, series 1.

Because Gen. 11:28 states that Ur of the Chaldeans was the home of Terah and his family, Chaldeans may have been ethnically Semitic (i.e., same racial group as the Hebrews).

■ "the hand of the LORD came upon him" This is an anthropomorphic phrase used often for God's presence, power, and inspiration (cf. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1; I Kgs. 18:46; II Kgs. 3:15; Isa. 8:11; Jer. 15:17). See Special Topic: Hand at 37:1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
 - A. Physical body parts
 - 1. eyes Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 - 2. hands Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 - 3. arm Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
 - 4. ears Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 - 5. face Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
 - 6. finger Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 - 7. voice Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 - 8. feet Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 - 9. human form Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 - 10. the angel of the Lord Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - B. Physical actions
 - 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 - 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
 - 3. closing the door of Noah's ark Gen. 7:16
 - 4. smelling sacrifices Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
 - 5. coming down Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
 - 6. burying Moses Deut. 34:6
 - C. Human emotions (some examples)
 - 1. regret/repent Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
 - 2. anger Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
 - 3. jealousy Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
 - 4. loath/abhor Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19
 - D. Family terms (some examples)
 - 1. Father
 - a. of Israel Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
 - b. of the king II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7

- c. metaphors of fatherly action Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
- 2. Parent Hosea 11:1-4
- 3. Mother Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13
- 4. Young faithful lover Hosea 1-3
- II. Reasons for the use of this type of language
 - A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
 - B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover).
 - C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
 - D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-14

⁴As I looked, behold, a storm wind was coming from the north, a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. ⁵Within it there were figures resembling four living beings. And this was their appearance: they had human form, ⁶Each of them had four faces and four wings. ⁷Their legs were straight and their feet were like a calf's hoof, and they gleamed like burnished bronze. ⁸Under their wings on their four sides *were* human hands. As for the faces and wings of the four of them, ⁹their wings touched one another; their *faces* did not turn when they moved, each went straight forward. ¹⁰As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle. ¹¹Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each had two touching another *being*, and two covering their bodies. ¹²And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go, without turning as they went. ¹³In the midst of the living beings there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches darting back and forth among the living beings. The fire was bright, and lightning was flashing from the fire. ¹⁴And the living beings ran to and fro like bolts of lightning.

1:4 "a storm wind coming from the north" God is sometimes identified with a storm (i.e., Sinai, cf. Exodus 19). The north is often used in the OT for impending judgment (i.e., Jer. 1:12-14; 4:6; 6:1). But here it is a symbol of acceptance and renewal. YHWH Himself is coming to be with the exiles (in Isa. 14:13 a northern mountain is God's dwelling).

■ "a great cloud with fire flashing fourth continually" This would have reminded Ezekiel and his readers of Exod. 19:9,16,18, the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant when YHWH visits Mt. Sinai/Horeb and gives the Ten Words to Moses (and, the rabbis say, the oral law).

The literal phrase is "and fire taking hold of itself." This exact phrase is also found in Exod. 9:24 (i.e., BDB 77 and BDB 542, KB 534, *Hithpael* PARTICIPLE).

All of the prophets refer to the Mosaic Covenant. They judge Israel in light of her disobedience (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29) to its commands. Ezekiel will contrast

1. the current temple practices (cf. chapters 8-11) with a future temple (cf. chapters 40-48)

2. current shepherds (i.e., leaders) with a future leader (cf. chapter 33)

His readers had no other categories to relate to a restoration by YHWH than this one! The New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27-38) and its focus on individual faith and faithfulness (i.e., chapters 18, 33) would be a shocking revelation which would have seemed to depreciate both the Mosaic Covenant and Israelite corporality!

• "something like glowing metal" Throughout the book of Ezekiel his visions are described in terms "like" (BDB 198) or "similar to." It is obvious that Ezekiel is doing the best that he can in describing that which is not normative.

Notice the different phrases used to describe this vision.

- 1. bright light or brightness (BDB 618 I) around it
- 2. glowing or gleaming metal in the midst of it
 - a. "amber" LXX, NKJV, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA
 - b. "bronze" TEV
 - c. "brass" NEB
 - d. "electrum" (mixture of gold and silver) LXX, Vulgate

The word's origin and meaning are uncertain (found only in 1:4,27; 8:2), but context denotes a brilliant, glowing substance (cf. 1:4,27; 8:2 only). YHWH is often seen as a light phenomenon (cf. Exod. 13:21; II Sam. 22:13; Ps. 89:15; 90:8; Ezek. 1:4,27; 8:2; Rev. 22:5).

•"fire"

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

- A. Positive
 - 1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
 - 2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
 - 3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
 - 4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
 - 5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
 - 6. God's leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
 - 7. God's empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
- B. Negative
 - 1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
 - 2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
 - 3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
 - 4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
 - 5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)
- C. God's anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors
 - 1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
 - 2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
 - 3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
 - 4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

1:5 "the four living beings" These throne creatures are first described in Exod. 25:18-22; 37:7-9. It is uncertain if there are two Cherubim (i.e., two on the mercy seat of the ark) or four (two at each end of the ark and two on the lid). This same confusion can be seen in Solomon's Temple (cf. I Kgs. 6:23-28; II Chr. 3:10-14). Jewish tradition has four and is the origin of the four of this vision.

I have always held to only two (on the lid) from Exodus with Solomon expanding the size of everything in the tabernacle when he built the Temple in Jerusalem (cf. I Kings 6). By the way, Ezekiel felt the same freedom (or revelation) to expand and change the temple further in chapters 40-48.

Just a note on the term "cherub" (BDB 500). Several possible sources.

- 1. Akkadian, lesser spiritual being
 - a. advisor to the gods
 - b. protector of the faithful (from Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, vol. 2, p. 319)
- 2. Assyrian
 - a. "to be gracious"
 - b. ADJECTIVE, "great" or "mighty"
 - c. similar to the name of the winged bulls on the gates of Nineveh
- 3. BDB mentions possibility of "thunder cloud" (Ps. 18:11)

They are described again in chapter 10. They are the origin of the living creatures of Rev. 4:6-8. Their description changes from time to time, but it is obvious that they are the same group of angelic creatures (i.e., throne guardians). Ezekiel recognizes them as Cherubim in chapter 10, but not here in chapter 1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHERUBIM

- A. One of several types of angelic beings. This particular type guarded sacred areas (cf. Exod. 25:18-22; I Kgs. 8:6-7).
- B. Etymology is uncertain.
 - 1. from Akkadian "intercessor" or "mediator" between God and man
 - 2. from Hebrew this is a possible word play, "chariot" and "cherub" (cf. Ezek. 1:10)
 - 3. some say it means "brilliant appearance"
- C. Physical form—This has been difficult to ascertain because of varying descriptions within the Bible and varying animal-human forms found in the Ancient Near East. Some link them to
 - 1. winged bull of Mesopotamia
 - 2. winged eagle-lions of Egypt called "griffins"
 - 3. winged creatures on Hiram's (King of Tyre) throne
 - 4. Sphinx of Egypt and similar forms found in King Ahab's ivory palace in Samaria
- D. Physical Description
 - 1. The form Cherubim is linked with the Seraphim of Isaiah 6.
 - 2. Examples of different forms
 - a. Number of faces
 - (1) two-Ezek. 41:18
 - (2) four-Ezek. 1:6, 10; 10:14,16,21,22
 - (3) one–Rev. 4:7

- b. Number of wings
 - (1) two-I Kgs. 6:24
 - (2) four-Ezek. 1:6,11; 2:23; 10:7,8-21
 - (3) six (like Seraphim of Isa. 6:2) Rev. 4:8
- 3. Other features
 - a. human hands-Ezek. 1:8; 10:8,21
 - b. legs
 - (1) Straight, no knee–Ezek. 1:7
 - (2) Calves' feet-Ezek. 1:7
- 4. Flavius Josephus admits that no one knew what Cherubim looked like (cf. *Antiquities of the Jews*, VIII.3.3).
- E. Places and purposes found in the Bible
 - 1. Guardian of the tree of life, Gen. 3:24 (possibly used metaphorically of Satan in Ezek. 28:14,16)
 - 2. Guardian of the Tabernacle
 - a. over the Ark of the Covenant; Exod. 25:18-20; Num. 7:89; I Sam. 4:4
 - b. depicted on veil and curtains; Exod. 26:1,31; 36:8,35
 - 3. Guardian of Solomon's Temple
 - a. two large carved cherubs in Holy of Holies; I Kgs. 6:23-28; 8:6-7; II Chr. 3:10-14; 5:7-9
 - b. on walls of inner shrine; I Kgs. 6:29,35; II Chron. 3:7
 - c. on panels that were associated with the several lavers; I Kgs. 7:27-39
 - 4. Guardian of Ezekiel's Temple
 - a. carved on walls and doors; Ezek. 41:18-20, 25
 - 5. Connected with transportation of deity
 - a. possibly a metaphor for wind; II Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1
 - b. guardian of God's throne; Ps.80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16
 - c. guardian of God's portable throne chariot; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22; I Chr. 28:18
 - 6. Herod's Temple
 - a. painted on walls (i.e., guardian, cf. Talmud "Yoma" 54a)
 - 7. Revelation throne scene (i.e., guardian, cf. Revelation 4-5)

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols
 - 1. One God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 - 2. Six human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 - 3. Seven divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation
 - a. seven candlesticks, 1:13,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6

- e. seven lamps, 4:5
- f. seven seals, 5:1,5
- g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
- h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
- i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
- j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
- k. seven thousand, 11:13
- l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
- m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
- n. seven bowls, 15:7
- o. seven kings, 17:10
- p. seven vials, 21:9
- 4. Ten completeness
 - a. use in Gospels
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
 - b. use in Revelation
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
 - c. multiples of 10 in Revelation
 - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x10x10x10, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) $1,000 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$, cf. 20:2,3,6
- 5. Twelve human organization
 - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
 - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
 - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
 - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 6. Forty number for time
 - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7;
 8:2

- b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
- c. Note (by means of a concordance) how many times the number "forty" appears in time designation in the Bible!
- 7. Seventy round number for people
 - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22

B. Good references

- 1. John J. Davis, Biblical Numerology
- 2. D. Brent Sandy, Plowshares and Pruning Hooks

1:6 -10 See Special Topic above.

1:7

1	
NASB	"feet were like a calf's hoof"
NKJV, N	NRSV "the soles of their feet <i>were</i> like the soles of calves' feet"
TEV	"they had hoofs like those of a bull"
NJB	"they had hooves like calves"
This	s is the only place this detail is mentioned. The Hebrew term "feet" is really "soles" (BDB 496

#3).

Remember this is imagery! It is a vision! Accuracy and detail are <u>not</u> the issue, but the overall effect. God is coming and the heavenly court with Him!

• "burnished bronze" This metallic imagery (BDB 887 and 638 I) describes heavenly beings.

- 1. here the Cherubim
- 2. the powerful angel in Dan. 10:6
- 3. the glorified Jesus in Rev. 1:15; 2:18

1:8 "wings" There are several angelic creatures who are said to have wings.

- 1. the Cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant, Exod. 25:20; 37:9; I Kgs. 6:24,27; 8:6,7; II Chr. 3:11-13; 5:7,8
- 2. the Seraphim of Isaiah's heavenly throne room vision, Isa. 6:2
- 3. the living creatures of Ezekiel's vision (i.e., called Cherubim in 10:1), Ezek. 1:8,24
- 4. the female angels of Zechariah's vision, Zech. 5:9
- 5. even used metaphorically of YHWH's special care (i.e., female bird, cf. Matt. 23:37), Ruth 2:12; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4 (also see Gen. 1:2; Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11)

- 6. imagery of John in Revelation (cf. 4:8; 9:9 from Ezekiel)
- 7. regular angels do not have wings in OT or NT

1:9 "their wings touched one another, their faces did not turn as they moved" This is a vision of the mobile throne chariot of God. This imagery may go back to David's Psalm of praise in II Sam. 22:11. The living creature's wings and the wheels formed a hollow square with burning coals in its midst and over it all a blue ice-crystal canopy (cf. v. 22, in Rev. 4:6 it is the floor).

1:10 "all four had the face of the lion" The two Cherubim (BDB 500) are described in Exod. 25:20 as having one face that faced the middle of the Mercy Seat. In Revelation 4 each one had a separate face similar to the description here. The early church fathers tried to ascribe these different faces to the different gospel writers: Matthew, the lion; Mark, the ox; Luke, the man; John, the eagle. It is best to stay somewhat neutral on specific interpretations of these visions. Obviously it refers to some type of angelic order, which is very closely identified with "the" Throne of God!

1:11 "and two covering their bodies" Without trying to read too much into this phrase, there are several ways to take it.

- 1. sense of modesty (cf. Isa. 6:2, where "feet" may be a euphemism referring to the male sexual organs, cf. Ruth 3; I Sam. 24:3)
- 2. sense of preparation for action
- 3. in Isaiah 6 and Rev. 4:8 they had six wings.

1:12 "the spirit" This verse must be interpreted in light of vv. 20 and 21, which seem to imply the spirit of the four living creatures themselves (cf. v. 21c). However, it must be admitted that the language of v. 12 implies a separate personal will (i.e., God in the metaphor of His Spirit [i.e., Gen. 1:2]).

1:13 This verse tries to describe something that is occurring in the midst of the box formed by the Cherubim wings, the wheels, and the crystal covering. Whatever it was, it was below the throne (cf. v. 26). Notice the parallelism, which attempts to describe the indescribable.

- 1. burning coals of fire
- 2. torches darting back and forth among the living beings
- 3. bright fire
- 4. lightening flashing from it

One wonders how v. 14 is related to v. 13. The Peshitta, NKJV, and REB translate v. 13 as if it describes the living creatures themselves and not the coals of fire (LXX, NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB). The answer to this confusion is rectified by JPSOA, which puts a full stop after the first phrase of v. 13, thereby relating it to the living creatures of v. 12.

I assume v. 13 does not describe the Cherubim, but is a sacrificial image going back to the tabernacle. It is uncertain if it refers to (1) coals on the altar of incense, which were used to make good smelling smoke which veiled the view of YHWH, who dwelt between the wings of the Cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Exod. 30:1-10; 37:5-28) or (2) the sacrificial altar (cf. Exod. 27:1-8; 38:1-7) at the front of the entrance to the tabernacle/temple where sacrifices (cf. Leviticus 1-7) were brought and given to the priests. These sacrifices allowed sinful humans to approach a holy God!

• "lightning" I take this opportunity to discuss the accommodation used by God to communicate His true revelation to a particular historical/geographical people. There are two items that especially fit into an Ancient Near Eastern setting (i.e., multi-faced animals, spiritual guardians, and lightning). God chooses imagery that His people have seen in other religions, but now they apply to YHWH.

- 1. The three heavens described by Babylonians as made of gem stones (NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 164).
- 2. Lightning is a common weapon in the hand of Canaanite gods, which are usually depicted on mountains (cf. v. 4, "north," cf. Isa. 14:13).
- 3. The multi-faced angelic guardians are also common in Mesopotamia (and Egypt), where they guard the entrance of temples and palaces (cf. IVP, *Bible Background Commentary*, p. 690).

YHWH often takes the names of foreign deities to describe Himself.

- 1. King of Kings
- 2. winged disk (sun)
- 3. God of heaven

In this way He shows that He is the only true God. The only universal God of creation and redemption. We must be careful as moderns

- 1. not to make the images literal
- 2. not to assume cultural borrowing has theological significance of reality to the false gods of the nations
- 3. that biblical images are just that—images attempting to convey spiritual reality! History is theologically affected and theology is historically/culturally affected. This is how human communication works. We move from the concrete to the figurative and from the known to the new reality!

1:14 The question again has to do with the referent. It is

- 1. the living creatures, Peshitta, NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB
- 2. the central fire, JPSOA

It seems to me that vv. 5-12,14 describe the living creatures, but v. 13 describes a central fire (cf. 10:2,7; Isa. 6:6; Rev. 8:5). But the issue cannot be definitively solved. The MT (JPSOA) implies that it all refers to the living creatures.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:15-21

¹⁵Now as I looked at the living beings, behold, there was one wheel on the earth beside the living beings, for *each of* the four of them. ¹⁶The appearance of the wheels and their workmanship *was* like sparkling beryl, and all four of them had the same form, their appearance and workmanship *being* as if one wheel were within another. ¹⁷Whenever they moved, they moved in any of their four directions without turning as they moved. ¹⁸As for their rims they were lofty and awesome, and the rims of all four of them were full of eyes round about. ¹⁹Whenever the living beings moved, the wheels moved with them. And whenever the living beings rose from the earth, the wheels rose *also*. ²⁰Wherever the spirit was about to go, they would go in that direction. And the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels. ²¹Whenever those rose from the earth, the wheels rose close beside them; for the spirit of the living beings *was* in the wheels.

1:15-19 "full of eyes round about" These wheels were beside the angelic beings (v. 15). There seems to be a wheel within a wheel at right angles to each other (v. 16), which symbolized immediate mobility (cf. v. 17; 10:11). The eyes around each wheel symbolizes the omniscience of God (cf. 10:12). From Babylonian literature "eyes" on wheels referred to jewels (cf. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 691). In v. 19 the chariot throne rises from the earth that shows it is not earthbound (cf. 10:16-17).

Ezekiel tries to describe the wheels.

- 1. eight wheels
- 2. two beside each cherub

- 3. made of beryl (BDB 1076, cf. 10:9; Exod. 28:30; 39:13; Song of Songs 5:14; Dan. 10:6)
- 4. full of eyes (from 10:12 and Rev. 4:6,8 there were also eyes on the living creatures)
- 5. all of them were alike (v. 16)
- The God of creation and covenant is not limited to the Promised Land! He goes and knows!

In Daniel's vision of heaven the Ancient of Days (i.e., YHWH) is also connected to fiery wheels (cf. Dan. 7:9) and angels (Dan. 7:10).

1:20-21 See note at v. 12. The word "spirit" (BDB 924) is being used in two senses.

- 1. God (i.e., in metaphor of "spirit," vv. 12,20)
- 2. the living creatures (v. 21)

"Spirit," in this context, is a way of expressing life/personality/being.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:22-25

²²Now over the heads of the living beings *there was* something like an expanse, like the awesome gleam of crystal, spread out over their heads. ²³Under the expanse their wings *were stretched out* straight, one toward the other; each one also had two wings covering its body on the one side and on the other. ²⁴I also heard the sound of their wings like the sound of abundant waters as they went, like the voice of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army camp; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings. ²⁵And there came a voice from above the expanse that was over their heads; whenever they stood still, they dropped their wings.

1:22 "something like an expanse" The Hebrew word means "that which is beat out" and usually refers to a concave, shallow dish (BDB 956). Here it seems to be a reference to the dome of the earth or the sky (i.e., "over the heads," cf. Dan. 12:3; Exod. 24:10). Its color was crystal, like ice (BDB 901), which implies a crystal blueness (see Rev. 4:6 for a foundation of the same color).

• "awesome" This term (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) is used in several ways (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 532).

- 1. fear during the wilderness wanderings of Israel, Deut. 1:19; 8:15
- 2. YHWH's redemptive acts during this exodus period, Deut. 10:21; II Sam. 7:23; I Chr. 17:21; Ps. 66:3,5; 106:22
- 3. YHWH's name, Deut. 28:58; Ps. 99:3; 119:9; Mal. 1:4
- 4. YHWH's presence, Jdgs. 13:6; Job 37:22; Isa. 64:3; Ezek. 1:22
- 5. eschatological redemptive acts, Joel 2:11,31; Mal. 4:5

1:24 This verse is an attempt to describe the sound of the chariot moving (i.e., the living creatures' wings)

- 1. like the sound of abundant waters (cf. 43:2)
- 2. like the voice (i.e., thunder, BDB 876) of the Almighty (cf. Rev. 1:15; 14:2; 19:6) or angel (cf. Dan. 10:6)
- 3. like a sound of tumult (BDB 242), like the sound of an army camp (i.e., "host," BDB 334, cf. Jer. 11:16)

The implication is that the voice of God directs their movement (cf. v. 25).

• "the Almighty" This is the term *Shaddai* (BDB 994, cf. Num. 24:4,16; Ruth 1:20,21; Ps. 91:1; Isa. 13:6; Ezek. 1:24; Joel 1:15). Usually it is combined with *El* (the general name for deity in the Ancient Near East, probably from the root "to be strong"). *Shaddai's* etymology is uncertain. Some scholars suggest

1. the all-sufficient One

- 2. the self-sufficient One
- 3. the compassionate One (same consonants in Arabic mean a woman's breast, BDB 994)
- 4. rain-giver
- 5. high (mountain) God
- 6. mighty or violent

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-28

²⁶Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, *was* a figure with the appearance of a man. ²⁷Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and *there was* a radiance around Him. ²⁸As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so *was* the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

1:26 "a throne" It is described

- 1. above the expanse (i.e., crystal dome, cf. 10:1)
- 2. color was "sapphire" or "lapis lazuli" (BDB 705, cf. Exod. 24:10; 28:18; 39:11; Job 28:6,16; Isa. 54:11). Notice Ezekiel's descriptions of colors come from his training as a priest. These were the colors of the tabernacle and priestly garments.
- 3. usually YHWH's throne is in heaven (cf. Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Isa. 66:1) and the earth is His footstool (i.e., between the wings of the Cherubim over the Ark).

• "high up was a figure" The throne's occupant is described.

- 1. appearance as a man, v. 26
- 2. his loins and above like glowing metal, v. 27 (cf. 1:4; 8:2)
- 3. below loins like fire, v. 27
- 4. radiance around him (like a rainbow), v. 28
- 5. like the glory of YHWH, v. 28

As in Isaiah 6, YHWH is depicted as a human person, but He Himself (i.e., face) cannot be described! He is the awesome, holy one, who only accommodates His glorious appearance to humans (cf. Exod. 24:10-11; Dan. 7:9). However, Israelites usually believed that to see God meant death (cf. Exod. 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). Often this seeing of God is related to "the Angel of the LORD."

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

It is obvious that deity manifests Himself physically in human form in the OT. The question for Trinitarians becomes which person of the Trinity fulfills this role. Since God the Father (YHWH) and His Spirit are consistently non-corporal, it seems possible to suggest that these human manifestations are the pre-incarnate Messiah.

To demonstrate the difficulties one faces in trying to identify a theophany from an angelic encounter the following list is illustrative.

- 1. the angel of the Lord as an angel
 - a. Gen. 24:7,40
 - b. Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34
 - c. Num. 22:22
 - d. Jdgs. 5:23

- e. II Sam. 24:16
- f. I Chr. 21:15-30
- g. Zech. 1:12-13
- 2. the angel of the Lord as theophany
 - a. Gen. 16:7-13; 18:2,16,17-21,22-33; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exod. 3:2,4; 14:19 (13:21)
 - c. Jdgs. 2:15; 6:22-24; 13:3-23
 - d. Hosea 12:3-4
 - e. Zech. 3:1-5

1:27 "brightness" This term (BDB 6) is often used to describe God and His presence (theopany).

- 1. by David, II Sam. 22:13
- 2. to an eschatological Israel, Isa. 4:5
- 3. of YHWH's portable throne chariot, Ezek. 1:4,13
- 4. of YHWH Himself, Ezek. 1:27,28; 3:23; 10:4

1:28 "the rainbow" This seems to represent the grace and mercy of God as expressed in the sign to Noah (cf. Gen. 9:13-17). God's purpose of a covenant people will not change, as He does not change!

■ "the glory of the LORD" This (BDB 458) is the theme of Ezekiel (19 times, mostly in chapters 10 and 43). This is also a major theme in Isaiah (38 times). In many ways it is theologically parallel to "holy" (BDB 872) as in Exod. 29:43; Lev. 10:3 and especially Isa. 6:3. These terms stand for YHWH's uniqueness and majesty! His personal presence is overwhelming and awe inspiring (*El Shaddai*). He is the God of creation (*Elohim*) and redemption (YHWH). He is the ever-living, only-living source of life. He is always present with Israel!

SPE	CCIAL TOPIC: CHARACTER	ISTI	CS OF ISRAEL'S GOD
1.	Compassionate (BDB 933) -		xod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Jeh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
2.	Gracious (BDB 337) -		xod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; bel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
3.	Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRU	JCT E	BDB 60)
	-	E	xod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
4.	Abounding in steadfast love (BI	DB 9 1	2 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338)
	-	E	xod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
5.	Faithful (BDB 54) -	E	xod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15
6.	Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) -	Neh. 9:17
7.	Did not forsake them (BDB 736	I) -	Neh. 9:17,31
8.	Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB	688,	Niphal PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) - Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
9.	The great God (BDB 42, 152)	-	Neh. 1:5; 9:32
10.	Great and terrible (BDB 152, 43	1) -	Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32
11.	Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136	6) -	Neh. 1:5; 9:32
12.	Steadfast love (BDB 338	-	Neh. 1:5; 9:32

I "I fell on my face" This is often what occurs in the presence of the divine or His representative (cf. 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; 44:4; Gen. 17:3,17; Dan. 2:46; 8:17; Rev. 1:17).

Paul House, Old Testament Theology, p. 329, compares this with

- 1. Moses' reluctance to serve (cf. Exodus 3-4)
- 2. Isaiah's sense of personal and corporate sinfulness (cf. Isa. 6:5)
- 3. Jeremiah's personal depreciation (cf. Jer. 1:6-10)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What exactly did Ezekiel see and why?
- 2. Why is the description of the Cherubim different from that in chapter 10?
- 3. How does chapter 10 relate to chapter 1?

EZEKIEL 2

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Prophet's Call	Ezekiel Sent to Rebellious Israel (1:28b-3:15)	The Five Commissions (1:28b-3:15)	God Calls Ezekiel to Be a Prophet (1:28b-3:15)	The Vision of the Scroll (2:1-3:15)
	1:28b-2:5	1:28b-2:7	1:28b-2:5	
2:1-7				2:1-8
	2:6-8		2:6-7	
2:8-10		2:8-10	2:8-10	
	2:9-10			2:9-10

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-7

¹Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!" ²As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard *Him* speaking to me. ³Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. ⁴I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' ⁵As for them, whether they listen or not — for they are a rebellious house —they will know that a prophet has been among them. ⁶And you, son of man, neither fear them nor fear their words, though thistles and thorns are with you and you sit on scorpions; neither

fear their words nor be dismayed at their presence, for they are a rebellious house. ⁷But you shall speak My words to them whether they listen or not, for they are rebellious.''

2:1 "Son of man" This is literally "*ben-Adam*" (BDB 119 CONSTRUCT, BDB 9). This is used often in Ezekiel as a way of referring to Ezekiel as a human being (93 times, cf. Ps. 8:4). In Ezekiel it is the way God addresses Ezekiel. This same phrase is found in Job and Psalms. In Dan. 7:13 this term takes on divine characteristics as one likened to "a son of man" coming before the Ancient of Days (i.e., deity) riding on the clouds of heaven. Daniel 7:13 is the background for Jesus' use of this term for himself, which combines humanity and deity (i.e., I John 4:1-3). The phrase had no nationalistic or militaristic rabbinical overtones.

■ God addresses Ezekiel.

- 1. "stand on your feet" (BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
- 2. "I may speak with you" (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERFECT, but used in a COHORTATIVE sense [cf. 2:2])

Notice the personal (cf. 1:26) God of glory (cf. 1:28) addresses Ezekiel! This is one of the major themes of this book (the personal presence of YHWH in Babylon). Also note a mere human, a fallen human, part of a rebellious people, is addressed face to face, standing before the holy presence. This says something of the dignity of humanity made in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

2:2 "the Spirit entered me" It is not certain if we are speaking of the Holy Spirit or, more probably, simply a personal metaphor parallel to "the hand of the LORD" from 1:3 (cf. 3:14; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). A non-human life force (*ruah*, BDB 924) entered me (i.e., divine, angel, cf. Ezek. 37:9,14).

Ezekiel's call to the prophetic ministry is signaled in several characteristic phrases.

- 1. "spirit/Spirit entered me" (cf. I Chr. 15:1; 20:14; 24:20; Isa. 61:1; Joel 2:28)
- 2. "I am sending you" (cf. vv. 3, 4)
- 3. "Thus says the Lord GOD"
- 4. "do not fear them"
- 5. "you shall speak My words to them"
- 6. "eat the scroll," 2:8-3:3
- 7. "go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them," 3:4,11
- 8. "spirit/Spirit lifted me up" (cf. 8:3; 11:1,24)

For a good brief discussion of *ruah* (BDB 924) see Norman Siraith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, pp. 143-158.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity. The term "trinity," first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

1. the Gospels

- a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
- b. John 14:26
- 2. Acts Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- 3. Paul
 - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14

- d. Gal. 4:4-6
- e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
- f. I Thess. 1:2-5
- g. II Thess. 2:13
- h. Titus 3:4-6
- 4. Peter I Pet. 1:2
- 5. Jude vv. 20-21
- It is hinted at in the OT
- 1. Use of plurals for God
 - a. Name *Elohim* is plural, but when used of God it always has a SINGULAR VERB
 - b. "Us" in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
 - c. "One" in the *Shema* (BDB 1033) of Deut. 6:4 is plural (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)
- 2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of deity
 - a. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 - b. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 - c. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - d. Zechariah 3:1-2
- 3. God and Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- 4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (Adon) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- 5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
- 6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

- 1. Tertullian subordinated the Son to the Father
- 2. Origen subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
- 3. Arius denied deity to the Son and Spirit
- 4. Monarchianism believed in a successive manifestation of God
- The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material
- 1. The full deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea
- 2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
- 3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine's work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

2:3 "I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people" The phrase "sons of Israel" in the book of Ezekiel is sometimes used for the Northern Ten Tribes, but most often it is used for all of the Jewish people.

The term "rebellious" is a *Qal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 597, KB 632). It is followed by a *Qal* PERFECT of the same VERB (lit., rebels who rebel). Their personal and continual rebellion is directed against the personal God (i.e., "Me"). This is what their fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers also did. To this terrible characterization is added another term for rebellion ("transgressed," BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* PERFECT). This is defined a "a rebellious nation" (cf. Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6,7,13; 10:16; 31:27; II Chr. 30:8; Acts 7:51).

The term "people" (BDB 156) is the term *goim*, which is often used contemptuously by the Israelites of the pagan Gentile nations. It is PLURAL, which probably refers to Israel and Judah. This was purposeful sarcasm.

2:4

NASB, TEV, NJB, REB "stubborn" NKJV, NRSV "impudent" JPSOA "brazen of face"

This was originally an agricultural phrase referring to unruly oxen. Literally it means "hard of neck" or "stiff-necked" (BDB 904, cf. Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deuteronomy 6,7,13,24,27; 10:16; 31:27).

NASB, NJB,	
REB	"obstinate"
NKJV, NRSV	"stubborn"
TEV	"do not respect me"

The second term (BDB 305 CONSTRUCT 524, lit. "strong of heart"), in this context, implies a hardness toward God and His revealed will (cf. 3:7).

■ "Lord GOD" This is "*adonai*-YHWH," which is a characteristic title of God in the book of Ezekiel. It comes from the term *Adon*, which is the Hebrew term for "master-lord" (BDB 10) and the Covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB "to be" (BDB 217).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. El

- 1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, "to be strong" or "to be powerful" (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
- 2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
- 3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* ("God who sees" or "God who reveals Himself"), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* ("God Almighty" or "God the All Compassion" or "God of the mountain"), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God's promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. El-Berit ("God of the Covenant"), Jdgs. 9:46
- 4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, "I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father
 - c. Shaddai in Gen. 49:25
 - d. "jealousy" in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. "mercy" in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; "faithful" in Deut. 7:9; 32:4

- f. "great and awesome" in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
- g. "knowledge" in I Sam. 2:3
- h. "my strong refuge" in II Sam. 22:33
- i. "my avenger" in II Sam. 22:48
- j. "holy one" in Isa. 5:16
- k. "might" in Isa. 10:21
- 1. "my salvation" in Isa. 12:2
- m. "great and powerful" in Jer. 32:18
- n. "retribution" in Jer. 51:56
- 5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)
- B. Elyon
 - 1. Its basic meaning is "high," "exalted," or "lifted up" (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
 - 2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* Gen. 14:22; II am. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for "High God") in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
 - 3. It is often used by non Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke's Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. Elohim (PLURAL), Eloah (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry
 - 1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
 - 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham's family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
 - 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
 - The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6)
 - 5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*) is exactly like Psalm 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.

- 6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
- 7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22

- b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
- c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
- 8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called "the plural of majesty," where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, which God meets with in heaven and that does His biding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods and from the NT Jesus is God the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).
- D. YHWH
 - 1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

- 2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said "*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD" (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El–Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
 - a. from an Arabic root, "to show fervent love"
 - b. from an Arabic root "to blow" (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root "to speak"
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning "the One who sustains," or "the One who establishes"
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form "the One who is," or "the One who is present" (in future sense, "the One who will be")
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form "the One who causes to be"
 - g. from the Hebrew root "to live" (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning "the ever-living, onlyliving One"
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, "I shall continue to be what I used to be" or "I shall continue to be what I have always been" (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form
 - (1) Yah (e.g., Hallelu yah)
 - (2) Yahu (names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) Yo (names, e.g., Joel)

3.	afrai subs (my	ter Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were d to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they tituted the Hebrew term for "owner," "master," "husband," "lord"— <i>adon</i> or <i>adonai</i> lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced d." This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4.	char	with <i>El</i> , YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain acteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible bination terms, here are some.
	a.	YHWH - Yireh (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
	b.	YHWH - Rophekha (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
	c.	YHWH - Nissi (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
	d.	YHWH - Meqaddishkem (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
	e.	YHWH - Shalom (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
	f.	YHWH - Sabbaoth (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
	g.	YHWH - Ro'I (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1

- h. YHWH Sidqenu (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
- i. YHWH Shammah (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

2:5 "a rebellious house" This descriptive phrase (BDB 108 construct BDB 598) is used often in Ezekiel (cf. 2:5,6,8; 3:9,26,27; 12:2[twice],3,9,25; 17:12; 24:3). Moses also saw this propensity in Israel (cf. Deut. 31:27, also note Neh. 9:17), as did Samuel (cf. I Sam. 15:23) and Isaiah (cf. Isa. 30:9).

God seems to have chosen a people who were notoriously stiff-necked and rebellious for the theological purpose of demonstrating His long-suffering covenant faithfulness, even amidst their inability to faithful obedience! God did not choose the family of Abraham because of anything special in them, but to reveal His own character (i.e., Deut. 7:7,8; Isaiah 48; Jer. 7:24-26; 11:7-8). The OT is not primarily about Israel, but about YHWH!

• "whether they listen or not" This is a recurrent theme (cf. 2:5,7; 3:11,27). This is parallel to Isa. 6:9-10.

• "they will know that a prophet has been among them" God chose to reveal His future actions in order that

- 1. the people are responsible for their rebellious acts (cf. vv. 6-7)
- 2. He is revealed as the only true God (i.e., predictive prophecy, cf. Jer. 28:9; Ezek. 33:33)

2:6 There is a series of commands from YHWH to Ezekiel.

- 1. "neither fear," BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense and repeated three times
- 2. "nor be dismayed," BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Josh. 10:25; Jer. 17:18

The reason Ezekiel is not to be afraid is YHWH's presence and promises (i.e., Deut. 31:8; Josh. 1:9; I Chr. 22:11-13; 28:20).

God uses several metaphors to describe the reaction to Ezekiel's words by the rebellious house.

- 1. thistles (BDB 709, lit. "rebel")
- 2. thorns (BDB 699)
- 3. scorpions (KB 875, cf. Deut. 8:15)

Numbers 1 and 2 are found only in Ezekiel. Israel did not want to hear from God. They wanted the covenant blessings, but not the covenant requirements and consequences!

Just a note to those of us who minister to God's people—they will not always appreciate or advocate our ministry (i.e., Moses and Israel). We must remember who we serve and why! It is possible that the thorns, thistles, and scorpions (possibly another thorny bush) refer to a hedge of God's protection around the prophet and his God-given message.

2:7 "whether they listen or not" This is repeated from v. 5 and again in 3:11. The same concept is repeated in 3:27. God will reveal Himself to His covenant people, even if they refuse to hear (cf. Isa. 6:9-13). This is because

- 1. He has an eternal redemptive purpose that involves Israel
- 2. of His love for the Patriarchs
- 3. of His character, bound to His promises

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:8-10

⁸"Now you, son of man, listen to what I am speaking to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you." ⁹Then I looked, and behold, a hand was extended to me; and lo, a scroll *was* in it. ¹⁰When He spread it out before me, it was written on the front and back, and written on it were lamentations, mourning and woe.

2:8 "do not be rebellious like the rebellious house" Like v. 6, v. 8 has a series of commands from YHWH to Ezekiel.

- 1. "listen," BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* JUSSIVE
- 2. "do not be rebellious," BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
- 3. "open your mouth," BDB 822, KB 953, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 4. "eat," BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Ezekiel's obedience constitutes his acceptance of God's call to be His spokesperson. It is analogous to (1) the Seraph touching Isaiah's lips with a coal from the heavenly altar (i.e., Isa. 6:6-7); (2) Jeremiah's eating a scroll (cf. Jer. 15:16); and (3) John's vision in which an angel gives him a scroll to eat (cf. Rev. 10:8-11). Obviously eating the scroll is a metaphor for receiving God's message and passing it on.

2:9 "a hand was extended to me" The text is ambiguous as to whose hand was extended and from where. It could be from the throne itself, but more likely, an attending angel, as in Isaiah.

"a scroll" This would refer to a piece of papyrus rolled up. It symbolized the message of God (cf. Isa. 29:11-12; 30:8; Jer. 25:13; 30:2; 36:2,4; Dan. 12:4).

Notice how the message of judgment on this scroll is described.

- 1. lamentations (BDB 884)
- 2. mourning (BDB 211)
- 3. woe (BDB 223)

2:10 "It was written on the front and the back" It was highly unusual for either papyrus (i.e., hard to write against the grain) or parchment (i.e., part of message can be worn off) to be written on both sides. This seems to reflect God's entire message of judgment (cf. Rev. 5:1). Once Jerusalem is destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army, Ezekiel begins to proclaim restoration in YHWH's name (i.e., chapters 36-37, 40-48).

EZEKIEL 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Ezekiel's Commission	Ezekiel Sent to Rebellious Israel (1:28b-3:15)	The Five Commissions (1:28b-3:27)	God Calls Ezekiel To Be A Prophet (1:28-3:15)	The Vision of the Scroll (2:1-3:15)
3:1-3	3:1-3	3:1-3	3:1	3:1-3
			3:2-3	
3:4-11	3:4-11	3:4-11	3:4-9	3:4-9
			3:10-11	3:10-11
3:12-15	3:12-15	3:12-15	3:12-15	3:12-15
	Ezekiel As Watchman		The Lord Appoints Ezekiel As A Lookout	The Prophet As Watchman
3:16-21	3:16-21	3:16-21	3:16-19	3:16-21
			3:20-21	
			Ezekiel Will Be Unable to Talk	Ezekiel Is Struck Dumb
3:22-27	3:22-27	3:22-27	3:22	3:22-24a
			3:23-27	
				3:24b-27

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-3

¹Then He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." ²So I opened my mouth, and He fed me this scroll. ³He said to me, "Son of man, feed your stomach and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving you." Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey in my mouth.

3:1 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

Chapter 3 closes out the literary unit of 1-3, which is Ezekiel's call to the prophetic ministry. This call involves YHWH addressing him in several commands.

- 1. "eat," v. 1(twice), BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. "go" (lit. "walk"), vv. 1,4,11, BDB 229, KB 241, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "speak," v. 1, BDB 180, KB 210 *Piel* IMPERATIVE (*Piel* PERFECT in 3:4)
- 4. "feed" (lit. "cause to eat," cf. v. 2), v. 3, BDB 37, KB 46, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE (*Qal* stem in 3:2,3; 4:9,10[twice],12,13,14,16; 5:10[twice])
- 5. "come," vv. 4,11,24, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 6. "take into your heart," v. 10, BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 7. "listen closely," v. 10, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 8. "get up," v. 22, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 9. "go out," v. 22, BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 10. "shut yourself up in your house," v. 24, BDB 688, KB 742, Niphal IMPERATIVE
- 11. "let him hear," v. 27, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT
- 12. "let him refuse" (lit. "cease"), v. 27, BDB 292, KB 292, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

3:3 "Then I ate it, and it was sweet as honey to my mouth" This conveys the thought that God's word is significant and meaningful even when it is a message of judgment (cf. Ps. 19:10; 119:103; Jer. 15:16; Rev. 10:9, 10). That the holy creator God would be involved with sinful humanity is amazing! God's judgment is really a sign of His parental discipline (cf. Heb. 12:5-13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:4-11

⁴Then He said to me, "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. ⁵For you are not being sent to a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language, *but* to the house of Israel, ⁶nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; ⁷yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate. ⁸Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads. ⁹Like emery harder than flint I have made your forehead. Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them, though they are a rebellious house." ¹⁰Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, take into your heart all My words which I will speak to you and listen closely. ¹¹Go to the exiles, to the sons of your people, and speak to them and tell them, whether they listen or not, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'''

3:4, 5 "the house of Israel. . .a people of unintelligible speech or difficult language" Ezekiel's primary ministry was to the Jews in exile. God was not sending him to a foreign people, as He did

Jeremiah and Daniel. However, the irony of v. 7 is that they (foreign nations with strange languages) would be willing to listen, but Israel would not.

3:7 "the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate" See note at 2:4. They will not listen to Moses or the Prophets (i.e., 20:8; Isa. 6:9-13).

3:8,9 "hard. . .harder" This word (BDB 305) is a play on the name of Ezekiel (BDB 306), which means "to harden or strengthen." God will equip Ezekiel to face head on the rebellious house of Israel (cf. 2:5-6; 3:9,26-27; 12:2-3; 44:6).

3:9NASBNKJV, JPSOA"adamant stone"NRSV"the hardest stone"TEV"as firm as rock"NJB"a diamond"

This Hebrew root (BDB 1038) has several meanings.

- 1. thorns, briars, only in Isaiah (cf. 5:6; 7:23,24,25; 9:18; 10:17; 27:4; 32:13)
- 2. adamant, flint (i.e., hard stone), Jer. 17:1; Ezek. 3:9; Zech. 7:12
- 3. person's name, I Chr. 24:24
- 4. place name, Josh. 15:48; Jdgs. 10:1,2

Context determines meaning! Only #2 fits. Which hard stone is being referenced is uncertain.

• "Do not be afraid of them or be dismayed before them" See note at 2:6.

3:10 What an insight into how inspiration worked in this case. The prophet had to listen (cf. 2:8), receive (comprehend), and then speak the message to Israel.

3:11 "go to the exiles" This is the specific group that Ezekiel is commissioned to speak YHWH's message to.

• "whether they listen or not" Some will respond, but others will not. There has always been a spiritual divide within national Israel. Some are covenant people by lineage only, but others are trusting, obeying, and heart-felt covenant followers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:12-15

¹²Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place." ¹³And I *heard* the sound of the wings of the living beings touching one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, even a great rumbling sound. ¹⁴So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me. ¹⁵Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar at Tel-abib, and I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them.

3:12 "the Spirit lifted me up" There is some doubt about to whom "spirit" refers in 1:12,20,21, but here and in 2:2 it obviously refers to the active presence of God. It may be true that a full-blown Trinitarian (see Special Topic at 2:2) understanding of God is absent from the OT. There are still texts (such as this one) that point toward a plurality in God.

There are several places in Ezekiel where this phrase is used implying that it is a literary way of introducing revelation (cf. 2:2; 3:12,14,24; 8:3; 11:1,24; 37:1; 43:5). Ezekiel is receiving active, personal revelation in the form of visions and words.

LXX	"the voice <i>as</i> of a great earthquake"
NASB	"a great rumbling"
NKJV	"a thunderous voice"
NRSV	"the sound of loud rumbling"
TEV	"the loud roar of a voice"
NJB	"a great vibrating sound"
JPSOA	"a great roaring sound"
Thick	(DDB 050) convertes

This NOUN (BDB 950) can refer to

- 1. the sound of an earthquake, I Kgs. 19:11-12; Ezek. 38:19; Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5
- 2. the context of a loud voice, Isa. 29:6
- 3. the sound of military action
 - a. warriors, Isa. 9:4
 - b. war chariots, Jer. 10:22; 47:3
 - c. war horses, Job 39:24
- 4. the shaking of persons, Ezek. 12:18
- 5. the VERB is used often of divine comings for judgment or blessing

In this context (cf. v. 13) it was the sound of YHWH's throne chariot lifting up and moving. Somehow the "lifting up" of the Spirit is equated with the lifting up of the throne chariot (cf. 1:12,20-21). With the sound of the movement of the throne chariot was a vocal statement of the attending angelic being, "Blessed by the glory of the LORD in/from His place." This is similar to the Seraphim of Isa. 6:3.

"glory"

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The biblical concept of "glory" is difficult to define. Believers' glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for "glory" (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term relating to scales ("to be heavy"). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God's majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term "glory" is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to "the righteousness of God"; (2) it may refer to the "holiness" or "perfection" of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH's presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

3:14 "and I went embittered in rage of my spirit" This is a very difficult phrase. It has been translated in one of two ways: (1) Ezekiel is upset at having to give a hard message which will be rejected or (2) Ezekiel was filled with the righteous indignation of God at the sin of the Jewish nation (cf. Jer. 6:11). I think theory 2 fits the context much better.

• "the hand of the LORD" Notice the different ways the presence of YHWH is alluded to.

- 1. direct speech, vv. 1,4,16,24,27
- 2. the Spirit, vv. 12,14,24
- 3. the glory of the Lord, vv. 12,23
- 4. the hand of the Lord, vv. 14,22 (see Special Topic: Hand at 37:1)

The anthropomorphic metaphor denotes the reception of divine revelation (cf. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). For anthropomorphic language used of God see Special Topic at 1:3.

3:15 "Tel-abib" This is also the name of one of the Canaanite months (see Special Topic at 1:1), which was the month of the Exodus/Passover. Here it is a settlement by the Grand Canal close to the city of Nippur. The Hebrew word *abib* (BDB 1) means "green ears of grain." "Tel" (BDB 1068) means "mound."

NASB	"I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among
	them"
NKJV, Peshitta	"I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days"
NRSV, JPSOA	"I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days"
TEV	"I cameand for seven days I stayed there, overcome by what I had seen and
	heard"
NJB	"I cameand there I stayed with them in a stupor for seven days"
LXX	"I sat there seven days, conversant in the midst of them"

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) means "appalled," "awestruck," "devastated." But who does it refer to?

- 1. Ezekiel (i.e., the vision itself), NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA
- 2. the exiled Israelites of Tel-abib (i.e., the message of Ezekiel), LXX, NASB

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:16-21

¹⁶At the end of seven days the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁷"Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. ¹⁸When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die', and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself. ²⁰Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he will die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. ²¹However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself."

3:17 "I have appointed you a watchman" This is expanded in chapter 33. It is a concept used often in the prophets (cf. Isa. 56:10; Jer. 6: 17; Hos. 9:8). Remember the prophets functioned as God's covenant enforcers for the Mosaic covenant. Israel's obedience determined her destiny. The prophets reminded Israel of the consequences of disobedience (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). How the people responded to the prophets' message (i.e., repentance or hardness) determined their future.

3:18-19 This is a major theological truth of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which deals with individual responsibility. The full theological discussion is in chapters 18 and 33.

3:18 "You shall surely die" This is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same VERB (BDB 559, KB 562), which denotes emphasis. In this setting it refers to physical death.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

- I. Old Testament
 - A. All humans go to *She'ol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
 - B. *She'ol* characterized
 - 1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 - 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 - 3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 - 4. associated with "the Pit" (grave), Ps.16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 - 5. wicked descend alive into She'ol, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 - 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
 - 7. people there called *Repha'im*, Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *She'ol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. Hades characterized
 - 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 - 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 - 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 - 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
 - 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
 - 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Gen. 6; I Enoch)
- D. Gehenna
 - 1. Reflects the OT phrase, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom," (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574) was worshiped through child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.
 - 2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
 - 3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
 - 4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43

- b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
- c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
- d. paralleled to *She'ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
- e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
- f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
- g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *She'ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).
- h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of She'ol, Hades, and Gehenna that
 - 1. originally all humans went to *She'ol/Hades*
 - 2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).
 - 3. only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She'ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.
- III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection
 - A. The NT does not teach the "immortality of the soul," which is one of several ancient views of the afterlife.
 - 1. human souls exist before their physical life
 - 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 - 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
 - B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 - 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 - 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 - 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
 - 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, II Thess. 4:13-18
 - 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 - 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
 - 1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 - 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 - 3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).

C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:6 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

- V. Helpful resources
 - A. William Hendriksen, The Bible On the Life Hereafter
 - B. Maurice Rawlings, Beyond Death's Door

■ "but his blood I will require at your hand" Being called to serve God is a great honor, but it also carries great responsibilities. If I know God's message and do not speak, it brings spiritual consequences, as does ignoring the message once given (cf. 3:20; 33:6,8).

The term "blood" (BDB 196) is a metaphor of death. The ancients knew that as the blood flowed away, so too, life. Therefore, the life was in the blood (cf. Gen. 9:5-6; Lev. 17:11,14).

3:20 "a righteous man"

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Righteousness" is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God's character is described as "just" or "righteous." The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God's righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind's interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind's loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God's first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind's repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

- 1. <u>declaring</u> mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
- 2. <u>freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness)</u>.
- 3. <u>providing</u> the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans <u>must</u> respond and continue to respond in

- 1. repentance
- 2. faith
- 3. lifestyle obedience
- 4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called "justification by faith." The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term "righteousness" in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term $dikaiosun\bar{e}$ in its Hebrew sense of the term SDQ used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was not clear delineation between the secular (society's norms) and the sacred (God's will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as "justice" (relating to society) and "righteousness" (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father's love, mercy, and grace; the Son's life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit's wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and the Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], which for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible, from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

- 1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
- 2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
- 3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2

- b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
- 4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) I Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21-31
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
- 5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. I Timothy 6:11
 - d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - e. I John 3:7
 - f. I Peter 2:24
- 6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* published by IVP:

"Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther's view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God's righteousness to us" (p. 834).

For me the believer's relationship to God has three aspects.

- 1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
- 2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
- 3. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

• "I place an obstacle before him" God tests all those who belong to Him (cf. Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; II Chr. 32:31; Matt. 4:1; Heb. 12:5-13).

Ezekiel uses the metaphor of a stone or obstacle placed on the road (i.e., life's path) as a way of denoting judgment (cf. Jer. 6:21). The fact that God tests humans demands that humans have a God-given "free will" (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). If there is no personal responsibility there can be no ethical consequences! The interpersonal relationship desired by God of His human creatures demands a free will.

Ezekiel also emphasizes an individual aspect to faith and obedience that is unique in the prophets who usually address national Israel (cf. 3:20-21; 14:12-20; 18:5-32; 33:12-20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:22-27

²²The hand of the LORD was on me there, and He said to me, "Get up, go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you." ²³So I got up and went out to the plain; and behold, the glory of the LORD was standing there, like the glory which I saw by the river Chebar, and I fell on my face. ²⁴The Spirit then entered me and made me stand on my feet, and He spoke with me and said to me, "Go, shut yourself up in your house. ²⁵As for you, son of man, they will put ropes on you and bind you with them so that you cannot go out among them. ²⁶Moreover, I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be mute and cannot be a man who rebukes them, for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you will say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.' He who hears, let him hear; and he who refuses, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house."

3:22 "The hand of the LORD" See notes at 3:14.

■ This is similar to 2:1. YHWH is initiating contact and preparing to communicate revelation.

- 1. "Arise," BDB 877, KB 1086, Qal IMPERATIVE
- 2. "Go out," BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "I will speak to you," BDB 180, KB 210, Piel IMPERFECT

3:23 "I got up and went out on the plain and behold the glory of the LORD was standing there" This experience was a major theological revelation. God's glory and presence were not limited to Palestine or the Temple. The exiles needed to know this. First, that God had not abandoned them and second, that God was not limited to the Holy Land!

Notice how "glory" is personified as "standing." The terms "glory" and "name" both stand for the personal presence of YHWH.

3:24 "The Spirit then entered me" This is the same "spirit" that controlled the living being of chapter 1 (cf. 1:12,20-21). It is the same "spirit" that entered Ezekiel and caused him to stand in 2:1-2. It is a way of referring to God Himself. Notice "He spoke with me" and the obvious antecedent is "the Spirit."

The Spirit of God is active in the OT in equipping humans to perform divine tasks or assignments.

- 1. design and building of the tabernacle, Exod. 31:3; 35:31
- 2. military deliverers, Jdgs. 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14
- 3. political leaders, I Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 16:13; II Sam. 23:2
- 4. prophets, I Kgs. 18:12,46; II Kgs. 2:16; Ezek. 2:2; 3:12,14,24; 8:3; 11:24; 37:1; 43:5; Micah 3:5
- 5. Messianic, Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; Luke 4:18-19

Go, shut yourself up in your house" Notice how specific God's message is. Ezekiel is claiming that his dramatic acts are direct commands from YHWH.

- 1. "go," BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. "be shut up," BDB 688, KB 742, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE

3:25 The question is, who does the PRONOUN "they" refer to?

- 1. other Jewish exiles
- 2. the Babylonian army besieging Jerusalem (cf. 4:8)

Whatever the exact meaning, it is clear from the context that there will be opposition to Ezekiel's message (cf. vv. 26-27). Ezekiel is declaring the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the exile, which was not a popular message.

3:26 "I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth" In context this is highly unusual, since God is commanding him to tell the message, but it may communicate the truth that the prophet is only to speak when God speaks. There will be a specific time to speak (cf. 24:27; 33:22). This reference to a divine silence is seen again in chapter 24:27: 29:21; 33:22.

This verse concludes with two commands.

- 1. "let him hear," BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 2. "let him refuse" (lit. "cease"), BDB 292, KB 292, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

EZEKIEL 4

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Siege of Jerusalem Predicted	The Siege of Jerusalem Portrayed	Symbolic Actions Describing the Coming Siege of Jerusalem (4:1-5:17)	Ezekiel Acts Out the Siege of Jerusalem	The Siege of Jerusalem Foretold (4:1-5:17)
4:1-3	4:1-3	4:1-3	4:1-3	4:1-3
4:4-8	4:4-8	4:4-8	4:4-6	4:4-8
Defiled Bread			4:7-8	
4:9-17	4:9-17	4:9-15	4:9-12	4:9-17
			4:13	
			4:14	
			4:15	
		4:16-17	4:16-17	

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-3

¹"Now you son of man, get yourself a brick, place it before you and inscribe a city on it, Jerusalem. ²Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps and place battering rams against it all around. ³Then get yourself an iron plate and set it up as an iron wall between you and the city, and set your face toward it so that it is under siege, and besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel."

4:1 "son of man" See note at 2:1.

God commands the prophet to do several dramatic acts of judgment which depict the fall of Jerusalem. Because of 3:25, these dramatic acts were probably performed in front of his house, in public view.

• "Get yourself a brick" BDB 527 says that this refers to a tile, not a brick, but the lexicon KB 518 says it was a sun-baked brick (larger in size than modern bricks), probably of white clay. It is uncertain if it was soft clay, which was normally used for writing, or baked clay with an outline of the city scratched into it.

- 1. get a brick, v. 1, BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - a. set it before you
 - b. inscribe (outline of the city of Jerusalem) on it
 - c. build siege wall, ramps, camps around the brick
 - d. place battering rams (i.e., another *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
- 2. get an iron plate, v. 3, BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (used as a divider)
- 3. lie on your side, v. 4, BDB 1011, KB 1486, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 4. take (food items), BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 5. take (sharp sword and cut off hair and beard), 5:1, BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The entire context (i.e., chaps. 4-5 is a literary unit) is one sustained dramatic act foreshadowing the siege of Jerusalem.

This occurred exactly four years before the siege of Jerusalem by Babylon, which resulted in the total destruction of the city (i.e., 586 B.C.). Chapters 4 and 5 contain a series of silent, dramatic acts related to God's enforced silence of 3:26.

4:2 "siege-wall" This (BDB 189) was a series of siege towers that were built to put the archers of the invaders on level with the ramparts of the city (cf. II Kgs. 25:1; Jer. 52:4; Ezek. 4:2; 17:17; 21:27; 26:8).

• "raise up a ramp" This was an earthen ramp (BDB 700, cf. II Sam. 20:15; Jer. 32:24; 33:4) where the ramming instruments (BDB 503, cf. 4:2; 21:27) could be brought against the walls of the city (e.g., the Roman ramp at Masada).

4:3 "an iron plate" This (BDB 290) is used in Lev. 2:5; 6:21 for a small, concave plate for the baking of bread. In context it seems to relate to God setting His face against His own people and not hearing their cries for help (i.e., His prophet/priest is silent, cf. 3:25-27).

■ "this is a sign to the house of Israel" Signs (BDB 16) were God's way to show His people that He was in control of history. Ezekiel uses this phrase often (cf. 4:3; 12:6,11; 24:24). Ezekiel's God-given signs were a dramatic way to communicate with the exiled community. It is uncertain if all of these signs were literally acted out or were literary in nature. The truth and trustworthiness of God's message remains the same either way. One wonders how v. 8 could be literal or related to 3:25.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:4-8

⁴"As for you, lie down on your left side and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel on it; you shall bear their iniquity for the number of days that you lie on it. ⁵For I have assigned you a number of days corresponding to the years of their iniquity, three hundred and ninety days; thus you shall bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. ⁶When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, *but* on your right side and bear the iniquity of the house of Judah; I have assigned it to you for forty days, a day for each year. ⁷Then you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared and prophesy against it. ⁸Now behold, I will put ropes on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege."

4:4 God commands the prophet to lie (BDB 1011, KB 1486, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) on his left side to bear (BDB 669, KB 724, lit. "to carry," *Qal* IMPERFECT) the sin of Israel. Apparently this is a function of the priesthood (cf. Num. 18:1). The VERB implies the carrying away of sin, like the scapegoat in the ceremony of Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement. However, Ezekiel's actions do not cause God to spare Jerusalem, but judge it (cf. v. 7). Ezekiel's acts show the extent of the people's rebellion (i.e., longevity).

4:5 "three hundred and ninety days" Ezekiel is told to lie on his side to show the sin of both Israel (vv. 4-5) and Judah (v. 6). It is obvious here that "the house of Israel" means the Northern Ten Tribes only.

There has been much difficulty concerning "390 days." The Septuagint has "190 days" and this may be closer to the original number because the difference in time between chapter 1:2 and 8:1 is only 14 months, which seems not to leave enough time for 430 days of silent witness (i.e., 390 for Israel and 40 for Judah).

It is possible that the combined numbers (i.e., 390 + 40) equals Israel's time in Egypt plus the wilderness wanderings (cf. Gen. 15:13; Exod. 12:40; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17). Therefore, it might be a way of referring to the beginning of Israel as a people (i.e., Abraham - Moses). If so, it symbolized that they had always been a sinful, rebellious, stiff-necked people (cf. 2:3-4,7,8).

We as moderns must remember that the ancients used certain numbers in symbolic ways. Often these are round numbers (cf. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*).

4:6 "forty days" The number forty in the Bible is often a long period of indefinite time. See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 1:5.

4:7 "with your arm bared" This was a metaphor for God's effective action against Jerusalem.

God's arm/hand can be for good or woe.

- 1. positive, Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; II Chr. 32:8; Ps. 98:1; Isa. 52:10; Jer. 32:17-18
- 2. negative, Jer. 6:12; 21:5; 27:5-6; Ezek. 20:33-34; 30:24-25

4:8 "I will put ropes on you" This same metaphor is used in 3:25. God directs the prophet's words and actions to communicate His message to His people.

It seems from 3:25 that the prophet was limited to his home. The elders had to go there to see him (cf. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1). He was also allowed to communicate either by a message or a dramatic act only if God directed him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-17

⁹"But as for you, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt, put them in one vessel and make them into bread for yourself; you shall eat it according to the number of the days that you lie on your side, three hundred and ninety days. ¹⁰Your food which you eat *shall be* twenty shekels a day by weight; you shall eat it from time to time. ¹¹The water you drink shall be the sixth part of a hin by measure; you shall drink it from time to time. ¹²You shall eat it as a barley cake, having baked *it* in their sight over human dung." ¹³Then the LORD said, "Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations where I will banish them." ¹⁴But I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I have never been defiled; for from my youth until now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has any unclean meat ever entered my mouth." ¹⁵Then He said to me, "See, I will give you cow's dung in place of human dung over which you will prepare your bread." ¹⁶Moreover, He said to me, "Son of man, behold, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem, and they will eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and drink water by measure and in horror, ¹⁷because bread and water will be scarce; and they will be appalled with one another and waste away in their iniquity.

4:9-17 The dramatic action of Ezekiel lying on his side was only part of the symbolism; what he ate and drank and how much he ate and drank also had significance (cf. vv. 16-17). The siege would cause famine in Jerusalem.

- 1. A food shortage required that the people eat a combination of grains, some of which were not normally eaten.
- 2. It meant less water per day.
- 3. There would be no wood or oil to cook with. Animal dung would be the only source of fuel. Cow dung was and still is (i.e., India) often used as fuel.

4:10 "twenty shekels a day by weight" This would equal about 8-10 ounces of bread. This amount is too small for a healthy diet. See Special Topic at 4:11.

• "from time to time" This is a Hebrew idiom which means at a set time each day (cf. v. 11; I Chr. 9:25).

4:11 "a sixth part of a hin by measure" This would be a 1ittle under a pint, according to rabbinical commentators. Ezekiel would lose weight and strength on this diet, which mimicked a siege situation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:1). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a "light" and a "heavy" of each amount (see *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) of Mesopotamia.

Many of the "sizes" and "amounts" used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer's containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

- Volume terms used most often
 - A. Dry measures
 - 1. Homer (BDB 330, possibly a "donkey-load," BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2
 - 2. Letekh (or lethech, BDB 547), cf. Hosea 3:2
 - 3. Ephah (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
 - 4. Se'ah (BDB 684, e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32
 - 5. Omer (BDB 771 II, possibly "a sheaf" [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
 - 6. 'Issaron (BDB 798, "a tenth part"), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21
 - 7. Qav (or Kab, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25
 - B. Liquid Measures
 - 1. Kor (BDB 499), e.g., I Kgs. 5:2,25; Ezek. 45:14
 - 2. Bath (BDB 330, equal to a homer), e.g., II Chr. 2:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
 - 3. Hin (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
 - 4. Log (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24
 - C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, Ancient Israel, vol. 1, p. 201 and Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 16, p. 379.

homer $(dry) = kor (liquid)$	1						
ephah (dry) = bath (liquid)	10	1					
se'ah (dry)	30	3	1				
hin (liquid)	60	6	2	1			
omer/issaron (dry)	100	10	-	-	1		
qav/kab (dry)	180	18	6	3	-	1	
log (liquid)	720	72	24	12	-	4	1

II. Weight terms used most often

- A. The three most common weights are the talent, the shekel, and the gerah.
 - 1. The largest weight in the OT is the talent. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one talent equals 3,000 shekels (i.e., "round weight," BDB 503).
 - 2. The term shekel (BDB 1053, "weight") is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of shekel mentioned in the OT.
 - a. "commercial standard" (NASB of Gen. 23:16)
 - b. "the shekel of the sanctuary" (NASB of Exod. 30:13)
 - c. "by the king's weight" (NASB of II Sam. 14:26), also called "royal weight" in the Elephantine papyri.
 - 3. The gerah (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit).
 - 4. The mina (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70-71). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1 ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.
 - 5. The beka (BDB 132, "half a shekel," cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a shekel. Its name means "to divide."

B.	Cha	rt							
	1.	Based on Ex	odus						
		talent	1						
		mina	60	1					
		shekel	3,000	50	1				
		beka	6,000*	100	1				
		*(gerah, also	6,000 from	n Exod. 3	0:13; Le	v. 27:25; N	Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12)		
	2.	Based on Ez	Based on Ezekiel						
		talent	1						
		mina	60	1					
		shekel	3,600	60	1				
		beka	7,200	120	2	1			
		gerah	72,000	1,200	20	10	1		

4:13 Using dung as a cooking fuel would make the inhabitants of Jerusalem ceremonially unclean. It would be a symbol of the Levitically unclean food they would be forced to eat as exiles in a foreign land (cf. Dan. 1:8; Hosea 9:3-4).

■ "I shall banish them" This VERB (BDB 623, KB 673, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) describes YHWH's sending the covenant people out of the Promised Land (cf. Jer. 8:3; 16:15; 24:9; 27:10,15). However, if they repent, YHWH will restore them (cf. Deut. 30:1,4; Jer. 23:3,8; 29:14; 32:37; 46:28).

Ezekiel presents YHWH's message of the destruction and exile of Jerusalem until it happens and then his message changes to one of a divine restoration (cf. chaps. 33-48).

4:14 "I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts" This relates to Ezekiel's squeamishness ("I have never been defiled," BDB 379, KB 375, *Pual* PARTICIPLE) about the uncleanness involved in this symbolic act. The human dung was the primary issue (cf. v. 12), but he expands his affirmation of his faithfulness to the Mosaic Law in v. 14. He would be referring to animals that had not been properly killed and bled (cf. Exod. 22:31; Lev. 17:11-16; Deut. 12:16). God responds to the prophet's squeamishness and allows cow dung (BDB 861, only here in the OT) to be substituted for fuel in v. 15.

4:16 "the staff of bread" This unusual metaphor uses "staff" in the sense of supply (cf. Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16; Isa. 3:1; Ezek. 4:16-17; 5:16; 14:13).

4:17 "waste away in their iniquity" The VERB (BDB 596, KB 628, Niphal PERFECT) means

- 1. fester, Ps. 38:5
- 2. rot, Zech. 14:12 (three times)
- 3. wear away or dissolve, Isa. 34:4

It is used three times in Ezekiel describing YHWH's judgment on His people (cf. 4:17; 24:23; 33:10). The choice of this term by Ezekiel may go back to Lev. 26:39, where it is used twice. Ezekiel, as a trained priest, drew much of his vocabulary from Leviticus.

EZEKIEL 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jerusalem's Destruction Foretold	A Sword Against Jerusalem	Symbolic Actions Describing the Coming Siege of Jerusalem (4:1-5:17)	Ezekiel Cuts His Hair	The Siege of Jerusalem Foretold (4:1-5:17)
5:1-4	5:1-4	5:1-4	5:1-4	5:1-4
5:5-12	5:5-17	5:5-12	5:5-10	5:5-6
				5:7-17
			5:11-12	
5:13-17		5:13-17	5:13-14	
			5:15-17	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-4

¹"As for you, son of man, take a sharp sword; take and use it *as* a barber's razor on your head and beard. Then take scales for weighing and divide the hair. ²One third you shall burn in the fire at the center of the city, when the days of the siege are completed. Then you shall take one third and strike *it* with the sword all around the city, and one third you shall scatter to the wind; and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. ³Take also a few in number from them and bind them

in the edges of your *robes*. ⁴Take again some of them and throw them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from it a fire will spread to all the house of Israel.''

5:1 "son of man" See note at 2:1.

■ "take a sharp sword" The VERB (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is a command. The normal instrument for shaving was a "razor" (BDB 1074, cf. Num. 6:5; 8:7). However, here a "sword" (BDB 352, vv. 1,2[twice], 12[twice], 17) is used. It was a symbol of the coming judgment (cf. 6:3,8,11,12; 7:15). This same judgment is alluded to in Isa. 7:20, using the word "razor." Shaving the hair and beard was a sign of shame (cf. II Sam. 10:4). The sword was a symbol of death and devastation. Judah would reap a divine judgment for her sins (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar's army).

• "scales for weighing" This is a Hebrew CONSTRUCT (BDB 24 and 1054). Scales were used in weighing the purchase of agricultural items. When used in an unfair way it became an idiom of exploitation and unfairness. In contrast, God's scales (i.e., of justice) were fair and reliable. Judah was weighed by YHWH and found wanting! Judah deserved both

- 1. shame (i.e., shaving)
- 2. judgment (i.e., scales)

5:2-4 Ezekiel's hair (usually a sign of religious devotion, cf. Numbers 6; Judges 16-17; II Sam. 10:4-5) was to be shaved, divided, and disposed of in specific ways.

- 1. one-third burned at the center of the city (i.e., the model of Jerusalem of chapter 4) when Jerusalem falls, v. 2
- 2. one-third cut with the sword all around the city (i.e., the model of Jerusalem of chapter 4), v. 2
- 3. one-third scattered to the wind, v. 2
- 4. a few hairs were tied into Ezekiel's robe, v. 3
- 5. a few hairs put in a fire, which will spread to all Israel, v. 4 (fire is often used in Ezekiel as a judgment of God, cf. 5:2,4; 10:2,6-7; 15:4-7; 16:41; 19:12,14; 20:47-48; 21:31-32; 23:25,47; 24:10,12; 30:8,14,16; 39:6. See Special Topic at 1:4).

The symbolic act seems to mean that one-third of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will be killed by the sword, one-third will be killed by famine and one-third will be scattered among the nations (cf. v. 2). In v. 3 the concept of remnant appears, which occurs throughout the OT in God's dealing with His rebellious people (cf. II Kgs. 25:22; Isa. 6:13; 10:22; Jer. 23:3; Ezek. 5:3; 6:8-10; 11:13; Zech. 13:8, 9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES

The OT concept of "a faithful remnant" is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

- 1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12, 14,28; Amos 1:8)
- 2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
- 3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel's past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Judges 6-7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:5-12

⁵"Thus says the Lord GOD, 'This is Jerusalem; I have set her at the center of the nations, with lands around her. 'But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations and against My statutes more than the lands which surround her; for they have rejected My ordinances and have not walked in My statutes.' ⁷Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have more turmoil than the nations which surround you and have not walked in My statutes, nor observed My ordinances, nor observed the ordinances of the nations which surround you, ⁸therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I, even I, am against you, and I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations. ⁹And because of all your abominations, I will do among you what I have not done, and the like of which I will never do again. ¹⁰Therefore, fathers will eat their sons among you, and sons will eat their fathers; for I will execute judgments on you and scatter all your remnant to every wind. ¹¹So as I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable idols and with all your abominations, therefore I will also withdraw, and My eye will have no pity and I will not spare. ¹²One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them.'''

5:5 This verse affirms the purposeful plan of God to place His people where they must depend on His care and protection. They were not a large, powerful people (cf. Deut. 7:7), but their land was at the crossroads of the major Near Eastern powers of Babylon, Assyria, Anatolia, and Egypt.

God wanted to use His people planted in such a prominent place to educate and draw the surrounding peoples (i.e., "the nations) to Himself (cf. Deut. 4:6-8, see *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* by Feinberg, p. 37). Because of Israel's disobedience, all they (i.e., the nations) saw was the judgment of God (cf. vv. 7-9; 36:22-38).

• "at the center of the nations" When this phrase is seen in light of

1. Ezek. 38:12

2. the use of the imagery of "navel" in Near Eastern religion (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 333-334) it becomes a significant theological statement. YHWH's people were the revelatory epicenter of the world. His eternal, universal, redemptive plan (see Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 12:16) involved them. Their continuing covenant unfaithfulness was a major (1) barrier or (2) revelatory means of revealing His faithful character, which will be expressed in the "New Covenant," which is not based on human performance (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

5:6-7 "statutes. . . ordinances" (See vv. 6, 7).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD'S REVELATION (using DEUTERONOMY and PSALMS)

I. "Statutes," BDB 349, "an enactment, decree, or ordinance"

A.	חק ,Masculine	-	Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24,25; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19;
			26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
B.	הקה Feminine,	-	Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5, 8,12, 16,23,26,33,48,54,64, 68,71,80,83,112,124,135,145,155,171

II.	"Law" BDB 435, "instru	ction	"
		-	Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29, 34,44,51, 53,55,61,70,72,77,85,92,97,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165, 174
III.	"Testimonies" BDB 730	, "div	vine laws"
	A. PLURAL, עדה	-	Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46, 59,79, 95,119,125,138,146,152,167,168
	B. עדת or עדות	-	Ps. 19:8; 78:5; 81:6; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157
IV.	"Precepts" BDB 824, "a	char	ge"
	······································	-	Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15, 27,40,45, 56,63,69,78,87,93,94, 100, 104, 110,128,134,141,159,168,173
V.	"Commandments" BDB	846	
		-	Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13, 17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32,35,47,48,60,66,73, 86,96, 98,115, 127,131,143,151,166,176
VI.	"Judgments/ordinances"	' BDI	B 1048, "rulings" or "justice"
		-	Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:23; 19:10; 48:12; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52, 62,75,84, 102,106, 120,132,137, 149, 156, 160,164; 147:19; 149:9
VII.	"His ways" BDB 202, Y	HW	H's guidelines for His people's lifestyle
	•	-	Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5,37,59
VII	. "His words"		
	A. BDB 202	-	Deut. 4:10,13,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43,49,57, 65,74, 81,89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169
	B. BDB 57		,- ,- ,,,,,,,,,,,-
	1. "word"	-	Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
	2. "promise"	-	Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
	3. "command"	-	Ps. 119:158

5:7

NASB	"you have more turmoil"
NKJV	"you have multiplied <i>disobedience</i> more"
NRSV	"you are more turbulent"
TEV	"you have caused more trouble"
NJB	"your disorders are worse"
JPSOA	"you have outdone"
REB	"you have been more insubordinate"

This NOUN form appears only here in the OT (BDB 243, KB 632, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). Its basic meaning may be

- 1. to rebel
- 2. to raze
- 3. to be turbulent

4. Some scholars assert that it comes from a different root meaning "to disdain" or "to be weak." Because of the last phrase of this verse, v. 6, and 16:27, this phrase must mean that Israel sinned worse than the surrounding nations! Her idolatries reached new heights!

5:8 "I, even I" This is very emphatic! YHWH will act against Israel to maintain the truthfulness of His own revelation. The covenant God acts against the covenant people!

God wanted to reach all nations through Israel. She was the means, not the goal!

■ "I will execute judgment among you in the sight of the nations" It must be remembered that Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5,6). She will be a testimony, either positively or negatively (cf. 5:15; Ezek. 36:23-38).

5:9 God will execute judgment against His own covenant people more severely than other judgments because Israel knew Him, knew His will and yet violated them (cf. Luke 12:48)!

5:10 "the fathers will eat *their* **sons"** This is one of the horrors of siege warfare. It was foretold in Lev. 26:29 and Deut. 28:53. The cannibalism is predicted in Jer. 19:9 and fulfilled in Lam. 2:20 and 4:10. Flavius Josephus also tells us of the same horrendous acts occurring in the siege of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70.

• "scatter all your remnant to every wind" The concept of remnant was alluded to in v. 3.

This VERB (BDB 279, KB 280, *Piel* PERFECT) refers literally to winnowing grain (i.e., separating the husk and grain), but it is often used as a metaphor of judgment (i.e., exile, cf. 20:23). God's very own people become the "husk"!

Notice it is YHWH, not the nations, who scatters His people (cf. 5:10,12; 6:8; 12:14-15; 20:23; 22:15; 36:19). It was not the power of the gods of the nations or their military, but the righteous judgment of YHWH that scatters His people for breaking the covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29).

5:11 "So as I live declares the Lord GOD" This is an oath used fourteen times in Ezekiel. It is a play on the word YHWH, which means "the only-living, ever-living God." God is true to His word!

• "because you have defiled My sanctuary" This is described in detail in chapter 8 (cf. 9:7; 23:38; 43:6-9).

"abominations"

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATIONS

"Abominations" (BDB 1072) can refer to several things

- 1. things related to Egyptians
 - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
 - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
 - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26

- 2. things related to YHWH's feelings toward Israel's actions
 - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
 - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
 - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
 - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
 - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
 - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
 - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
 - h. remarrying a woman who you have previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
 - i. women wearing man's clothes (possibly Canaan worship), Deut. 22:5
 - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
 - k. Israel's idolatry, Jer. 2:7
 - 1. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - m. use of false weights, Det. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
 - n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
- 3. Examples in Wisdom Literature
 - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
 - b. Psalms 88:8
 - c. Job 30:10
- 4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase "abomination of desolation," which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy).
 - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
 - b. the roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
 - c. an end-time world leader called "the man of lawlessness" (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or "the Antichrist" (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

NASB	"I will also withdraw"
NKJV	"I will also diminish you"
NRSV, TEV	"I will cut you down"
NJB	"I too shall reject you"
JPSOA	"I in turn will shear [you] away"
REB	"I in turn shall destroy you"

This refers to (1) Ezekiel's vision of the glory of YHWH and His Spirit leaving the temple in Jerusalem and moving east to be with the exiles (cf. chapters 8-11) or (2) YHWH shearing Israel (cf. 5:1).

There is some question about what this VERB (BDB 175, KB 203, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means. The basic meaning is to

- 1. diminish (cf. Exod. 5:8,19; Deut. 4:2; Jer. 26:2)
- 2. restrain (cf. Job 15:4,8; *Niphal* Num. 9:7)

3. withdraw (cf. Job. 36:7; *Niphal* Num. 36:3,4)

The results of YHWH abandoning His own temple is a complete rejection of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as His people. Notice He will

- 1. have no pity, BDB 299, KB 298, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 7:9; 8:18; 9:5,10
- 2. not spare, BDB 328, KB 328, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 7:9; 8:18; 9:5,10

Instead of the promise of great numbers of Israelites (i.e., stars, sand, dust), YHWH will extensively reduce their numbers until only a remnant is left (cf. v. 3).

"My eye" This is an anthropomorphic way of referring to God's personal attention to His covenant people. See Special Topic: Anthropomorphic Language Used to Describe God at 1:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:13-17

¹³"'Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them. ¹⁴Moreover, I will make you a desolation and a reproach among the nations which surround you, in the sight of all who pass by. ¹⁵So it will be a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken. ¹⁶When I send against them the deadly arrows of famine which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you, then I will also intensify the famine upon you and break the staff of bread. ¹⁷Moreover, I will send on you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; plague and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.'''

5:13 Notice all the "My's" in this verse! They denote YHWH's personal righteous character.

- 1. My anger (BDB 60)
- 2. My wrath (BDB 404)
- 3. My zeal (or "jealousy," BDB 888)
- 4. My wrath (BDB 404)

- NASB, REB "I shall be appeased"
- NKJV "I will be avenged"
- NRSV "satisfy myself"
- TEV "until I am satisfied"

NJB "I have sated my fury"

The VERB (BDB 636, KB 688, *Hithpael* PERFECT) in this stem can have several meanings.

- 1. "be sorry" or "have compassion," cf. Deut. 32:36 (which does not fit this context)
- 2. "rue" or "repent," cf. Num. 23:19 (which does not fit this context)
- 3. "comfort oneself," cf. Gen. 37:35; Ps. 119:52 (which could fit)
- 4. "ease oneself by taking vengeance," cf. Gen. 27:42 (by planning evil); also this same connotation is expressed in the *Niphal* stem (cf. Isa. 1:24). This does fit the context best!

God's anger will cease after His judgment (cf. 16:42; 21:17; 24:13). His purpose is an obedient people, not a settled wrath! His acts of judgment are meant to restore, not totally annihilate!

Also note that it is not the people's repentance, but YHWH's mercy that limits and concludes judgment!

• "in My zeal" This NOUN (BDB 888) is translated "ardor," "zeal," and "jealousy." Therefore, it could be understood as

1. YHWH jealous for His word

2. YHWH jealous for His covenant people.

Israel had violated God's covenant and God's love!

5:14-15 This reflects Deut. 28:37. Moses told the people of Israel that if they kept the Covenant they would be blessed, but if they broke it they would be cursed.

Notice the list of things YHWH will do to His disobedient covenant people.

- 1. "I will make you a desolation," v. 14 (BDB 352, a place of waste and ruin)
- 2. "a reproach among the nations," v. 14 (BDB 357, a shame, disgrace, scorn, cf. v. 15)
- 3. "a reviling," v. 15 (BDB 154, this FEMININE NOUN form is found only here and means a taunt or someone as the object of blasphemous words)
- 4. "a warning," v. 15 (BDB 416, "chastening" or "chastisement of God")
- 5. "an object of horror," v. 15 (BDB 1031, "appalling object," horror," cf. Deut. 28:37; Jer. 25:9,11,18,38)

Notice how God describes His coming judgments (i.e., v. 15)

- 1. in anger (BDB 60, cf. v. 13)
- 2. in wrath (BDB 404, cf. v. 13[twice])
- 3. in raging rebukes (BDB 407 CONSTRUCT 404, cf. 25:17)

God acts against disobedient Israel as a witness to the nations of His righteous character (i.e., vv. 14-15; 36:22-38). It has always been YHWH's plan to reveal Himself through Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). He wanted it to be in blessing, but if necessary, He will witness in judgment!

5:15 "it will be a reproach" The Dead Sea Scrolls and several ancient versions have "you," rather than "it."

5:16-17 These verses continue the items of destruction mentioned in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28. YHWH is true to His word (cf. v. 17c).

Note the litany of judgments.

- 1. the deadly arrows of famine, vv. 16,17; Deut. 28:20-26
- 2. wild beasts, v. 17 (cf. Lev. 26:22; Deut. 32:24)
- 3. plague, v. 17 (cf. Lev. 26:21)
- 4. bloodshed, v. 17
- 5. sword, v. 17

These were meant to turn His people back to Him in repentance and faith (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).

5:16 "and break the staff of bread" The term "staff" (BDB 641), following its usages with Moses' staff (i.e., God's power in the hands of Moses), may be an idiom for a divine supply. Therefore, in this context it is parallel to famine. This phrase is used several times (cf. Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16; Ezek. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13).

5:17 "they will bereave you of children" The wild beasts will kill the children of the disobedient Jerusalemites. Notice, like David's first child with Bathsheba, the children pay the price for their parent's sin (cf. Deut. 5:9). However, please note Deut. 5:10 and 7:9. His love reaches to "a thousand generations"! Judgment is God's strange work (cf. Isa. 28:21; Lam. 3:33).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What does the scroll of chapter 2 represent? Why was it sweet as honey in his mouth, chapter 3, v. 3?
- 2. Why did God send a prophet to His people when He knew they would not listen?
- 3. What do the symbolic acts of chapters 4 and 5 represent?
- 4. What is the major message that Ezekiel is trying to convey to the exiles in Babylon?

EZEKIEL 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Idolatrous Worship Denounced	Judgment on Idolatrous Israel	Oracle Against the Mountains	The LORD Condemns Idolatry	Against the Mountains of Israel
6:1-7	6:1-7	6:1-7	6:1-7	6:1-7
6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10	6:8-10
				The Sins of Israel
6:11-14	6:11-14	6:11-14	6:11-14	6:11-14

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READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-7

¹And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them ³and say, 'Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys: "Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places. ⁴So your altars will become desolate and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will make your slain fall in front of your idols. ⁵I will also lay the dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars. ⁶In all your dwellings, cities will become waste and the high places will be desolate, that your altars may become waste and desolate, your idols may be broken and brought to an end, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be blotted out. ⁷The slain will fall among you, and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

6:1 These prophecies and symbolic actions were not from Ezekiel, but from YHWH. Ezekiel is but a mouthpiece for God (cf. 1:3; 3:16; 7:1).

6:2 "Son of man" This is a Hebrew idiom for "human person." See full note at 2:1.

Ezekiel is to

- 1. "set his face towards the mountain," BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (a standard phrase of judgment oracles, cf. 13:17; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2)
- 2. "prophesy against them," BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE

• *"the mountains"* This had a multiple connotations.

- 1. the most permanent physical feature
- 2. part of God's promised land
- 3. a place of refuge
- 4. places of fertility worship (cf. v. 13)

In context #4 fits best. The mountains are personified and commanded to hear the word of the Lord through Ezekiel, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This phrase occurs only in Ezekiel (fifteen times) and is an idiom for the entire Promised Land.

6:3 "listen to the word of the Lord GOD" The VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is often used in a legal sense of testimony in a trial. Israel is responsible for the words they hear! The prophets often used a court scene as a literary mechanism to communicate their message of covenant negation (i.e., divorce case).

" "the Lord GOD" This is literally *Adon* YHWH. See the Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

■ "I Myself" This is reminiscent of 5:13. It is God Himself who acts through the human instrumentality of Babylon. Later, God will call and use Cyrus (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1) to return Israel to Palestine. History is in YHWH's hands, for His purposes!

• "your high places" This man-made, raised altar (the one at Megiddo was 6' tall by 24' x 30') was used for the worship of the Canaanite fertility gods (i.e., *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, cf. v. 13).

YHWH hates the false worship of idolatry (see Roland deVaux, Ancient Israel, vol. 2, pp. 284-288).

6:4 "incense altars" This term (BDB 329) is uncertain. Here are the possibilities from Canaanite sites (cf. II Kgs. 16:4)

- 1. incense altar
- 2. sun-pillar (cf. II Chr. 34:4 in ASV)
- 3. sanctuary of a foreign god (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 903)

The best option is #1 (cf. R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 365, footnote 23).

• "idols" This term (BDB 165) is uncertain in etymology. It is used often in Ezekiel to refer to Canaanite idols. It may come from the root, "dung" ($g\bar{e}l$). Verses 4 and 6 have a series of six *Niphal* PERFECTS. YHWH's judgment on pagan worship sites and worshipers in Israel is shockingly graphic!

6:6 "altars" Apparently these man-made worship platforms had several items.

- 1. raised stone (*massebah*, BDB 663) representing *Ba'al*
- 2. carved or live tree representing *Asherah* (BDB 81)
- 3. incense altar (cf. Lev. 26:30; II Chr. 14:3; 34:4,7)

6:7 "you will know that I am the LORD" This is a recurrent phrase in Ezekiel which denotes the personal judgment of YHWH (i.e., vv. 10,13,14 and over 50 times in the book of Ezekiel).

The phrase first appears as a repeated refrain in Exodus (cf. 6:7; 7:5; 16:6; 29:46). YHWH acts on Israel's behalf so they will know (BDB 393,KB 390, in personal intimacy) Him, but in Ezekiel they will know Him in covenant justice. He will act according to His word!

■ YHWH will pollute idolatrous worship sites (cf. Lev. 26:30) by

- 1. their physical destruction (cf. v. 6)
- 2. unburied bodies in their locale (cf. v. 7)
- 3. dead bodies in their locale (cf. v. 13)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:8-10

⁸"However, I will leave a remnant, for you will have those who escaped the sword among the nations when you are scattered among the countries. ⁹Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations to which they will be carried captive, how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me, and by their eyes which played the harlot after their idols; and they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations. ¹⁰Then they will know that I am the LORD; I have not said in vain that I would inflict this disaster on them."

6:8 "I shall leave a remnant" See note and Special Topic at 5:3.

6:9 There is hope! A remnant will repent and return to YHWH.

- 1. "will remember Me"
- 2. how I have been hurt by their adulterous hearts which turned away from Me (possibly "broken for Myself their hearts")
- 3. by their eyes, which played the harlot after their idols
- 4. they will loathe themselves in their own sight (cf. 16:61,63; 20:43; 36:31)

Notice the personal element of idolatrous sin. YHWH also felt a personal rejection. Sin is a personal violation of the grace of God! Biblical faith is a love relationship.

6:10 Judgment is an act of love. Mankind's only permanent hope is a personal faith relationship with the one true God. The best way to view divine discipline is in the analogy of a human parent (cf. Heb. 12:5-13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:11-14

¹¹"Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Clap your hand, stamp your foot and say, "Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, which will fall by sword, famine and plague! ¹²He who is far off will die by the plague, and he who is near will fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged will die by the famine. Thus will I spend My wrath on them. ¹³Then you will know that I am the LORD, when their slain are among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every green tree and under every leafy oak—the places where they offered soothing aroma to all their idols. ¹⁴So throughout all their habitations I will stretch out My hand against them and make the land more desolate and waste than the wilderness toward Diblah; thus they will know that I am the LORD.''''

6:11 There are three symbolic acts of recognition

1. "clap your hands," BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

- 2. "stamp your feet," BDB 955, KB 1291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (usually #1 and 2 refer to rejoicing, cf. 25:6)
- 3. "say, 'Alas,'" BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. 9:4, a sign of repentance)

It is difficult to be certain what these three taken together mean. They seem to be a recognition of the appropriateness of YHWH's judgment, but also the tragedy of it.

James M. Freeeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, notes five different meanings to clapping of the hands (p. 305).

- 1. sign of contempt, Job 27:33; Lam. 2:15
- 2. sign of anger, Num. 24:10; Ezek. 21:14,17; 22:13
- 3. sign of sorrow, Ezek. 6:11
- 4. sign of triumph, Ezek. 25:6; Nah. 3:19
- 5. sign of a pledge, Gen. 14:22 (if "lift the hand" is related to "clap the hands"); Pro. 11:21 and possibly Ezek. 21:14,17

6:12 "He who is far off" This phrasing ("those far off. . .those near. . .") is often used in a positive sense (i.e., Ps. 145:18; Isa. 55:6), but here it is just the opposite. Everyone will experience the judgment of YHWH.

• "plague. . .sword. . .famine" These are the three triads of YHWH's judgment (cf. 14:12; 24:10; 27:8,13; 29:17,18). Ezekiel 14:21 adds the Levitical and Deuteronomic curse of "wild beasts."

6:13 "Then you will know that I am the LORD" The phrase is used in both a negative and positive sense, both of which relate to the disobedience or obedience to YHWH's revealed will (i.e., word).

- 1. negative, 6:13; 7:27; 11:10; 12:16
- 2. positive, 34:27,30; 37:13,14,28

In Jeremiah it is related to Israel's witness to the surrounding nations (cf. Jer. 22:8-9). This is reaffirmed in Ezek. 37:28.

■ "on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak" These were the physical locations of Canaanite fertility altars (cf. 20:28; Deut. 12:2; I Kgs. 14:23; II Kgs. 16:4; 17:10; II Chr. 28:4; Isa. 57:5; Jer. 2:20; 3:6,13; 17:2; Hosea 4:13).

■ "the places where they offered soothing aroma to all their idols" The phrase "soothing aroma" (BDB 629) was an idiom for an acceptable animal sacrifice (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25,41; Lev. 1:9,13,17). As the smoke of the sacrifice rose up, it symbolically left this physical realm and ascended to God. Ezekiel takes this sacrificial idiom and turns it on its head (another idiom) and uses it of pagan sacrifices offered by Jerusalemites and Judeans (cf. Ezek. 6:13; 16:19; 20:28).

6:14 "I shall stretch out My hand" See Special Topic: Anthropomorphic Language Used to Describe God at 1:3. This phrase is characteristic of the book of Ezekiel (cf. 14:9,13; 16:27; 25:7; 35:3), but is also found in Jeremiah (cf. 6:12; 15:6).

NASB, NKJV "Diblah" NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB "Riblah"

This is a city in the Negev, but "Riblah" (cf. II Kgs. 23:33; 25:6), is in northern Israel (cf. Num. 34:11). The whole point of the phrase, which probably should be "the wilderness to Riblah," is to denote the whole Promised Land from south to north.

EZEKIEL 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Punishment for Wickedness Foretold	Judgment On Israel Is Near	Oracles On the Approaching Judgment	The End Is Near for Israel	The End Is Near
7:1-4	7:1-4 (1-2a)	7:1-4	7:1-4	7:1-4
	(2b-4)			
7:5-9	7:5-9 (5b-8)	7:5-9	7:5-7	7:5-7
			7:8-9	7:8-9
	(9)			
7:10-13	7:10-15 (10-12a)	7:10-13	7:10-11	7:10-14
	(12b-13)		7:12-14	
7:14-19	(14-15)	7:14-20	Punishment for Israel's Sins	The Sins of Israel
			7:15-20	7:15-20
	7:16-19 (16-18)			
The Temple Profaned	(19)			
7:20-22	7:20-22			
		7:21-27	7:21-22	7:21-22
7:23-27	7:23-27 (23-26)		7:23-27	7:23-27
	(27)			

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1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph

- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-4

¹Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"And you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel, 'An end! The end is coming on the four corners of the land. ³Now the end is upon you, and I will send My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways and bring all your abominations upon you. ⁴For My eye will have no pity on you, nor will I spare you, but I will bring your ways upon you, and your abominations will be among you; then you will know that I am the LORD!""

7:1 "the word of the LORD came to me saying" See note at 6:1.

7:2 "son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "the land (*adamah*, **BDB 9**) **of Israel"** This is parallel to "the four corners of the land" (*erets*, **BDB** 75, v. 2), "the mountain of Israel," in 6:2, and "the wilderness of Diblah/Riblah" of 6:14.

This phrase (BDB 9, 975) is found only in Ezekiel (17 times, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 271). It seems to have the theological emphasis of the Promised Land given by YHWH to His covenant people (cf. Deut. 7:13; 11:9,21; 28:11; 30:20). This special gift they are about to lose! As God took the Canaanites out of the land because of their evil (cf. Gen. 15:16), so too, if Israel takes on their ways (i.e., idolatry), He will remove them from the land.

■ "an end" The time of judgment has come! This word (BDB 893) is used in v. 2 (twice), v. 3, v. 6 (twice). It is also used in the sense of "climax" in 21:25,29; 29:13; 35:5. God is in control of time and history. His patience and longsuffering are often misunderstood and abused, but there is a limit!

• "the four corners of the land" The word "four" is often associated with the whole earth (i.e., four directions of the compass, four winds, four corners, cf. Isa. 11:12). Here it is a play on "end." The end of time is coming to the very ends (corners) of the Promised Land.

7:3-4 Verses 3-4 are repeated exactly in vv. 8-9. They form a refrain. In many ways this chapter is a lament (cf. *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, by Feinberg, p. 44).

7:3 "I shall judge you according to your ways" This truth is repeated in v. 8; 18:30; 24:19; 33:20; 36:19; 39:24. Another way to put this recurrent truth is "we reap what we sow" (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

• "abominations" This term (BDB 1072) is used in vv. 3, 4, 9, 20. It is used forty-three times in Ezekiel, mostly in chapters 7,8,16. See Special Topic at 5:11.

7:4 "For My eye will have no pity on you" See note at 5:11. This is repeated in v. 9; 8:18; 9:5,10; 24:14. It is a shocking reversal of YHWH's normal character (cf. Exod. 34:6) and acts!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:5-9

⁵"Thus says the Lord GOD, 'A disaster, unique disaster, behold it is coming! ⁶An end is coming; the end has come! It has awakened against you; behold, it has come! ⁷Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land. The time has come, the day is near—tumult rather than joyful shouting on the mountains. ⁸Now I will shortly pour out My wrath on you and spend My anger against you; judge you according to your ways and bring on you all your abominations. ⁹My eye will show no pity nor will I spare. I will repay you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst; then you will know that I, the LORD, do the smiting.'''

7:5

NASB, NJB "a unique disaster"	NASB, NJB	"a unique disaster"
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NKJV "a singular disaster"

NRSV "disaster after disaster"

TEV "one disaster after another"

REB "disasters are coming, one after another"

The word "unique" is literally the Hebrew word "one" (BDB 29). Translating it "unique" shows that there is theological significance to the phrase "one God" (i.e., a unique, one-of-a-kind God). Monotheism is the stark uniqueness of the OT in its Ancient Near Eastern setting!

7:6 "It has awakened" The end is personified. It awakens to the activity of judgment (cf. "the sword" of Zech. 13:7).

The VERB (BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is also used in Hab. 2:19 in sarcasm of lifeless idols. However, YHWH is not a lifeless idol; He acts!

Notice the repetition of immediate and appointed time (BDB 773) markers in vv. 6-12.

- 1. the end is coming, v. 6
- 2. the end has come, v. 6
- 3. it has come, v. 6
- 4. your doom has come to you, v. 7
- 5. the time has come, v. 7
- 6. the day is near, v. 7
- 7. I will shortly pour out My wrath on you, v. 8
- 8. Behold the day! Behold, it is coming, v. 10
- 9. the time has come, v. 12
- 10. the day has arrived, v. 12

The VERB "come" (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT) is used eight times in these verses! This theme of immediacy is repeated in 12:23-25,28. Number 6 becomes a key eschatological phrase in Amos 5:18-20; Joel; and Zephaniah.

7:7

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB, REB "doom" TEV "the end" KJV "the morning" The term (BDB 862) is also used in v. 10. It usually means "crown" or "diadem" (cf. Isa. 28:5). Its meaning in Ezekiel 7:7,10 is uncertain. The NKJV takes it from an Aramaic root "morning." Most English translations take it from an Arabic root, "doom" or "fate."

• "tumult" This (BDB 223) refers to the panic (originally a divinely given military technique used against Israel's enemies, cf. Exod. 15:16; 23:27; Deut. 7:23, but also a warning to Israel that if she was disobedient to the covenant, it would happen to her military, cf. Deut. 28:20) caused by YHWH's coming in judgment (cf. Zech. 14:13). The judgment referred to is the Babylonian invasion.

This is not what YHWH desired. He wanted "joyful shouting on the mountains," but His covenant people forced Him to act in judgment because of their idolatry!

NASB	"joyful shouting"
NKJV, REB	"rejoicing"
NRSV	"reveling"
TEV	"celebrations"
NJB	"joy"

This term (BDB 212) is found only here in the OT. Many assume it is from the root, "loud noise" (BDB 212), possibly "thunder," which in this context would refer to the sounds of the harvest festivals (cf. Isa. 16:9c; Jer. 48:33).

7:8 "I will pour out My wrath on you" This VERB (BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used several times in Ezekiel (cf. 9:8; 14:19; 20:8,13,21; 22:31; 30:15; 36:18). It could have several origins.

- 1. In 5:2 it is a metaphor, "pour out" (BDB 937, KB 1237, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT), translated "unsheathe a sword." It may refer to the military conquest of the Babylonian military.
- 2. The concept also has a sacrificial connotation of
 - a. "pour out" a libation (i.e., Gen. 35:14)
 - b. "pour out" the life blood at the base of the altar of sacrifice (cf. Exod. 29:12; Lev. 8:15; 9:9)
- 3. "pour out" (same root), used of idolatry in Ezek. 16:15; 23:8
- 4. the opposite of "pouring out" the Spirit in Joel 2:28-29

That which was meant to be a metaphor of worship and blessing has become a metaphor of judgment and destruction!

7:9 "I, the LORD, do the smiting" Normally in the Ancient Near East the defeat of one nation by another was viewed as the superiority of one national deity above another. YHWH wants it clearly understood that He uses Babylon (i.e., Marduk) for His purposes. Israel's defeat is due to their covenant infidelity and idolatries, not His impotence!

John Taylor has a great statement about this phrase in *Ezekiel*, *Tyndale OT Commentary*:

"To hearers and readers who were used to names of God like 'Jehovah-jereh' and 'Jehovah-nissi' (Gen. 22:14; Ex. 17:15), it must have come home with tremendous force to have Him described as 'Jehovah-makkeh'! The Lord who had provided and protected was about to strike" (p. 93).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:10-13

¹⁰"Behold, the day! Behold, it is coming! *Your* doom has gone forth; the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed. ¹¹Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness. None of them *shall remain*, none of their people, none of their wealth, nor anything eminent among them. ¹²The time has come, the day has arrived. Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn; for wrath is against

all their multitude. ¹³Indeed, the seller will not regain what he sold as long as they *both* live; for the vision regarding all their multitude will not be averted, nor will any of them maintain his life by his iniquity.'''

7:10-11 Notice the imagery of spring (i.e., budding, Israel's evil has burst into flower).

- 1. "The rod has budded" (note this is where "doom" of v. 7 can be understood as "diadem")
- 2. "Arrogance has blossomed"
- 3. Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness

Israel thought her unique position as YHWH's covenant people would protect her, even without obedience and faith! But this false sense of assurance (i.e., #2, arrogance) was about to be clearly rejected! I fear evangelicalism has this same false sense of security. Conservative theology must issue in Christlikeness, not self-righteousness and judgmentalism. Justification must issue in sanctification. An initial profession must issue in daily obedience and perseverance (cf. Luke 6:46; Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:14-26). The covenantal method of being accepted by God has changed from a human-performance basis (OT) to a God-performance basis (NT), but the goal of a righteous people for the purpose of fellowship with God has not. It is affected by Genesis 3. Now God wants a righteous people to help those who do not yet know Him to come to Him. The goal has always been Christlikeness! Be careful not to confuse the changing method and the unchanging goal! Also be careful of a proof-texted assurance connected solely to an initial prayer or rite!

7:11

- NASB "nor anything eminent"
- NKJV "nor shall there be wailing for them"
- NRSV "no pre-eminence amoung them"
- **TEV** *"or their glory"*
- NJB -----

REB "nothing but turmoil in them"

The meaning of "eminent" (BDB 627) is uncertain. The form is found only here. BDB lists "eminence" and "distinction." Feinberg suggests "lamentation" or "wailing" (p. 45, i.e., no one left alive to bury or mourn the dead, cf. 6:4-5).

7:12 "Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn" These VERBS are translated as JUSSIVES.

- 1. "rejoice" BDB 970, KB 1333, Qal IMPERFECT
- 2. "mourn" BDB 5, KB 6, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT

Verses 12-13 are a literary way of prophesying that all segments of society (i.e., rich and poor) will be judged by YHWH.

"multitude" This root (BDB 242) basically means "a great noise" (cf. 7:11,12,13,14) and can refer to

- 1. tumult and confusion (cf. I Sam. 14:19; II Sam. 18:29; Ps. 65:7; Isa. 17:12)
- 2. a large crowd (cf. 7:11-14; 29:19; 30:11,15; 31:2,18; 32:12[twice],16,18,20,24,25,26,31,32; Isa. 13:4)
- 3. abundance of wealth (cf. I Chr. 29:16; Ps. 37:16; Eccl. 5:10; Isa. 60:5)

In this context it refers to all of Israel (there is no distinction between righteous and wicked). They all are wicked"!

7:13 This is a difficult verse to translate as the variety in the ancient versions shows. Some think that vv. 12-13 refer to the selling of property in relation to "the Year of Jubilee" (cf. Lev. 25:13-16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:14-22

¹⁴"'They have blown the trumpet and made everything ready, but no one is going to the battle, for My wrath is against all their multitude. ¹⁵The sword is outside and the plague and the famine are within. He who is in the field will die by the sword; famine and the plague will also consume those in the city. ¹⁶Even when their survivors escape, they will be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, each over his own iniquity. ¹⁷All hands will hang limp and all knees will become like water. ¹⁸They will gird themselves with sackcloth and shuddering will overwhelm them; and shame *will be* on all faces and baldness on all their heads. ¹⁹They will fling their silver into the streets and their gold will become an abhorrent thing; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their appetite nor can they fill their stomachs, for their iniquity has become an occasion of stumbling. ²⁰They transformed the beauty of His ornaments into pride, and they made the images of their abominations *and* their detestable things with it; therefore I will make it an abhorrent thing to them. ²¹I will give it into the hands of the foreigners as plunder and to the wicked of the earth as spoil, and they will profane it. ²²I will also turn My face from them, and they will profane My secret place; then robbers will enter and profane it.'''

7:14 "They have blown the trumpet" Military preparations will fail because of the fear of the soldiers (cf. v. 17).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew association with horns/trumpets.

- 1. "the ram's horn" (BDB 901) used as an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham substituted for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
- 2. "trumpet" (BDB 1051) from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and times to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. 6:4).
- 3. "ram's horn" (BDB 385) from Phoenician word for ram (cf. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

All of these first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed animal horns from sheep, goats, or antelope, but not from cows.

- 4. "trumpets" (BDB 348) possibly from the VERB "stretch out," implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egyptian sacred trumpets). These are used
 - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10)
 - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
 - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

7:15 Here are the three main enemies that YHWH arrayed against His people:

- 1. the sword the Babylonian army
- 2. the plague sickness within the walled cities
- 3. famine no food within the walled cities

These three are the recurrent threat of divine judgment (cf. Lev. 26:25-26; II Chr. 20:9; Jer. 14:12; 21:7,9; 24:10; 27:8,13; 29:17,18; 32:24,36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17,22; 44:13; Ezek. 5:12; 6:11,12; 7:15; 12:16).

7:16 Even those few who escape to the mountains will be helpless and sorrowful (i.e., like doves, cf. Isa. 38:14; 59:11). Most who try to escape by fleeing the walled cities into the supposed safety of the countryside will also die (cf. 7:15; 33:27). There is no safety!

7:17 All resistance will be ineffective because of the paralyzing fear striking the cities' defenders (cf. 21:7; 22:14; Isa. 13:7).

• "knees will become like water" This is literally, "knees shall run with water" (NASB margin). It possibly refers to fear causing urination.

7:18 This is a series of mourning rites.

- 1. gird with sackcloth (cf. 27:31; Isa. 22:12; Amos 8:10)
- 2. pull out or shave (cf. 5:1) their hair (cf. 27:31; 29:18; Amos 8:10)

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

- 1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
- 2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
- 3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
- 4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:9; Jer. 2:37
- 5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
- 6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lay on the ground, II Sam. 12:16) Isa. 47:1
- 7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
- 8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
- 9. fast, II Sam. 1:16,22; I Kgs. 21:27
- 10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
- 11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
- 12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
- 13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

• "shame will be on all faces" This was a common idiom (cf. Jer. 51:51; Obad. v. 10; Micah 7:10).

7:19-22 These verses describe Israel's gods.

- 1. money and commerce
- 2. gold and silver idols

3. YHWH's temple and its wealth have become a boast of pride, not sanctity and faith Babylon will take Israel's collected wealth, individually and corporately.

7:19 "abhorrent thing" This term (BDB 622, cf. v. 20) is used of unclean or impure things or acts.

- 1. menstrual period, cf. 18:6; 22:10; 36:17; Lev. 12:2; 15:19,20,24,25
- 2. having sex with a brother's wife, Lev. 20:21

- 3. contact with a corpse (note 6:4-5), Num. 19:9,13,20,21; 31:23
- 4. idolatry, cf. 7:19,20; Ezra 9:11; Lam. 1:17

• *"their silver and gold shall not be able to deliver them"* This has two possible meanings.

1. Babylon will not take ransom to spare them (cf. Zeph. 1:18)

2. their personal idols of gold and silver cannot deliver them; they are thrown out into the streets Neither can their wealth buy them food because of the siege!

• "an occasion of stumbling" The original meaning of the VERB for "faith" was a stable stance. The opposite was slipping in the miry clay or stumbling in the way. Therefore, "stumbling" (BDB 506) is the contrasting concept from faith.

This phrase is literally "for the stumbling block of their iniquity" and is used only in Ezekiel, but often (cf. 14:3,4,7; 18:30; 44:12). The prophet must have coined the phrase. Wealth is not always a blessing!

7:20

- NASB "His ornaments"
- NKJV "his ornaments"
- NRSV "their beautiful ornaments"
- TEV "once they were proud of their beautiful jewels"
- NJB "they used to pride themselves on the beauty of their jewelry"
- **REB** "their beautiful jewelry"

The context (i.e., vv. 20-22) seems to imply the temple's treasures, but it must be noted "His" is not in the text and the ornaments may refer to (1) personal jewelry (BDB 725, cf. Exod. 33:4-6) of v. 19 or (2) their idols (i.e., BDB 1055, "detestable things"). If so, then "the secret place" of v. 22 refers to Jerusalem (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 1074, while in vol. 3, p. 686, a different word study author asserts it is the temple), not the temple (note v. 24).

7:21 "foreigners" This VERB, "be a stranger," BDB 266, KB 267, *Qal* PERFECT, is used of invading enemies (cf. 7:21; 11:9; 16:32; 28:7,10; 30:12; 31:12).

They are characterized as "the wicked of the earth." Babylon followed the military practices of the Assyrians. Both were merciless, vicious people. In v. 24 they are called "the worst of the nations."

7:22 "I will also turn my face from them" The "face" of God was an idiom for His personal presence and care for His covenant people (cf. 39:23-24,29; Isa. 59:2). Israel's protection, peace, and prosperity depended on Him. When He left, hope left!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:23-27

²³''Make the chain, for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence. ²⁴Therefore, I will bring the worst of the nations, and they will possess their houses. I will also make the pride of the strong ones cease, and their holy places will be profaned. ²⁵When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there will be none. ²⁶Disaster will come upon disaster and rumor will be *added* to rumor; then they will seek a vision from a prophet, but the law will be lost from the priest and counsel from the elders. ²⁷The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with horror, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. According to their conduct I will deal with them, and by their judgments I will judge them. And they will know that I am the LORD.''' **7:23 "Make a chain"** The VERB (BDB 793, KB 889) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The term "chain" (BDB 958) can be understood in two ways.

- 1. sarcasm related to decorating idols with gold or silver chains (cf. Isa. 40:19)
- 2. related to fetters to drag the people into exile (cf. Jer. 27:2)

■ The violent foreigners came because of the violence of Israel.

- 1. The land is full of bloody crimes
- 2. The city is full of violence.

We reap what we sow (cf. vv. 3,8).

7:24 "the worst of the nations" This refers to the mercenary armies of Babylon (cf. 21:31; 28:7; Jer. 6:22-23).

7:25 "anguish" This term (BDB 891) appears only here as a NOUN. The VERB appears only in Isa. 38:12, where it is translated "rolled up," but may refer to a cloth being "cut off" from the loom (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 953).

■ Many of the prophets (i.e., false) of Israel relied on YHWH's earlier promises to Israel, forgetting they were conditional promises/covenants. The benefits of the covenant are only available to the faithful, obedient follower. The consequences of disobedience are severe (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28). These false proclaimers, in YHWH's name, preached a covenant protection and peace, but there was "no peace" (cf. 13:10,16; Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

7:26-27 The leaders of the people (cf. Jer.18:18; Micah 3:11) will be totally helpless.

- religious leaders
- a. prophets
 - b. priests
- 2. civil leaders

1.

- a. elders
- b. king
- c. princes
- d. military (i.e., "the hands of the people of the land will tremble," cf. vv. 14,17)

They are the very ones who have caused and allowed the covenant disobedience to start and continue!

• "people of the land" This phrase changes meaning in the OT.

- 1. Originally it referred to free citizens of Israel (i.e., Lev. 4:27).
- 2. Here (22:29; 45:22) it may refer to a group of leaders involved in civil government at a federal level, similar to the elders at a local level (cf. II Kgs. 16:15).
- 3. Later it becomes a way of referring to the poorest people of Israel (cf. II Kgs. 24:14).

EZEKIEL 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Vision of Abominations in Jerusalem	Abominations in the Temple	Temple Visions (8:1-10:25)	Ezekiel's Second Vision (8:1-10:22)	A Vision of the Sins of Israel
		The Vision of Idolatry	Idolatry in Jerusalem	
8:1-4	8:1-4	8:1-4	8:1-3	8:1
				8:2-6
			8:4-5	
8:5-6	8:5-12	8:5-6		
			8:6	
8:7-13		8:7-13	8:7-12	8:7-13
	8:13-14		8:13-14	
8:14-15		8:14-15		8:14-15
	8:15-16		8:15-16	
8:16-18		8:16-18		8:16-18
	8:17-18		8:17-18	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

BACKGROUND STUDY TO CHAPTERS 8-11

- A. Chapters 8-11 are one literary unit (cf. 8:1 and 11:24).
- B. This section occurs fourteen months after Ezekiel's original vision of God by the River Chebar; compare 1:1-3 with 8:1 (August-September 592 B.C.).
- C. This is a literary unit which encompasses a vision of Ezekiel's of the abominations that were occurring in the Temple in Jerusalem. Commentators have been divided on whether this was simply a vision ("brought me in the visions of God," 8:3; also especially 11:24) or that he was physically transported to Jerusalem ("lifted me up between earth and heaven," 8:3). The details of both the Temple and the people involved are very specific.
- D. Much of this flagrant idolatry can be attributed to the influence of King Manasseh (cf. II Kings 21), also notice King Josiah's reform in II Kings 23.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-4

¹It came about in the sixth year, on the fifth *day* of the sixth month, as I was sitting in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell on me there. ²Then I looked, and behold, a likeness as the appearance of a man; from His loins and downward *there was* the appearance of fire, and from His loins and upward the appearance of brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal. ³He stretched out the form of a hand and caught me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the north gate of the inner *court*, where the seat of the idol of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy, was *located*. ⁴And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance which I saw in the plain.

8:1 "It came about in the sixth year, on the fifth *day* **of the sixth month"** This day relates to the exile of the Davidic seed (Jehoiachin) from Jerusalem to Babylon (cf. 1:2). Ezekiel uses this dating reference throughout his book (cf. 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1,17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1,17; 33:21; 40:1). This same dating reference is also seen in II Kgs. 25:27; Jer. 52:31.

• "with the elders of Judah sitting before him" This shows that the symbolic physical positions of 4:4-8 did not last all day and all night.

The "elders" were local tribal or clan leaders. This meant they were the civil leadership of towns, villages, and communities. They dealt with individual Israelites on a local level. Here they are the tribal leaders from Judea who have been exiled by Nebuchadnezzar to an exilic community by the canal Chebar. The fact that the elders would come and consult with Ezekiel shows his reputation (i.e., "sitting before me"). What a contrast between the elders of Judah, who would seek God's counsel from Ezekiel, and the elders of Israel, who are committing idolatry in the temple and at home in 8:7-13.

■ "the hand of the Lord GOD fell on me there" Notice the anthropomorphic language (see Special Topic at 1:3). Apparently YHWH's revelations came at different times and at different places. The exact nature and mechanism of divine inspiration is uncertain, but the reality is certain (cf. 1:3; 3:14,22; 33:22; 37:1; I Kgs. 18:46; II Kgs. 3:15; Isa. 8:11; Jer. 15:17). God has revealed Himself and His will to certain human instruments and through them to generations of believers. See Special Topic at 37:1.

8:2 Although this appearance (BDB 909) is very similar to the description of anthropomorphic deity in 1:26, 27, this verse seems to describe angelic agency (typical of apocalyptic literature).

The MT has "a form that had the appearance of fire." The term "fire" (BDB 77) is repeated later in the verse. The Septuagint translates a similar Hebrew word "man" (BDB 35).

1.	Man	-	איש
2.	Fire	-	אש

• "fire" See note at Ezek. 1:27.

• "brightness, like the appearance of glowing metal" See note at Ezek. 1:4,27.

8:3 "He. . the Spirit" The angelic being is parallel or equated with the Spirit (cf. 3:12; 11:1). Often the Spirit (BDB 924) represents YHWH's presence. In this case the Spirit, in conjunction with the angelic being, transports the prophet (cf. I Kgs. 18:12; II Kgs. 2:16; Ezek. 3:12,14; 8:3; 11:24; 37:1; possibly Acts 8:26-27,39). See notes at 2:2.

"lifted" The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724) is used in

- 1. v. 3 *Qal* IMPERFECT, Ezekiel is lifted, cf. 3:12,14; 11:1,24; 43:5
- 2. v. 5 *Qal* IMPERATIVE, Ezekiel is commanded to lift his eyes
- 3. v. 5 *Qal* IMPERFECT, he lifts his eyes

■ "in the visions of God" "Visions" (BDB 909) is a means of receiving divine revelation (cf. Gen. 46:2; Num. 12:6; I Sam. 3:15; Dan. 10:16; Ezek. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2). Whether this involved

- 1. sight (cf. vv. 2,4,5,6,7,10,11)
- 2. hearing (cf. vv. 5,6,8,9,12)
- 3. mental images (cf. vv. 3,4,7)

is not always clear. See note at the beginning of the chapter, C.

• "to the entrance to the north gate of the inner *court*" This gate is called the Altar Gate in v. 4. We learn from Lev. 1:11 that this was the place of sacrifice. It was known as the royal entrance because it faced the palace of the king.

• "the idol of jealousy" There has been much discussion as to the exact nature of this idol or image (BDB 702). Idolatry caused a powerful reaction from YHWH (cf. Exod. 20:3-4)! Jealousy (BDB 888) is a word of deep passion. It is obvious that the idol had a prominent place at the entrance to the Temple of YHWH (cf. vv. 3,5; Jer. 7:30; 32:34). Some have supposed that because of II Kings 21:3,7; 23:6 that it was the carved image of Ashtoreth, the female fertility goddess. If so, this reflected Canaanite idolatry. Others supposed it was a statue of a temple guardian (i.e., lion, sphinx), if so, then Babylonian idolatry.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- I. Reasons For
 - A. Ancient humans began as hunter-gatherers, but as nomadic life became settled, the need for crops and herds developed.
 - B. Ancient Near Eastern inhabitants were vulnerable to the forces of nature. As civilizations developed around the major bodies of fresh water they became dependant on the regular order of the seasons.
 - C. The forces of nature became gods who needed to be supplicated and controlled.

II. Where and Why

- A. Fertility religions developed in
 - 1. Egypt (Nile)
 - 2. Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates)
 - 3. Canaan (Jordan)
- B. There is a basic commonality among the fertility cults of the Ancient Near East.
- C. The changing and unpredictable seasons and weather conditions caused the development of myths using human/divine analogies as the basis of life in the spiritual realm and on earth.

III. Who and How

- A. Who (the gods and goddesses)
 - 1. Egypt
 - a. Isis (female)
 - b. Osiris (male)
 - 2. Mesopotamia
 - a. Ishtar/Inanna (female)
 - b. Tammuz/Dumuzi (male)
 - c. Canaan
 - 1) Ba'al (male)
 - 2) Asherah, Astarte, Anath (female)
- B. Each of these pairs were mythologized in similar ways
 - 1. one dies
 - 2. the other restores
 - 3. the patterns of dying and rising gods mimics the annual cycles of nature
- C. Imitation magic saw human sexual unions (i.e., marriage of the gods) as a way of insuring fertility of crops, herds, and people.
- IV. The Israelites
 - A. YHWH's people were warned (i.e., Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to avoid the fertility cults (especially of Canaan).
 - B. These cults were very popular because of the superstition of human beings and the added incentive of sexual activity.
 - C. Idolatry involves the blessings of life to be sought in cultic or ritual ways instead of a personal faith and trust in YHWH.

IV. Suggested Reading

- A. W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel
- B. J. H. Breasted, Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt
- C. James G. Frazer
 - 1. Adonis, Attis, Osiris
 - 2. Folklore in the Old Testament
 - 3. The Worship of Nature
- D. C. H. Gordon, Before the Bible
- E. S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*

8:4 The portable throne chariot of God that Ezekiel saw in Babylon (cf. 1:26-28) was also present in the temple.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:5-6

⁵Then He said to me, "Son of man, raise your eyes now toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate *was* this idol of jealousy at the entrance." ⁶And He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations."

8:6 "great abominations" This term (BDB 1072) is used in this literary unit in 8:6 (twice),9,13,15,17 and 9:4; 11:18,21. See Special Topic at 5:11.

- NASB "that I would be far from My sanctuary"
- NKJV "to make Me go far away from My sanctuary"
- NRSV "to drive Me far from My sanctuary"
- **TEV** "drawing me farther and farther away from my holy place"
- NJB "to drive Me out of my sanctuary"

The VERBAL (BDB 934, KB 1221, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) expresses the reason for YHWH's departure (cf. 11:22-23) from the temple, which He promised never to leave (cf. II Sam. 7:13,16, but Jeremiah saw this as future, cf. Jer. 33:17,21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:7-13

⁷Then He brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. ⁸He said to me, "Son of man, now dig through the wall." So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance." ⁹And He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here." ¹⁰So I entered and looked, and behold, every form of creeping things and beasts *and* detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around. ¹¹Standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them, each man with his censer in his hand and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising. ¹²Then He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.'" ¹³And He said to me, "Yet you will see still greater abominations which they are committing."

8:7 "a hole in the wall" This implies that this particular idolatry was done in secret by the leaders of the people.

8:8 "now dig through the wall" This VERB (BDB 369, KB 365) is used twice.

- 1. *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. *Qal* IMPERFECT

It is uncertain how "the hole" of v. 7 is related to the new hole of v. 8, dug by Ezekiel. The first may have been a secret entrance for the idolaters (cf. vv. 11-12) and the second an access hole for Ezekiel to view the abominations occurring there (cf. vv. 10-13).

8:9 "Go in and see" These are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

- 1. BDB 97, KB 112, cf. v. 10
- 2. BDB 906, KB 1157, cf. v. 11

8:10 "every form of creeping things and beasts *and* **detestable things"** This may relate to the worship of animals as reflected in Egyptian idolatry (cf. Exodus 32, a golden calf, later copied at the temples in Bethel and Dan). For Israel, they were to make no image of these unclean (cf. Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) animals (cf. Deut. 4:18). These prohibitions were to isolate Israel from Canaanite worship. Much of the Levitical legislation is for this purpose.

• "were carved on the wall all around" The VERB (BDB 348, KB 347, *Pual* PARTICIPLE) means "to carve" (cf. I Kgs. 6:35 or "scratch" cf. Ezek. 4:1). In Ezek. 23:14 it may refer to wall painting.

8:11 "seventy elders of the house of Israel" "The house of Israel" parallels "the house of Judah." It also shows the number 70 (cf. Exod. 24:1; Num. 11:16,25) of the elders (cf. 7:26) involved in this idolatry. This would symbolize all of Israel's leadership. Seventy is a round number denoting fullness.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
 - 1. One God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 - 2. Six human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 - 3. Seven divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation.
 - a. seven candlesticks, 1:13,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, 4:5
 - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
 - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, 11:13
 - 1. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, 15:7
 - o. seven kings, 17:10
 - p. seven vials, 21:9
 - 4. Ten completeness
 - a. use in Gospels
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25

- b. use in Revelation
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
- c. multiples of 10 in Revelation:
 - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x10x10x10, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) $1,000 = 10 \times 10 \times 10$, cf. 20:2,3,6
- 5. Twelve human organization
 - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
 - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breastplate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
 - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
 - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 6. Forty number for time
 - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7;
 8:2
 - b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - c. Note (by means of a concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designations in the Bible!
- 7. Seventy round number for people
 - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9; Ezek. 8:11
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22

- B. Good references
 - 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
 - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

■ "Jaazaniah the son of Shapan" This shows the radical influence of idolatry when one of the well known leaders was involved in it (cf. 11:1). Shapan is a name related to the court leaders of Josiah (cf. II Kings 22; II Chronicles 34; Jeremiah 36), but the connection is uncertain. Possibly his name is meant to convey that the political leadership at the highest levels was involved.

8:11 "each man with his censer in his hand, and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising" They were all personally involved in the idolatrous rituals.

NASB, NRSV	"fragrance of the cloud of incense rising"
NKJV	"a thick cloud of incense went up"
TEV	"smoke was rising from the incense"
NJB, REB	"rose a fragrant cloud of incense"

The Hebrew term (BDB 801 II) is found only here in the OT. The same consonants mean (1) pray, (2) worshiper, (3) abundant, and (4) a place name in Josh. 15:42. BDB suggests "odor," but also possibly "smoke" (which is a symbol of prayer rising to God).

8:12 "each man in a room with its carved images" Not only were these leaders participating in cultic idolatry in the temple, but they had made local or individual shrines in their own homes (or alcoves of the temple). It is uncertain if this represents corporate worship or individual worship or both.

• "they say" There is a series of excuses and words found in the book of Ezekiel (cf. 8:12; 9:9; 11:3, 15; 12:22, 27; 18:2,25; 33:10, 24, 30; 35:12; 37:11). This is similar to Paul's use of diatribe in Romans.

■ ""The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land" These comments cast aspersions on God's knowledge and His covenant promises! They were repudiating the character of YHWH (cf. Gen. 3:1-7)! These men had reacted theologically to the deportations of artisans and leaders from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 596 B.C.

8:13 "yet you will see still greater abominations which they are committing" This becomes a repeated refrain (cf. v. 15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:14-15

¹⁴Then He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the LORD'S house which *was* toward the north; and behold, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. ¹⁵He said to me, "Do you see *this*, son of man? Yet you will see still greater abominations than these."

8:14 "women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz" See a good, brief article in James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 299-300. This reflects the Babylonian idolatry of the Sumerian agricultural god who died and rose every year. Obviously he became the fertility god of the Babylonians. He is known in Babylon as Dumuzi, Consort of Ishtar (cf. Isa. 17:10,11). He is known in Greece as Adonis, which is very similar to the Egyptian Osiris. This was the male lover of Aphrodite who was killed by wild boars and sent to the underworld each year for six months. The women wept to

identify with Aphrodite, who wept at the loss of her lover during the winter. August to September (cf. v. 1) would have started this cycle. Possibly the worship of Babylonian gods shows that it had already conquered Israel spiritually!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:16-18

¹⁶Then He brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun. ¹⁷He said to me, "Do you see *this*, son of man? Is it too light a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they have committed here, that they have filled the land with violence and provoked Me repeatedly? For behold, they are putting the twig to their nose. ¹⁸Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them."

8:16 "twenty-five men" There may be some purposeful symbolism related to the identity of these different groups.

- 1. The 70 elders and the son of Shapan seem to represent the civil leadership.
- 2. The women seem to represent the general public.
- 3. The twenty-five men may represent priests (i.e., the High Priest and the priests from David's day).

If so, then all segments of Israeli society were actively involved in idolatry at the temple (the place YHWH symbolically dwelt).

■ "with their backs to the Temple of the LORD and their faces to the east. . .toward the sun" The last mentioned Canaanite idolatry was the worship of the sun (i.e., Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 23:5,11; Jer. 8:2). The worship of the sun is also illustrated by the names of cities: (1) "Beth Shemesh" ["House of the sun," cf. Josh. 15:10; 21:16; Jdgs. 1:33]; (2) "En-shemesh" ["fountain of the sun," cf. Josh. 15:7; 18:17]; and (3) "Mount Heres" ["mount of the sun," cf. Jdgs. 1:35]). It is ironic symbolism that as they faced the sun they turned their back on the Lord. This sun worship was rampant all over the Ancient Near East, but particularly in Egypt, Canaan, Babylon, and later in Persia (cf. II Kgs. 23:11, also the later winged sun disk of Zoroastrianism).

8:17 "provoked Me repeatedly" The VERB (BDB 494, KB 491, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is regularly used of provoking YHWH to anger by committing idolatry (cf. Deut. 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 32:16; I Kgs. 14:9,15; 16:7,33; 22:54; II Kgs. 17:11,17; 21:6; 23:19; Jer. 25:6,7; 32:30; 44:8; Ezek. 16:25).

■ "for behold they are putting the twig to their nose" There have been several theories concerning this phrase: (1) we have found this (i.e., a flowered stem held to the nose) as an act of sun worship in Assyrian bas reliefs (which fits this context best); (2) the early rabbis and later Kimchi and Rashi say it relates to God's nose and thus the stench of idolatry that rose to Him; or (3) it is a sign of contempt and mockery of God (i.e., LXX, Strabo [historian], cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1118).

8:18 See note at 7:4.

EZEKIEL 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Vision of Slaughter	The Wicked Are Slain	Temple Visions (8:1-11:25)	Ezekiel's Second Vision (8:1-10:22)	The Punishment (9:1-10:17)
		The Punishment of the Guilty	Jerusalem Is Punished	
9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-7
9:3-8	9:3-7	9:3-10	9:3-4	
			9:5-6	
			9:7	
	9:8-11		9:8	9:8-11
9:9-10			9:9-10	
9:11		9:11	9:11	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-2

¹Then He cried out in my hearing with a loud voice saying, "Draw near, O executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand." ²Behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, each with his shattering weapon in his hand; and among them was a certain man clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

9:1 NASB, NKJV, NRSV "Draw near" TEV "come here" NJB "are approaching" REB "here they come"

This is translated as an IMPERATIVE, but the VERB (BDB 897, KB 1132) is a *Qal* PERFECT, which denotes that they have drawn near and abide!

NASB	"O executioners of the city"
NKJV	"those who have charge over the city"
NRSV	"you executioners of the city"
TEV	"you men who are going to punish"
NJB	"The scourges of the city"
REB	"those appointed to punish the city"
JPSOA	"you men in charge of the city"

Chapter 9 personifies the judgment that is mentioned in 8:18. These executioners (BDB 824, literally, "those who bring punishment") are angelic beings (cf. The Death Angel of Egypt, Exodus 12 and Dan. 4:13, 17, 23). It is interesting that the "watchers" of Daniel may serve as temple guardians. If so, they would have been distressed at an idol guardian erected at the temple entrance!

It is also interesting that the basic meaning of this FEMININE NOUN (BDB 824) is "visitation." It can mean for blessing, but usually it is for punishment (cf. Isa. 10:3; Jer. 8:12; 10:15; 49:8; 50:31; Hosea 9:7; Micah 7:4).

• "destroying weapon" This (BDB 479 and 1008) is similar to "shattering weapon" (BDB 479 and 658) in v. 2.

9:2 "the upper gate which faces the north" These angelic executioners came from the very place of the image in 8:3 and the women weeping in 8:14. It was also the direction from which the invading Babylonian army came.

Shattering weapon" This NOUN (BDB 658) is found only here in the OT. The VERB means "shatter." The same root consonants are found in Jer. 51:20 and denote a war club.

■ "a certain man clothed in linen" This, too, was one of the angelic beings sent by YHWH. He is dressed as a priest (cf. Exod. 28:42; I Sam. 22:18; Dan. 10:5; 12:6) and yet, is angelic and functions as a scribe. Recording angels are an aspect of apocalyptic literature (i.e., Enoch 89:59ff).

• "a writing case" This (BDB 903 and 707, literally "ink horn for writing") is an Egyptian loan word which speaks of the equipment of a scribe. It is found only in this chapter in the OT (cf. vv. 2,3,11).

■ "the bronze altar" This was the altar of sacrifice (i.e., Exod. 27:1-8 describes the bronze altar of the tabernacle; II Chr. 4:1 describes the bronze altar of Solomon's Temple). This sacrificial altar had been moved to the north side of the temple to accommodate Ahaz's new pagan altar, patterned after one in Damascus (cf. II Kgs. 16:10-16). This same altar of sacrifice is also described in Ezekiel's future temple (cf. 43:13-17).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:3-8

³Then the glory of the God of Israel went up from the cherub on which it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case. ⁴The LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, *even* through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst." ⁵But to the others He said in my hearing, "Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare. ⁶Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from My sanctuary." So they started with the elders who *were* before the temple. ⁷And He said to them, "Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go out!" Thus they went out and struck down *the people* in the city. ⁸As they were striking the people and I *alone* was left, I fell on my face and cried out saying, "Alas, Lord GOD! Are You destroying the whole remnant of Israel by pouring out Your wrath on Jerusalem?"

9:3 "went up from the cherub" This can refer either to God moving (1) from the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Exod. 25:10-22) or (2) from His throne chariot (cf. 8:4). This is part of the preparation for God leaving the Temple and moving east (cf. 10:18-19; 43:2-5).

For "cherub" see Special Topic at 1:5.

• "the threshold of the temple" The term "threshold" (BDB 837, cf. 9:3; 10:4,18; 47:1) is uncertain. It has no cognates. Some think it is related to "asylum" or "protector." It has something to do with the entrance. The same Hebrew consonants mean "cobra" or "serpent."

Interestingly the JPSOA translation has "to the platform of the House." The Jewish Study Bible's footnote says, "the raised platform on which the Temple stood, cf. 47:1," p. 1058.

9:4 "Go through the midst of the city" The VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) commands that those who "sigh" (BDB 58, KB 70, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) and "groan" (BDB 60, KB 72, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, literally, "be in mourning") over Israel's idolatry be marked for protection. This shows YHWH's compassion and protection for those who seek Him even in the midst of judgment. This is related to the theological concept of a believing remnant (cf. Special Topic at 5:2-4).

• "and put a mark on the forehead of the men" This is similar to the mark of protection placed on Cain's forehead in Gen. 4:15 and later in the NT on the saints in Rev. 7:1-3; 14:1.

The term "mark" (BDB 1063, KB 1696, *Hiphil* PERFECT, "set a mark") and the shape of the mark is not known. The same consonants form the word for "wound" or "pain" (cf. Ps. 78:41). Whatever it was it was visible to the angelic beings who brought death.

There is speculation (often allegorical) that the Hebrew t (*tau*) was in the shape of a t or x, which symbolized Christ (cf. Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, p. 332). Be careful of allegory. It can make Scripture mean anything!

9:5-6 The command is repeated from v. 4 with the added command, "strike" (BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf, 7:9; 32:15).

The two commands, "go through" and "strike," are grammatically related to three JUSSIVES:

- 1. do not let your eye have pity, BDB 299, KB 298, *Qal* JUSSIVE, YHWH states that He will have no pity in 5:11; 7:4,9; 8:18; 9:10
- 2. do not spare, BDB 328, KB 328, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 3. do not touch any man on whom is the mark, BDB 620, KB 670, *Qal* IMPERFECT, literally, "drawn near," used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. Exod. 12:33; Rev. 9:4

9:6 "utterly slay" This VERB (BDB 246, KB 255, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means "to kill" with an added NOUN (BDB 1008) "ruin," "destruction," cf. Exod. 12:13.

• "old men, young men, maidens, little children and women" This list adds shocking vividness to the order "kill" (i.e., kill everyone, of any sex, of any age, of any social, economic standing)!

• "and you shall start from My sanctuary" The VERB (BDB 320, KB 319, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT [twice]) is from a root which basically means "to pollute," "to defile," and "to profane."

I think this is probably the OT source of Peter's statement in I Pet. 4:17, "for it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God."

• "so they started with the elders who were before the Temple" We must remember that privilege brings great responsibility. To whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48; Gal. 6:7).

9:7 YHWH's commands to the angelic destroyers are three-fold in this verse.

- 1. "defile the temple," BDB 379, KB 375, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. 6:4-5
- 2. "fill the courts with the slain," BDB 569, KB 583, Piel IMPERATIVE
- 3. "go through," BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, similar statement to 9:4

9:8 "I *alone* **was left**" Ezekiel begins to plead for the remnant when he realizes the destroying angels were killing everyone (BDB 983, KB 1375, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Gen. 7:23). Apparently there were none who grieved over the idolatry (i.e., no righteous remnant left in Jerusalem)!

Remember this is a theological vision (8:1). This is a prediction of the Babylonian invasions (i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.), culminating in the 586 B.C. destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Many died, but not all! The terrible vision is a result of YHWH's revulsion to idolatry! In the vision there were no survivors. In reality there were. The vision drives home the theological truth with vividness and power! YHWH hates idolatry, especially in His own covenant people!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:9-10

⁹Then He said to me, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is very, very great, and the land is filled with blood and the city is full of perversion; for they say, 'The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see!' ¹⁰But as for Me, My eye will have no pity nor will I spare, but I will bring their conduct upon their heads."

9:9 This decree of guilt (BDB 730) is expressed by three words in the Hebrew text.

- 1. "great," BDB 152
- 2. "exceedingly," BDB 547 (twice)
- 3. "is full," BDB 569, KB 583, *Niphal* IMPERFECT and it is repeated in *Qal* PERFECT, "full of perversion" (BDB 642)

• "perversion" This term (BDB 642) occurs only here in the OT. It may be from the root "bend" or "twist" (BDB 62, initial n instead of m). If so, the root concept of sin as a perversion of the standard would make sense.

• "they say" This reflects the idolaters' statement of 8:12 (cf. Isa. 29:15; 47:10).

9:10 The Jerusalemite idolaters say YHWH does not see. In one sense, they are right. He will refuse to see (i.e., My eye) when calamity comes, cf. 8:18.

I "I shall bring their conduct upon their heads" This phrase is used several times (cf. 7:3,4,8,9; 9:11; 11:21; 16:43; 17:19; 22:31; I Kgs. 8:22). See note at 7:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:11

¹¹Then behold, the man clothed in linen at whose loins was the writing case reported, saying, ''I have done just as You have commanded me.''

9:11 This refers to the angelic messenger/scribe. Angels obey God, but not His creatures made in His image. What irony!

EZEKIEL 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Temple Vision (8:1-11:25)		
Vision of God's Glory Departing From the Temple	The Glory Departs From the Temple	The LORD Leaves His Temple	The glory of the LORD Leaves the Temple	The Punishment (9:1-10:22)
10:1-2	10:1-2	10:1-5	10:1-2b	10:1-2
			10:2c-5	
10:3-5	10:3-5			10:3-5
10:6-8	10:6-8	10:6-8	10:6-7	10:6-7
			10:8-13	10:8-10
10:9-14	10:9-14	10:9-14		
				10:11-17
			10:14-17	
10:15-17	10;15-17	10:15-17		The Glory of Yahweh Leaves the Temple
10:18-19	10:18-19	10:18-19	10:18-20	10:18-22
10:20-22	10:20-22	10:20-22		
			10:21-22	

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-2

¹Then I looked, and behold, in the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim something like a sapphire stone, in appearance resembling a throne, appeared above them. ²And He spoke to the man clothed in linen and said, "Enter between the whirling wheels under the cherubim and fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter *them* over the city." And he entered in my sight.

10:1-2 This is very similar to the description of YHWH's portable throne chariot of 1:13-25.

10:2 YHWH gives three commands to the angelic being dressed in linen.

- 1. "enter," BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. "fill," BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "scatter," BDB 284, KB 283, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The imagery comes from the vision of Isa. 6:6, where it is initially a purification ritual inaugurating Isaiah's ministry. Here it is a judgment ritual, which is repeated in Rev. 8:5. In may ways Isaiah (i.e., chapter 24) and Ezekiel are the beginning of apocalyptic imagery. This is developed in Daniel and Zechariah and becomes a significant Jewish genre during the interbiblical period.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:3-5

³Now the cherubim were standing on the right side of the temple when the man entered, and the cloud filled the inner court. ⁴Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the LORD. ⁵Moreover, the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when He speaks.

10:3 "the cloud filled the inner court" This is the theophanic cloud (BDB 777) of glory (a visual symbol of the presence of YHWH) that was present

- 1. at the crossing of the Red Sea (cf. Exod. 13:21)
- 2. on Mount Sinai (cf. Exod. 24:14-18)
- 3. at the tabernacle of Moses (cf. Exod. 40:34-38; Num. 14:14)
- 4. at the dedication of Solomon's Temple (cf. I Kgs. 8:11)
- 5. in Isaiah's vision (cf. Isa. 6:4)
- 6. in Ezekiel's vision (cf. Ezek. 1:4)
- 7. at the baptism of Jesus (cf. Mark 1:10-11)
- 8. at the transfiguration of Jesus (cf. Matt. 17:5)
- 9. at the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9)
- 10. at the return of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 21:27; I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:7)

This ADJECTIVE "inner" (BDB 819) refers to parts of the temple or a king's palace (cf. Esther 4:11; 5:1). The VERB form means "to turn a specific direction" (cf. 8:3). Ezekiel uses this term twenty-four times in his discussions of the Jerusalem temple and his eschatological temple.

10:4 "the glory of the LORD. . . brightness of the glory of the LORD" See Special Topic on "glory" at 3:12. Brightness becomes an added characteristic of His glory (cf. 1:4,28) during the Wilderness Wandering period (i.e., the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory).

• "the threshold" See full note at 9:3.

10:5 "the sound of the wings of the Cherubim" For the full notes see 1:24.

• "God Almighty" This is the Hebrew title *El Shaddai*. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:6-8

⁶It came about when He commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he entered and stood beside a wheel. ⁷Then the cherub stretched out his hand from between the cherubim to the fire which *was* between the cherubim, took some and put it into the hands of the one clothed in linen, who took *it* and went out. ⁸The cherubim appeared to have the form of a man's hand under their wings.

10:6 "Take fire from between the whirling wheels and from between the Cherubim" The VERB (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is the fourth command to this angelic being (cf. v. 2). This is obviously a reference to the burning coals, which represent God's holiness.

10:7-8,11-12,14 The full description of the Cherubim is given in 1:5-14.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:9-14

⁹Then I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels *was* like the gleam of a Tarshish stone. ¹⁰As for their appearance, all four of them had the same likeness, as if one wheel were within another wheel. ¹¹When they moved, they went in *any* of their four directions without turning as they went; but they followed in the direction which they faced, without turning as they went. ¹²Their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around, the wheels belonging to all four of them. ¹³The wheels were called in my hearing, the whirling wheels. ¹⁴And each one had four faces. The first face *was* the face of a cherub, the second face *was* the face of a man, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

10:9-10,13 The full description of the wheels is found in 1:15-21.

10:12 "Their whole body, their back, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around" This is an expansion of the description found in chapter 1, where the eyes were only found on the wheels (cf. 1:18; Rev. 4:6,8). It seems to be an intensification of the all-knowingness of God. This is in contrast to the statements of the idolaters in 8:12 and which is reacted to by God in 9:9.

10:14 "The first face *was* **the face of a cherub"** In 1:10 it was the face of an ox. There is no real explanation for the change (cf. Rev. 4:7). Even in the book of Ezekiel it seems that the description changes even again in 41:18-19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:15-17

¹⁵Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw by the river Chebar. ¹⁶Now when the cherubim moved, the wheels would go beside them; also when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels would not turn from beside them. ¹⁷When the cherubim stood still, the wheels would stand still; and when they rose up, the wheels would rise with them, for the spirit of the living beings *was* in them. **10:15, 20 "The cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw at the river Chebar"** Possibly, Ezekiel had not been in the inner court of the temple. Although he was in training to become a priest he was exiled before his thirtieth year. Apparently when he saw the pictures on the inside of the Temple he recognized the creatures he saw in chapter 1 were the Cherubim.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:18-19

¹⁸Then the glory of the LORD departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim. ¹⁹When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still at the entrance of the east gate of the LORD'S house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.

10:18 God returns to His throne chariot.

10:19 This is the initial sequence of YHWH leaving His temple. This is where the symbolic title "Ichabod," which means "the glory has departed," was put over the Temple. It is one thing for YHWH to refuse to listen to His people. It is far more devastating that He leave His temple! The rabbis speculate that God stayed three and a half years on the Mount of Olives (cf. 11:22-23) hoping that the Jews would repent, but they would not. This is surely an exaggeration. So He moved east to be with the exiles who formed a nucleus of the people of God who would return.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:20-22

²⁰These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they *were* cherubim. ²¹Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings *was* the form of human hands. ²²As for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one went straight ahead.

EZEKIEL 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Temple Visions (8:1-11:25)		
Evil Rulers To Be Judged	Judgment On Wicked Counselors	Judgment and Promise	Jerusalem Condemned	The Sins of Jerusalem (con't.)
11:1-4	11:1-4	11:1-4	11:1-4	11:1
				11:2-12
11:5-12	11:5-12	11:5-12	11:5-6	
			11:7-12	
11:13	11:13	11:13	11:13	11:13
Promise of Restoration	God Will Restore Israel		God's Promise to the Exiles	The New Covenant Promised to the Exiles
11:14-21	11:14-21	11:14-21	11:14-15	11:14-21
			11:16	
			11:17-21	
			God's Glory Leaves Jerusalem	The Glory of Yahweh Leaves Jerusalem
11:22-25	11:22-23	11:22-25	11:22-25	11:22-23
	11:24-25			11:24-25

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-4

¹Moreover, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the LORD'S house which faced eastward. And behold, *there were* twenty-five men at the entrance of the gate, and among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. ²He said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and give evil advice in this city, ³who say, 'Is not *the time* near to build houses? This *city* is the pot and we are the flesh.' ⁴Therefore, prophesy against them, son of man, prophesy!"

11:1 "the Spirit lifted me up" This was not the first or last time Ezekiel was impacted by the Spirit (cf. 2:2; 3:12,14; 8:3; 11:24; 43:5). See note at 3:12.

• "the east gate of the LORD'S house" We know from Jer. 26:10 that this was a place of public assembly (like the city gate in local settings). This gate is mentioned in 10:19. This is where the portable Throne Chariot lifted up and left the Temple area.

■ "Jaazaniah son Azzur" There are three others mentioned by this same name but who have different fathers (cf. 8:11; II Kgs. 25:23; Jer. 35:3). Be careful of confusion.

Pelatiah" We know nothing of this man. It is obvious that these two men were leaders of the people. The nobility had been exiled with Ezekiel in 597 B.C. and, therefore, these were new leaders.

NASB, NJB,
JPSOA"leaders of the people"NKJV"princes of the people"NRSV"officials of the people"TEV"leaders of the nation"REB"of high office"

The NKJV has the literal (BDB 978 construct BDB 766) ??. This would imply they are high government leaders. The problem comes in how to identify them because most of these leaders were exiled with Ezekiel and the royal court (597 B.C.). These may have been

- 1. some who escaped capture and deportation
- 2. some of lesser stature who assumed the role of leadership in the vacuum caused by the exile

11:2 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "who devise iniquity and give evil advice in the city" Their attitude is depicted in vv. 3 and 15. They are false leaders (cf. v. 4), so common in Israel's religious and civic life!

11:3 "Is it not time to build houses? This city is the pot and we are the flesh" What they were saying is

- 1. "We are the chosen ones. Those who were exiled were judged by God, but He is not going to judge us who remain in the chosen city! We are His choicest vessels" (cf. 28:26; Jer. 29:5, i.e., build houses in Jerusalem now! Also note Jer. 21:8-10, where the prophets were preaching "Peace, peace" and yet the destruction of Babylon is surely coming).
- 2. The phrase "to build houses" may be an idiom for starting a family (or family line, cf. Deut. 25:9; Ruth 4:11).

Not only is the first phrase in doubt, but also the second. It could be

- a metaphor for protection a.
- b. a metaphor for destruction

All being noted, I think it is a parallel to the false prophets' message of

- peace is sure a.
- the city will never fall b.
- we who remain are the chosen ones c.
- YHWH has already rejected us, why should we serve Him? 3.
- 4. Let us prepare for war (i.e., build fortifications, not build houses)!

11:4 "prophesy against them" Ezekiel had done this earlier in 3:4,17.

The VERB "prophesy" (BDB 612, KB 659) is a Niphal IMPERATIVE. It is used twice for emphasis! YHWH, by His Spirit, directed the prophet (v. 5) what to say, when to say it, and who to say it to.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:5-12

⁵Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and He said to me, "Say, 'Thus says the LORD, "So you think, house of Israel, for I know your thoughts. ⁶You have multiplied your slain in this city, filling its streets with them." ⁷Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of the city are the flesh and this *city* is the pot; but I will bring you out of it. ⁸You have feared a sword; so I will bring a sword upon you," the Lord GOD declares. ⁹"And I will bring you out of the midst of the city and deliver you into the hands of strangers and execute judgments against you. ¹⁰You will fall by the sword. I will judge you to the border of Israel; so you shall know that I am the LORD. ¹¹This *city* will not be a pot for you, nor will you be flesh in the midst of it, but I will judge you to the border of Israel. ¹²Thus you will know that I am the LORD; for you have not walked in My statutes nor have you executed My ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations around you.""

11:5 "said...say...says" The Hebrew word "say" (BDB 55, KB 65) is found often in this chapter.

- 1. v. 2 -Qal IMPERFECT
- 2. v. 3 - Oal PARTICIPLE v. 5 -Qal IMPERFECT 3.-6. -Oal IMPERATIVE - Qal PERFECT (twice) v. 7 - Qal PERFECT 7.
- 8. v. 13 – Qal IMPERFECT
- 9. v. 14 - Qal infinitive construct
- 10. v. 15 - Qal PERFECT
- 11.-12. v. 16 - Qal imperative
 - -Qal PERFECT
- v. 17 Qal imperative 13.-14

- Qal PERFECT

See note at v. 4. Ezekiel is YHWH's mouthpiece!

I "I know your thoughts" This same truth is expressed in several ways (cf. I Sam. 16:7; I Chr. 28:9; Ps. 7:9; Pro. 16:2; 21:2; 24:12; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; 15:8; Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23). God knows the thoughts and motives of His human creatures! We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7) and what we think!

The literal phrase is "what comes up in your spirit" (NASB margin). The Hebrew term "spirit," "wind," "breath" (BDB 924) is understood here as "mind" (cf. 20:32).

11:6 The terrible judgment about to destroy Jerusalem and the temple (God's protected place, Jer. 7:26) is because of their evil, not a lack of YHWH's protection and care!

11:7 This statement reverses the false leaders' statement of confidence in v. 3.

11:9 "I shall deliver you into the hands of" This is an idiom of military defeat.

• "of strangers" This is a fulfillment of Deut. 28:36,49,50. As Assyrians exiled the northern tribes, so Babylon will exile the southern tribes!

11:10 "so you shall know that I am the LORD" See note at 6:13.

• "to the borders of Israel" This could be "as far as the borders of Israel," or it could refer to "at the borders of Israel" as fulfilled in II Kings 25:18-21, where Zechariah, when trying to fleeing, is captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar II at Riblah.

11:11 This is a clarification of v. 7.

11:12 Israel sinned against two "laws."

- 1. the statutes and ordinances of YHWH (see Special Topic at 5:7; known as "special revelation," cf. Ps. 19:7-12)
- 2. the society norms of the surrounding nations (cf. 5:7; known as "natural revelation," cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19; 2:14)

Israel "walked" (i.e., lifestyle actions, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT) in ways more evil than their pagan neighbors. This demanded judgment (cf. Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-30).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:13

¹³Now it came about as I prophesied, that Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell on my face and cried out with a loud voice and said, "Alas, Lord GOD! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?"

11:13 "it came about as I prophesied, that Pelatiah son of Benaiah died" This was a visible and immediate sign to the elders back in the exile of the validity of Ezekiel's message. The word of this man's death would not reach them for several weeks.

• "Alas, Lord GOD! Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end" This same question was asked by Ezekiel as the six angelic destroyers went through the city (9:8).

It is uncertain why the death of an evil leader (v. 2) would illicit this response.

For the theological concept of "remnant" see Special Topic at 5:2-4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:14-21

¹⁴Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁵"Son of man, your brothers, your relatives, your fellow exiles and the whole house of Israel, all of them, *are those* to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'Go far from the LORD; this land has been given us as a possession.' ¹⁶Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.'' ¹⁷Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you

have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel."¹⁸When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. ¹⁹And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. ²¹But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

11:15	
NASB, NRSV	"your fellow exiles"
NASB margin	"the men of your redemption"
NKJV	"your kinsmen"
NRSV footnote	"people of your kindred"
NJB, REB	"to your kinfolk"
LXX	"the men of thy captivity"

The MT has "the men of your kindred" (BDB 35 construct BDB 145), which seems to refer to other exiles, possibly of the same tribe clan or family.

■ "Go far from the LORD; this land has been given us as a possession" "Go far" (BDB 934, KB 1221) can be a *Qal* IMPERATIVE or a *Qal* PERFECT. This is related to verse 3. The current residents of Jerusalem were saying they were the new chosen seed and the exiles (the royal family, the civil and religious leaders, and the artisans) had been rejected. But in reality just the opposite was true. This can be seen in v. 16, where God says, "I am going to dwell with the exiles" and v. 17, where He says He will restore them to the land. Both vv. 16 and 17 start with an IMPERATIVE!

Although it is true that Ezekiel focuses on Judah's destruction and exile through chapter 24 (chapters 25-32 are oracles against the nations, except for 28:25-26), there are hints here and there in these early chapters of Ezekiel's message of restoration to the faithful remnant.

- 1. 5:3
- 2. 6:8-9
- 3. 11:14-21
- 4. 12:16
- 5. 16:60-63
- 6. 17:22-24
- 7. 20:39-44
- 8. 28:25-26

11:16 "I was a sanctuary for them" YHWH is described as a place of sacredness and safety to the faithful exiles (cf. Isa. 8:14, in Isa. 25:4 He is a "refuge"). These are all powerful metaphors for care and protection! The physical sanctuary in Jerusalem will be destroyed, but the "true" sanctuary (i.e., YHWH) was with them in exile as the visions of Ezekiel would clearly reveal. YHWH had left Jerusalem and moved east (cf. 11:22-25), but He would return with the exiles.

This phrase may have been the OT background for Jesus' statement in John 2:19, quoted in Mark 14:58; 15:29; and Acts 6:14. Jesus saw Himself as the new temple! He is our sanctuary!

The term "little" (BDB 589), depending on context, can mean "a little," "a few." It can denote numbers, kinds, or time. In this context "time" (i.e., the exile) fits best. YHWH Himself cannot be described as "a little sanctuary"!

11:17 "the land of Israel" See note at 7:2. For the name Israel see Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name's meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persisteth
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
 - C. *El* Persevereth
 - D. Let *El* Contend
 - E. *El* Strives
 - F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28).
- II. Usages in the OT
 - A. Jacob's name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10; 32:13).
 - B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
 - C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
 - D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 - 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 - 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 7:22 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
 - E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
 - F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants again (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
 - G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

11:18 Notice that "they will remove" (BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* PLURAL) follows Ezek. 18:31-32. However, this has been the problem of fallen humanity, they cannot keep God's covenant! Therefore, YHWH will act on their behalf (cf. 36:22-38).

- 1. "I will give," v. 19, BDB 678, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT SINGULAR
- 2. "I shall put, v. 19, BDB 678, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERFECT SINGULAR
- 3. "I shall take out," v. 19, BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* PERFECT SINGULAR
- 4. "I will give," v. 19, BDB 678, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT

Notice that human response is still required (cf. v. 20).

- 1. "they will walk," v. 20, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT PLURAL
- 2. "they will keep," v. 20, BDB 1036, KB 1581, Qal IMPERFECT PLURAL
- 3. "they will do," v. 20, BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT PLURAL

The covenant will be restored ("they will be My people, and I shall be their God"), but it still required obedience (cf. v. 21; Deut. 30:2,10).

The returning exiles were meant to remove all the idolatrous evil from the land. By reading Ezra and Nehemiah this hope was only partially fulfilled. Idolatry was forsaken, but other evils returned.

The terms "detestable" (BDB 1055) and "abominations" (BDB 1072) are used together in 5:11; 7:20; 11:18,21; and Jer. 16:18.

11:19 "I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them" The MT has "one" heart, but note the following translations.

- 1. LXX "another heart"
- 2. Peshitta "a new heart"
- 3. REB "singleness of heart"
- 4. NIV "an undivided heart"

If "one," then it denotes

- 1. loyalty to YHWH
- 2. unity of Jacob's children (cf. 37:15-23)

Because of (1) the parallelism within v. 19 and the textual parallel of 36:26-27, I think the concept of "new" fits best. This is the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34. Not just restoration, but reorientation from an outward performance standard to an inner motivation based on divine performance (cf. Deut. 30:3-9). It is not just a new day for the children of Jacob, but for the children of Adam!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *leb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

- 1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
- 2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind's spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
- 3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
- 4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
- 5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
- 6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
- the heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms.
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart" (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
 - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

This is very similar to the new covenant (cf. Luke 22:20; I Cor. 11:25; II Cor. 3:3,6; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:24) described in Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:22-38. Israel had been characterized by Moses as being stiff-necked, hard-faced, and hard-hearted; now they will have a soft heart (i.e., obedient heart, cf. Ezek. 36:27) that is turned toward God (cf. Ezek. 16:60-63).

This is a good example of God's sovereignty and mankind's individual responsibility in the sense that this same phrase is repeated in 18:31, where the people are commanded to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit. Yet, again in 36:26 it says that YHWH will give them a new heart and a new

spirit. Here is the paradox of God's sovereignty and human responsibility! At this point let me insert two theological Special Topics that deal with this issue.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Eph. 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Eph. 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths.

- 1. Predestination vs. human free will
- 2. Security of the believers vs. the need for perseverance
- 3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
- 4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
- 5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
- 6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
- 7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
- 8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
- 9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
- 10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
- 11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
- 12. Jesus as equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PREDESTINATION (CALVINISM) VS. HUMAN FREE WILL (ARMINIANISM)

It is important to balance predestination with free will. I thought it might be theologically helpful to provide my commentary notes from Rom. 8:29 and Romans 9, as well as Ephesians 1.

I. Rom. 8:29 - Paul uses "foreknew" (*proginōskō*, "to know before") twice, here and 11:2. In 11:2 it refers to God's covenant love for Israel before time began. Remember that the term "know" in Hebrew related to intimate, personal relationship, not to facts about someone (cf. Genesis 4:1; and

Jeremiah 1:5). Here it was included in a chain of eternal events (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). This term was linked with predestination. However, it must be stated that God's foreknowledge is not the basis of election because if that were so, then election would be based on fallen humanity's future response, which would be human performance. This term is also found in Acts 26:5; I Pet. 1:2,20 and II Pet. 3:17.

A. "foreknew" (*proginōskō*, "to know before")

The terms "foreknow" or "predestine" are both compounds with the preposition "before" and therefore, should be translated "to know before," "to set bounds before," or "mark off before." The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:13-14; and Romans 9. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things. There is a preset divine plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, but on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelegius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

B. "predestined" (*proorizō*, "to set the bounds before")

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God's love, grace, and mercy nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their worldview. God is <u>for</u> all mankind (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? God views all history as present. Humans are time bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of truth given in dialectical tension. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by choosing one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). We were chosen to be "holy and blameless." God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility. This is the major truth of the passage. This is the goal of Christianity. Holiness is God's will for every believer. God's election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God, which was given to man in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6), is to be restored.

- C. "conformed to the image of His Son"—God's ultimate goal is the restoration of the image lost in the Fall. Believers are foreordained to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4).
- II. Romans 9
 - A. Chapter 9 is one of the strongest NT passages on God's sovereignty (the other being Eph. 1:3-14), while Romans 10 states humans' free will clearly and repeatedly (cf. "everyone" v. 4; "whosoever" vv. 11,13; "all" v. 12 [twice]). Paul never tries to reconcile this theological tension. They are both true! Most Bible doctrines are presented in paradoxical or dialectical pairs. Most systems of theology are logical half-truths. Augustinianism and Calvinism versus semi-Pelegianism and Arminianism have elements of truth and error. Biblical tension

between doctrines is preferable to a proof-texted, dogmatic, rational, theological system that forces the Bible onto a preconceived interpretive grid.

B. This same truth (found in Rom. 9:23) is stated in Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:4,11. This chapter is the strongest expression of God's sovereignty in the NT. There can be no dispute that God is in total charge of creation and redemption. This great truth should never be softened or diminished. However, it must be balanced with God's choice of covenant as a means of relating to human creation, made in His image. It is surely true that some OT covenants, like Genesis 15, are unconditional and do not relate at all to human response, but other covenants are conditioned on human response (e.g., Eden, Noah, Moses, David). God has a plan of redemption for His creation; no human can affect this plan. God has chosen to allow individuals to participate in His plans. This opportunity for participation is a theological tension between sovereignty (Romans 9) and human free will (Romans 10).

It is not appropriate to select one biblical emphasis and ignore another. There is tension between doctrines because eastern people present truth in dialectical or tension-filled pairs. Doctrines must be held in relationship to other doctrines. Truth is a mosaic of truths.

III. Ephesians 1

A. Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven only, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner, etc).

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from man. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

B. "He chose us" in Eph. 1:4 is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE, which emphasizes the subject. This focuses on the Father's choice before time. God's choice must not be understood in the Islamic sense of determinism, nor in the ultra-Calvinistic sense as some versus others, but in the covenantal sense. God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose Abraham to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). God Himself elected all persons who would exercise faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). This text and Romans 9 are the biblical basis for the doctrine of predestination emphasized by Augustine and Calvin. God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification (cf. Co1:12). This could relate to (1) our position in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21) or (2) God's desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). God's will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

"In Him" is a key concept of Eph. 1:4. The Father's blessings, grace, and salvation flow through Christ (cf. John 14:6). Notice the repetition of this grammatical form (LOCATIVE OF SPHERE) in v. 3, "in Christ"; v. 4, "in Him"; v. 7, "in Him"; v. 9, "in Him"; v. 10, "in Christ," "in Him"; v. 12, "in Christ"; and v. 13, "in Him" (twice). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind (Karl Barth). Jesus is the elect man and all are potentially elect in Him. All of God the Father's blessings flow through Christ.

The phrase "before the foundation of the world" is also used in Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; I Pet. 1:19-20 and Rev. 13:8. It shows the Triune God's redemptive activity even before Gen. 1:1. Humans are limited by their sense of time; everything to us is past, present, and future, but not to God.

The goal of predestination is holiness, not privilege. God's call is not to a selected few of Adam's children, but to all! It is a call to be what God intended mankind to be, like Himself (cf. I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13); in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). To turn predestination into a theological tenet instead of a holy life is a tragedy. Often our theologies speak louder than the biblical text.

The term "blameless" ($am\bar{o}mos$) or "free from blemish" is used of (1) Jesus (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19); (2) Zachariah and Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:6); (3) Paul (cf. Phil. 3:6); and (4) all true Christians (cf. Phil. 2:15; I Thess. 3:13; 5:23). God's unalterable will for every Christian is not only heaven later, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 4:19; I Pet. 1:2). Believers are to reflect God's characteristics to a lost world for the purpose of evangelism.

Grammatically the phrase "in love" in this verse could go with either v. 4 or v. 5. However, when this phrase is used in other places in Ephesians it always refers to human love for God (cf. 3:17; 4:2,15,16).

C. In Eph. 1:5 the phrase "He predestined us" is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This Greek term is a compound of "before" and "mark off." It refers to God's predetermined redemptive plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 17:31; Rom. 8:29-30). Predestination is one of several truths related to mankind's salvation. It is part of a theological pattern or series of related truths. It was never meant to be emphasized in isolation! Biblical truth has been given in a series of tension-filled, paradoxical pairs. Denominationalism has tended to remove the biblical tension by emphasizing only one of the dialectical truths (predestination vs. human free will; security of the believer vs. perseverance of the saints; original sin vs. volitional sin; sinlessness vs. sinning less; instantaneously declared sanctification vs. progressive sanctification; faith vs. works; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility; transcendence vs. immanence).

God's choice is not based on foreknowledge of human performance, but on His gracious character (cf. vv. 9 & 11). He wishes that all (not just some special ones like the Gnostics or modern-day ultra-Calvinists) would be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23,32; John 3:16-17; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9). God's grace (God's character) is the theological key to this passage (cf. vv. 6a, 7c, 9b), as God's mercy is the key to the other passage on predestination, Romans 9-11.

Fallen mankind's only hope is the grace and mercy of God (cf. Isa. 53:6 and several other OT texts quoted in Rom. 3:9-18). It is crucial in interpreting these first theological chapters to realize that Paul emphasizes those things which are totally unrelated to human performance: predestination (chap. 1), grace (chap. 2), and God's eternal plan of redemption (mystery, 2:11- 3:13). This was to counterbalance the emphasis of the false teachers on human merit and pride.

11:20 "that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them" Obedience is crucial! It is not optional. These are conditional covenants! Notice the repetition used for emphasis.

- 1. "walk," BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 13:4-5; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16
- 2. "keep," BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 2:4; 4:2,6,9,15,23,40
- 3. "do," BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 4:1,3,6,13,14,16,23,25

■ "Then they will be my people and I will be their God" These are covenant terms (cf. Exod. 6:7; Ezek. 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:27). This was so important for these exiled people to hear because they wondered if God would keep His covenant with Israel's descendants. They wondered if they had been rejected. They wondered if their sin had totally altered their relationship with YHWH.

11:21 "I shall bring their conduct down on their heads" See note at 9:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:22-25

²²Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them. ²³The glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city. ²⁴And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me. ²⁵Then I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me.

11:22 This is referring to the portable throne chariot of YHWH, first seen by Ezekiel in chapter 1 and seen again in chapter 8. In v. 23 it moves from the temple to the Mt. of Olives and then in v. 24 it moves to the exiles in Babylon.

11:23 This shows the depth of the idolatry of the city of Jerusalem and particularly the priests that YHWH would have to leave the place where He had chosen to dwell (i.e., the temple), and go with the exiles.

11:24 "I had seen" This VERB (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT) is one of the terms used to describe a prophet (i.e., "seer." See Introductory Article, "Prophecy").

11:25 "I told the exiles all the things God had shown me" This refers to the elders who were mentioned in 8:1. Therefore, chapters 8-11 form a literary unit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. Why did the elders come to Ezekiel?
- 2. What does the series of idolatry in chapter 8 mean?
- 3. Why is the description of the Cherubim and the portable throne chariot in chapter 10 slightly different from chapter 1?
- 4. Why is chapter 11:16 and 23 so significant to the exiles?
- 5. Describe the significance of chapter 11:19 in relationship to the New Covenant of Jeremiah and the NT emphasis on individual responsibility.

EZEKIEL 12

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Ezekiel Prepares for Exile	Judah's Captivity Portrayed	Symbols of the Exile	The Prophet As A Refugee	The Mime of Exile
12:1-6	12:1-6	12:1-6	12:1-2	12:1-6
			12:3-6	
12:7	12:7	12:7	12:7	12:7
12:8-16	12:8-16	12:8-16	12:8-14	12:8-16
			12:15-16	
	Judgment Not Postponed		The Sign of the Trembling Prophet	
12:17-20	12:17-20	12:17-20	12:17-20`	12:17-20
		Of Prophets and People (12:21-14:23)	A Popular Proverb and An Unpopular Message	Popular Proverbs
12:21-25	12:21-25	12:21-25	12:21-23	12:21-22
				12:23a
				12:23b-25
			12:24-25	
12:26-28	12:26-28	12:26-28	12:26-28	12:16-28

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READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-6

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²"Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house. ³Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself baggage for exile and go into exile by day in their sight; even go into exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand though they are a rebellious house. ⁴Bring your baggage out by day in their sight, as baggage for exile. Then you will go out at evening in their sight, as those going into exile. ⁵Dig a hole through the wall in their sight and go out through it. ⁶Load *the baggage* on *your* shoulder in their sight *and* carry *it* out in the dark. You shall cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have set you as a sign to the house of Israel."

12:2 "you live in the midst of the rebellious house" Shockingly, this described the covenant people living and worshiping in Jerusalem (cf. 2:5,7,8; 3:7; 20:8; Isa. 6:5,9-13; 29:13).

■ "who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear" Spiritual blindness and deafness has always been a problem for the children of Jacob (cf. Deut. 29:1-4; 32:5; Isa. 1:2-3; 6:9,10; Jer. 5:21; 6:10; Zech. 7:11; Matt. 13:13, 14; Mark 8:18; John 9:39-41; 12:39-40; Acts 28:26, 27) and all fallen humanity! The results of Eden are pervasive!

12:3-6 This describes in dramatic symbolism the fall of Jerusalem brought about by Nebuchadneaazr's army in 586 B.C.

12:3 "son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "prepare for yourself baggage for exile" Ezekiel is to pack bags as if he were being exiled (he had done this very thing in 597 B.C.). The VERB (BDB 793, KB 889) is the first of two *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

• "go into exile" This VERB'S (BDB 162, KB 191) basic meaning is "to uncover" or "to remove," but here it is used for going into exile (cf. Jdgs. 18:30; II Kgs. 17:23; 25:21; Isa. 5:13; Jer. 1:3; 52:27; Lam. 1:3; Ezek. 12:3; 39:23; Amos 1:5; 5:5; 6:7; 7:11,17; Micah 1:16). It is the second *Qal* IMPERATIVE.

• "by day in their sight" This (BDB 744) is repeated twice for emphasis. It is a wordplay on their blindness mentioned in v. 2.

This wordplay continues in the phrase "perhaps they will understand," which is literally the VERB "to see" (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT).

Some modern theologians have taken literary phrases like this and Jer. 26:3; 36:3,7 and have asserted that YHWH does not know how free moral human agents will act. It is called "Open Theism." In my opinion all truth comes in tension-filled pairs. There are theological ditches on both sides. In this case the two extremes are

1. God's sovereignty chose some to heaven and others to hell (no human choice at all)

2. Human choice is ultimate and free and unknown by God

Our text is a literary statement, not a theological doctrine! YHWH desires that none should perish (cf. 18:30-32), but He requires a repentant, faithful human response.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE BIBLE IN EASTERN LITERATURE

One reason many modern western peoples have so much trouble understanding the Bible is because the writers of Scripture were eastern thinkers and modern westerns are Greek thinkers. Modern westerners seek and express truth in syllogistic logic expressed in propositional statements (truth is a correct statement of fact). However, eastern people have tended to express truth in stories, parables, actions, and paradoxes.

Often these literary forms contain what seem to us to be illogical or paradoxical statements. It almost seems that one particular parallelism of wisdom literature and poetry becomes the structure of presenting truth (i.e., antithetical parallelism). A truth is conveyed by means of its extremes. The radical statements of a truth are meant to force us into a tension-filled life of faith and trust, not a perfect theology!

We must resist any attempt (i.e., systematic theology) to structure Scripture in such a way as to remove or prioritize the paradoxes. One inspired text cannot cancel another inspired text (the exception to this may be Old Covenant vs. New Covenant).

Often moderns have selected one doctrine (or a few) and made them ultimate. However, truth comes in related doctrines. Maybe a good analogy would be a star vs. a constellation. Scripture presents truth in constellations. We must resist "the Bible says it, that settles it"! All human systematic theologies are dangerous because

- 1. they are constructed by
 - a. historically conditioned humans
 - b. fallen humans
- 2. the Bible itself is not systematized truth

These insights have been so painful for me to deal with because I, too, am sinful and historically conditioned! Let me illustrate some of the theological tensions. I could present them by saying, "Is _____

or _____ true" and the obvious biblical answer is "yes!"

- 1. predestination or human free will
- 2. the security of the believer or the need to persevere
- 3. lostness based on Adam/Eve's sin or lostness based on personal sin
- 4. Jesus as divine or Jesus as human
- 5. Jesus as equal with the Father or Jesus as subservient to the Father
- 6. sinlessness or sinning less
- 7. initial sanctification or progressive sanctification
- 8. justification by faith or justification by works
- 9. Christian freedom or Christian responsibility
- 10. transcendence or immanence
- 11. kingdom as present or kingdom as future
- 12. repentance as a gift from God or repentance as a necessary human response to a divine offer
- 13. OT as permanent or OT as passing away
- 14. believers as servants or believers as children

The question is not which one of these is biblical. They are all biblical! Different denominations focus on opposite sides of the paradox and construct elaborate human systems to defend their choice!

The only hope is to consider all Scripture, not selected passages. The proof-text method of sincere moderns who trust the Bible has failed! Scripture is not western!

12:5 "Dig a hole through the wall" This refers to the wall of his house, which was made of dried bricks (no wood was available in southern Mesopotamia). Obviously Ezekiel's activity caught the people's attention. The noise of breaking through the walls right after dark (cf. vv. 4,6) caused quite a disturbance.

The VERB "dig" (BDB 369, KB 365) is the third *Qal* IMPERATIVE in this context. Ezekiel's dramatic actions were not his own design, but YHWH's (cf. vv. 6,7).

12:6 "You shall cover your face so that you shall not see the land, for I have set you as a sign before the house of Israel" This probably relates to King Zedekiah's attempted escape from Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege (cf. II Kgs. 25:1-7; Jer. 39:4), as do vv. 10 and 12. He was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar II at Riblah (cf. v. 13).

For the covenant people there were two things which they depended on

- 1. YHWH's covenant promises about Jerusalem (Deuteronomy and Isaiah)
- 2. YHWH's promises about a Davidic king (II Samuel 7)

For both of these to be taken and destroyed was a theological blow that was unimaginable for them. They had forgotten the conditional nature of all the covenant promises!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:7

⁷I did so, as I had been commanded. By day I brought out my baggage like the baggage of an exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands; I went out in the dark *and* carried *the baggage* on my shoulder in their sight.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:8-16

⁸In the morning the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹"Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' ¹⁰Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "This burden *concerns* the prince in Jerusalem as well as all the house of Israel who are in it."' ¹¹Say, 'I am a sign to you. As I have done, so it will be done to them; they will go into exile, into captivity.' ¹²The prince who is among them will load *his baggage* on his shoulder in the dark and go out. They will dig a hole through the wall to bring *it* out. He will cover his face so that he can not see the land with *his* eyes. ¹³I will also spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. And I will bring him to Babylon in the land of the Chaldeans; yet he will not see it, though he will die there. ¹⁴I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will draw out a sword after them. ¹⁵So they will know that I am the LORD when I scatter them among the nations and spread them among the countries. ¹⁶But I will spare a few of them from the sword, the famine and the pestilence that they may tell all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the LORD."

12:8 YHWH communicated to Ezekiel regularly as he finished the previous revelation.

12:9 "the rebellious house" This phrase refers to the exiles (cf. 2:5-8). The term "rebellion" (BDB 598) is used often by Ezekiel (cf. 2:5,6,7,8; 3:9,26; 12:2[twice],3,9,25; 17:12; 23:3; 44:6).

12:10 "Say to them" This (BDB 55; KB 65) *Qal* INFINITIVE is repeated twice (v. 10 and v. 11) to emphasize that Ezekiel is modeling the future judgment of YHWH on idolatrous Jerusalem.

12:11 "a sign" This term (BDB 69) basically means "wonder," "sign," or "portent." Here it is used to show YHWH's control of future events (i.e., 12:6,11; 24:24,27; I Kgs. 13:3,5; II Chr. 32:24;31). In the

Ancient Near East a military defeat demonstrated the power of one god over another. Israel was defeated because of her covenant disobedience, not YHWH's impotence! Passages such as this demonstrate His omnipotence and control!

• "As I have done, so it will be done to them" Notice these are words from YHWH for Ezekiel to speak to the exiles. They show

- 1. the power of YHWH's word (cf. Isa. 44:24-28; 45:23; 55:11; Matt. 24:35)
- 2. that Ezekiel is a true prophet

Both of these theological items are crucial, especially when Ezekiel begins to prophesy about the restoration!

• "they will go into exile, into captivity" The "they" refers to the few in Judah and Jerusalem who will escape the destruction and horror of the invasion (cf. v. 16).

The terms "exile" (BDB 163) and "captivity" (BDB 985) are parallel. Judgment is coming! YHWH will do it! His own people will be taken out of the land (cf. Jer. 13:19; 15:2; 20:4,6) which He promised to their fathers!

12:13 "I shall also spread My net over him" This refers to the capture of King Zedekiah. It was YHWH who planned and executed (by means of the Babylonian army) his capture (i.e., 5:10,12; 6:8; 12:14,15; 20:23; 22:15; 36:19). The metaphor used is a "net" (BDB 440, cf. 17:20; 19:8), which denotes either

- 1. a fishing net
 - a. casting, Ezek. 12:13; 32:3
 - b. dragging, Ezek. 26:5,14; 47:10
- 2. a snare (for birds)

• "yet he will not see it" See Jer. 39:1-10, especially v. 7.

12:14 "I shall scatter to every wind" This VERB (BDB 279, KB 280, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is used in 5:2, which describes Ezekiel's prophetic acts of judgment (see note at 12:13).

"Every wind" is an idiom for every direction (i.e., complete exile).

12:15 This verse, which describes the exile of Israel into all the surrounding nations, can be viewed theologically in two ways.

- 1. This is the consequence of covenant rebellion predicted in Deuteronomy (i.e., 4:27; 28:64; 29:28).
- 2. This had a secondary effect of forcing Israel to fulfill her missionary mandate (similar to the dispersion of the Tower of Babel). Ezekiel makes this missionary mandate definite in 36:20-21, 22-38!

■ "they will know" This VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in a special sense in Ezekiel. It describes YHWH's desire that His people, all people, know (in the sense of intimate personal relationship, i.e, Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) Him. The characteristic phrase "they will know that I am the LORD" first occurs in the covenant context of the exodus (cf. Exod. 6:7; 7:5,17; 16:12; 29:46). The phrase refers to future actions of YHWH, positive and negative. All His acts are revelations of His character and purposes!

12:16 "But I will spare a few of them" The VERB (BDB 451, KB 451, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used in several senses by Ezekiel.

- 1. spare, 6:8; 12:16
- 2. the rest, 34:18
- 3. some survivors, 14:22
- 4. what remains, 39:14,28; 48:15,18,21

See Special Topic: The Remnant, Three Senses at 5:2-4.

• "the sword, the famine, the pestilence" These are the three major enemies of a city under siege (cf. 5:12; 6:11-12; 7:15; 14:21). These are mentioned repeatedly in Deuteronomy (esp. chaps. 27-29).

• "and may know that I am the LORD" The goal of a "chosen people" was to be a means of revelation to the nations. Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), but she failed.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB'S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelism. I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-32), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture (i.e., Jonah). I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:17-20

¹⁷ Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁸"Son of man, eat your bread with trembling and drink your water with quivering and anxiety. ¹⁹Then say to the people of the land, 'Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel, "They will eat their bread with anxiety and drink their water with horror, because their land will be stripped of its fullness on account of the violence of all who live in it. ²⁰The inhabited cities will be laid waste and the land will be a desolation. So you will know that I am the LORD.""

12:18 Ezekiel is told to emulate the fear of the people of Judah facing invasion (cf. v. 19; Deut. 28:65).

- 1. eat bread with trembling (BDB 950)
- 2. drink water
 - a. with quivering (BDB 919)
 - b. with anxiety (BDB 178)

It is possible that this is a reversal of the Exodus meal (cf. Exodus 11-12)! YHWH gave them the land, but now He takes it away!

12:19 "the people of the land" In the earlier parts of the OT this phrase means the landed nobility, but after the exile and in Jesus' day it speaks of the poorest people of the land. Here it refers to Ezekiel's fellow exiles.

12:20 Two terms describe YHWH's judgment of Judah.

1. the VERB "will be laid waste," BDB 351, KB 349, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 6:6; 25:19; 30:7

2. the NOUN "desolation," BDB 1031, cf. 6:14; 14:15,16; 15:8; 23:33; also used often in the prophecies against the nations, chapters 25-32

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:21-25

²¹Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²²"Son of man, what is this proverb you *people* have concerning the land of Israel, saying, 'The days are long and every vision fails'? ²³Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''I will make this proverb cease so that they will no longer use it as a proverb in Israel.'' But tell them, ''The days draw near as well as the fulfillment of every vision. ²⁴For there will no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. ²⁵For I the LORD will speak, and whatever word I speak will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, for in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it,'' declares the Lord GOD.'''

12:21-25 There are two stated reasons why the exiles were holding out hope that Jerusalem would not fall and that they might return.

- 1. Ezekiel's prophecies were far into the future and would not affect them, vv. 22-23,26-28.
- 2. There were other prophets who were predicting the opposite of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (i.e., see (1) Jeremiah 28 and (2) Josephus' *Antiquities* 10.7.2), vv. 24-25.

12:22 "the days are long and every vision fails" This was a proverb spoken by the rebellious house of Israel (cf. v. 27) that God was not going to fulfill His prophecy through Ezekiel. Ezekiel started preaching in the fifth year of the exile and the city of Jerusalem did not fall until the thirteenth year of the exile. Delay does not mean YHWH's word will not be accomplished (cf. vv. 23,25,28). Ezekiel often quotes (or alludes to) popular proverbs (cf. 16:44; 18:2,3) or parables (cf. 17:2; 24:3).

12:24 "divination" This (BDB 890) was strictly forbidden for the people of God. It is an attempt by humans to know and control future events! The fact that a prophet would use this means to know God's will shows the degradation of the leadership (cf. Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10-12; Ezek. 13:6,7,9,23; 21:21, 22,23,29; 22:28; Jer. 14:14). For an interesting discussion of occult practices in the OT see *Synonyms of the Old Testament* by Robert G. Girdlestone, pp. 296-302, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 608-610.

12:25 "'I shall speak the word and perform it,' declares the Lord GOD" Also refer to 6:10; 12:28; 17:24; 22:14; Isa. 14:24; 55:6-13. YHWH's word is sure, but often His patience and longsuffering are misunderstood.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:26-28

²⁶Furthermore, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²⁷"Son of man, behold, the house of Israel is saying, 'The vision that he sees is for many years *from now*, and he prophesies of times far off.' ²⁸Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''None of My words will be delayed any longer. Whatever word I speak will be performed,'''' declares the Lord GOD.

12:26-28 See note at 12:21-25.

EZEKIEL 13

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
False Prophets Condemned	Woe to Foolish Prophets	Of Prophets and People (12:21-14:23)	Prophecy Against False Male Prophets	Against the False Prophets
13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-7	13:1-4
				13:5-7
13:8-16	13:8-16	13:8-16	13:8-9	13:8-14
			13:10-12	
			13:13-14	
			13:15-16	13:15-16
			Prophecy Against False Female Prophets	Against the False Prophetesses
13:17-19	13:17-19	13:17-19	13:17-18a	13:17-19
			13:18b-19	
13:20-23	13:20-23	13:20-23	13:20-21	13:20-21
			13:22-23	13:22-23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-7

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, 'Listen to the word of the LORD! ³Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing. ⁴O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins. ⁵You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the LORD. ⁶They see falsehood and lying divination who are saying, 'The LORD declares,' when the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope for the fulfillment of *their* word. ⁷Did you not see a false vision and speak a lying divination when you said, 'The LORD declares,' who have spoken?''''

13:1 "Then the word of the LORD came to me saying" This chapter is an amplification of 12:24, dealing with "false" prophets.

13:2 "prophesy against the prophets of Israel" Another category of Judean society is condemned! There are six charges brought against these prophets.

- 1. they prophesied from their own inspiration
- 2. they followed their own spirit
- 3. they have seen nothing
- 4. they have not gone into the breaches for My people
- 5. they see falsehood
- 6. they have misled My people

The question, "How do you know a false prophet?" is extremely important (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:21-22; Matt. 7; 1 John 4:1-6). This passage in Ezekiel is reminiscent of Jeremiah, chapters 23,28,29.

The VERB "prophesy" (BDB 612, KB 659) is used twice in this verse.

- 1. *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. *Niphal* PARTICIPLE

The NOUN "prophets" (nabi, BDB 611) is also used. See Special Topic following.

A good discussion of the characteristics of false prophets is found in *The Hermeneutical Spiral* by Grant R. Osborne, pp. 210-211.

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Opening Statements:
 - 1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
 - 2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy.
 - a. premonarchial
 - (1) individuals called prophets
 - (a) Abraham Gen. 20:7
 - (b) Moses Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - (c) Aaron Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)

- (d) Miriam Exod. 15:20
- (e) Medad and Eldad Num. 11:24-30
- (f) Deborah Jdgs. 4:4
- (g) unnamed Jdgs. 6:7-10
- (h) Samuel I Sam. 3:20
- (2) references to prophets as a group Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
- (3) prophetic group or guild I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
- (4) Messiah called prophet Deut. 18:15-18
- b. non-writing monarchial (they address the king):
 - (1) Gad I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 29:29
 - (2) Nathan II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
 - (3) Ahijah I Kgs. 11:29
 - (4) Jehu I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
 - (5) unnamed I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
 - (6) Elijah I Kings 18; II Kings 2
 - (7) Milcaiah I Kgs. 22
 - (8) Elisha II Kgs. 2:8,13
- c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah-Malachi (except Daniel)
- B. Biblical Terms
 - 1. *Ro'eh* = "seer," I Sam. 9:9. This reference itself shows the transition to the term *Nabi*. *Ro'eh* is from the general term "to see." This person understood God's ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God's will in a matter.
 - 2. *Hozeh* = "seer," II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *Ro'eh*. It is from a rarer term "to see." The PARTICIPLE form is used most often to refer to prophets (i.e., "to behold").
 - 3. *Nabi*' = "prophet," COGNATE of Akkadian VERB *Nabu* = "to call" and Arabic *Naba*'a = "to announce." This is the most common term in the Old Testament to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but "to call" at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH's description of Moses' relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4.)
 - 4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel *Ro'eh*; Nathan *Nabi*' and Gad *Hozeh*.
 - 5. The phrase, *'ish ha 'elohim*, "Man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
 - 6. The term "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from: (1) pro = "before" or "for" and (2) phemi = "to speak."

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) are labeled by the Jews as "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896.
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present, "Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 13 p. 1152.

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's covenants. To this must be added that often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected this into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history is unique in Israel and its sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and usurp the office of High Priest as a way to know God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems also to have passed away in Israel after Malachi. It does not reappear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of "prophecy" relates to the Old Testament. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation or Scripture, but forth-tellers and foretellers of God's will in covenant situations.
- D. Prophecy is <u>not</u> exclusively or primarily predictive in nature nor is it always Messianic. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted "...less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come." (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).
- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time frame or clear division between oracles. These books are difficult (1) to read through in one sitting; (2) to outline by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of "prophet" and "prophecy." In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase, "the sons of the prophets," was used to designate this group (II Kings 2). The prophets were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israeli society (Amos). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14.)
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on man's immediate response. Often the prophet's task was an unfolding of God's universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of the Ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets are primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation.
- D. Most prophetic material was orally presented. It was later combined by means of theme, chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature which are lost to us. Because it was oral it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages.
 - 1. Court Scene God takes His people to court, often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 - 2. Funeral dirge the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic "woe" sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 - 3. Covenant Blessing Pronouncement the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deut. 27-28).

V. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book.
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember this Ancient Near Eastern literature is not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat prediction with care.
 - 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
 - 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
 - 3. Are they yet future events?
 - 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 - 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.

- F. Special concerns
 - 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 - 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 - 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfilment?
 - 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or wordplay. Since we are not inspired we best leave this approach to them.

VI. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. A Guide to Biblical Prophecy by Carl E. Amending and W. Ward Basque
- B. How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. My Servants the Prophets by Edward J. Young
- D. Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic by D. Brent Sandy
- E. New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, vol. 4, pp. 1067-1078

• "who prophesy from their own inspiration" See II Pet. 2:1-3. The Hebrew term behind "inspiration" is "hearts" (BDB 524). See Special Topic at 11:19.

13:2 "'Listen to the word of the LORD'" The VERB "listen" is literally "hear" (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). YHWH is addressing the false prophets. This is a common verb in the prophets. Notice a sample of who/what is addressed.

3:17 Ezekiel 1. 2. 6:3; 36:1,4 the mountains of Israel 3. 13:2 false prophets 16:35 harlot 4. _ 5. 18:25; 33:7,30 house of Israel forest of the Negev 6. 20:47 -7. sons of Ammon 25:3 _ 8. 34:7.9 shepherds (i.e., leaders) _ 9. 37:4 _ the dry bones

13:3 "the Lord GOD" This title is a combination of the terms

- 1. Adon BDB 10
- 2. YHWH BDB 217

For a full discussion of these terms see the Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

■ "Woe" This is the literary marker (BDB 222) for a prophetic literary form known as a funeral dirge. It is common in Isaiah (e.g., 5:8,11,18,20,21,22) and Jeremiah (e.g., 22:13,18[four times]), but found in Ezekiel only in 13:3,18 and 34:2. Several of the chapters in Isaiah begin with "Woe" (cf. Isaiah 28; 29; 30; 31; 33).

• "foolish prophets" This seems to refer to self deception (cf. Jer. 23:21-22), not low intelligence. The ADJECTIVE (BDB 614) is used to describe Israel in Deut. 32:6,21.

• "who are following their own spirit" Here is the problem! It is their own spirit that is leading them, not God's Spirit! They speak their word in God's name!

13:4 "your prophets have been like foxes among ruins" Their only concern was for themselves (v. 5). The word "foxes" (BDB 1043) may be a theological wordplay on

- 1. "ruins" (BDB 352) places where foxes live (i.e., Jerusalem will be a place of ruins)
- 2. "foxes" some desert animals that lived in the ruins of destroyed cities became associated with the demonic (NEB)
- 3. "foxes" this term may also imply that these false prophets fed on the people (cf. Ps. 63:10)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The exact relationship between fallen angels and the demonic is uncertain. I Enoch asserts that the *Nephilim* of Gen. 6:1-8 are the source of evil (the rabbis also focus on the text and not Genesis 3). I Enoch says that these half angel/half human beings were killed by the flood (it even asserts that their death was the purpose of the flood), but now their disembodied spirits are seeking a body host.
- B. There are several hostile spirits or demons named in the OT.
 - 1. *Satyrs* or "hairy ones," possibly goat demons (BDB 972 III) Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15; Isa. 13:21; 34:14
 - 2. *Shedim* (BDB 993) Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37, to which sacrifices were made (similar to *Molech*)
 - 3. *Lilith*, the female night demon (BDB 539) Isa. 34:14 (part of Babylonian and Ugarit myth)
 - 4. *Azazel*, demon of the desert (name of chief demon in I Enoch, cf. 8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8; 13:1-2; 54:5; 55:4; 69:2) Lev. 16:8,10,26
 - 5. Psalm 91:5-6 are personifications of pestilence (cf. v. 10), not spiritual beings (cf. Song of Songs 3:8)
 - 6. Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14 list several desert animals as a way to show the desolation of destroyed places. Some assume that the list includes the demonic to illustrate that these destroyed places are also haunted (cf. Matt. 12:43; Luke 11:24; Rev. 18:2).
- C. The OT monotheism silenced and modified the legends of the pagan nations, but sometimes names and titles of their superstitions are referred to (esp. poetic texts). The reality of evil spirits is a part of progressive revelation and is developed in the NT as is the person/angel of Satan.

13:5 This verse uses several siege metaphors to describe the false prophets' lack of action on behalf of the covenant people.

did not go into the breaches
 BDB 829, "breaches" were holes made in the walls of cities by the enemy (cf. Isa. 58:12; Amos 4:3; 9:11)
 did not fortify the wall
 BDB 154, a good parallel to both metaphors is Ezek. 22:30

Israel's only hope is in their God. These false religionists do not know Him.

• "the day of the LORD" This is a metaphor for the coming of YHWH's personal presence (cf. 7:10,19; 30:3; Isa. 2:2; 13:6,9; 22:5; 34:8; Jer. 46:10). Israel often expected it to be a day of blessing and affirmation, but in reality it was a day of judgment. Israel was not in compliance with the Mosaic Covenant.

13:6-7 These false prophets are characterized by several terms.

- 1. they see falsehood (literally "vanity" or "nothingness," BDB 996)
- 2. they see lying divination (BDB 890 CONSTRUCT 469), cf. 22:28
- 3. the Lord has not sent them (BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* PERFECT)
- 4. their message is not from YHWH, v. 7 (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT)

They claim to be YHWH's representatives, but they knowingly speak their own messages (cf. v. 6c).

• "the LORD declares" This is exactly the prophetic formula that Ezekiel and Jeremiah used. It was so difficult to know who was/is from God and who was/is not (cf. Jeremiah 28 - 29). See note at 13:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:8-16

⁸Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you," declares the Lord GOD. 'So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord GOD. ¹⁰It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash; ¹¹so tell those who plaster it over with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out. ¹²Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, 'Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?"¹³Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume it in wrath. ¹⁴So I will tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the LORD. ¹⁵Thus I will spend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I will say to you, 'The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone, ¹⁶along with the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,' declares the Lord GOD."

13:9 "My hand is against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations" There are three things God says He will do to these false prophets.

- 1. they will lose their leadership ("council of My people," cf. Ps. 111:1)
- 2. their names will be taken out of the register of the people of God (cf. Ps. 87:6)
- 3. they will not enter the Promised Land (this message is addressed to false prophets in both Babylon and Judah).

They are completely removed from God's people!

13:10

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB "they have misled My people" NKJV "they have seduced My people"

The VERB (BDB 380, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) is found only here in the prophets. It occurs only one other time in Song of Songs 1:7, where it is translated "veils," NASB; "wanders," REV. In Arabic the root means "to exceed just limit" or "one who deviates from the right path." In Ethiopian it means "apostasy," "superstition," or "idolatry." The Septuagint has "they have caused My people to err" and the Peshitta has "they have deceived my people."

It seems that the term is used metaphorically of not following the right path or way. God's word was seen as a clearly marked path/road. To deviate from this path was to knowingly violate YHWH's

covenant (e.g., Job 6:18; Ps. 16:11; 17:4; 25:4,10; Pro. 2:8,13,19,20; 3:6; 4:18; Isa. 2:3; 3:12). The prophets are willfully self-deluded!

• "saying 'Peace' when there is no peace" This was the problem of the false prophets (cf. v. 16). They were preaching the destruction of Babylon and the restoration of Israel (possibly following Isaiah's insistence that Jerusalem would not fall, but things had changed, the covenant promises were conditional on covenant obedience!) and yet, the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah were prophesying judgment and destruction (cf. Jer. 8:18; 28-29).

■ "a wall" This is a rare term (BDB 300) used only here in the OT. Kimchi (a Jewish commentator of the Middle Ages) says it means "an inferior partition." It is used in the sense of pretending to build something strong, but which is really very weak. It is used symbolically for the theological pronouncements of these false prophets.

• "they plastered over the whitewash" They hid their false religious pronouncements with a thin coating of religious language (cf. v. 11)! There may be a wordplay between "plaster" (BDB 1074) and "foolish" or "unsatisfying things" (BDB 1074, cf. Lam. 2:14).

13:11 YHWH will expose the weakness of their false prophecies (cf. 38:22) using metaphors from nature.

- 1. flooding rain, v. 13
- 2. hailstones, v. 13
- 3. a violent wind, v. 13

Against these three the true nature of the wall (i.e., prophecies) of these false prophets will be clearly revealed (i.e., "fall," BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT, twice in v. 11 and the *Qal* PERFECT in v. 12).

In the MT these three natural occurrences are not grammatically parallel, but from the context they are.

13:13 "in My wrath. . .in wrath" Wrath (BDB 404, cf. v. 15) is anthropomorphic language. See Special Topic at 1:3.

13:14 "its foundation is laid bare" This is an idiom of total destruction (cf. Micah 1:6 and possibly Hab. 3:13). The phrase is a *Niphal* PERFECT (BDB 162, KB 191). The term in the *Niphal* is often used of nakedness (cf. Ezek. 16:36; 23:29). YHWH will show the true nature of the false prophets' (male and female) messages of hope and security.

13:15 This is a proverb that YHWH directs to these false prophets. All of their efforts and words will come to naught. No lasting results! Their words and they themselves are no more!

13:16 "peace" The term "peace" (BDB 1022) is used in two senses in this verse.

1. The false teachers used it in the sense of the political autonomy of Judah.

2. Ezekiel uses it in the sense of a restored relationship with YHWH.

Judah will fall and become a vassal nation to Babylon, but the exiles who trust and obey will be restored (i.e., in their heart and one day to their land)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:17-19

¹⁷"Now you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration. Prophesy against them ¹⁸ and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Woe to the women who sew *magic* bands on all wrists and make veils for the heads of

persons of every stature to hunt down lives! Will you hunt down the lives of My people, but preserve the lives *of others* for yourselves? ¹⁹For handfuls of barley and fragments of bread, you have profaned Me to My people to put to death some who should not die and to keep others alive who should not live, by your lying to My people who listen to lies.''''

13:17 "set your face against" The VERB (BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used here in the sense of "direct your intention against" (i.e., 6:2; 14:8; 15:7; 21:2; 29:2; 35:2; Lev. 20:5; Jer. 21:10; 44:11). The face symbolized the person and thereby one's personal attention to someone or some thing.

YHWH repeats His opposition to these false prophets (men and women) by using the phrase "prophesy against them" (BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) at the end of v. 17!

• "the daughters of your people who are prophesying from their own inspiration" Apparently, along with the false prophets, there were false prophetesses (cf. v. 23). Women active in God's service was/is not an unusual thing. However, as there are false prophets, there are also false prophetesses.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

- I. The Old Testament
 - A. Culturally women were considered property.
 - 1. included in list of property (Exod. 20:17)
 - 2. treatment of slave women (Exod. 21:7-11)
 - 3. women's vows annullable by socially responsible male (Num. 30)
 - 4. women as spoils of war (Deut. 20:10-14; 21:10-14)
 - B. Practically there was a mutuality
 - 1. male and female made in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27)
 - 2. honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
 - 3. reverence for mother and father (Lev. 19:3; 20:9)
 - 4. men and women could be Nazirites (Num. 6:1-2)
 - 6. daughters have right of inheritance (Num. 27:1-11)
 - 7. part of covenant people (Deut. 29:10-12)
 - 8. observe teaching of father and mother (Prov. 1:8; 6:20)
 - 9. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chr. 25:5-6)
 - 10. sons and daughters will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)
 - C. Women were in leadership roles
 - 1. Moses' sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exod. 15:20-21)
 - 2. women gifted by God to construct Tabernacle (Exod. 35:25-26)
 - 3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Jdgs. 4:4-5; 5:7)
 - 4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah instructed to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
 - 5. Ruth, godly woman, was ancestress of David
 - 6. Esther, godly woman, saved Jews in Persia
- II. The New Testament
 - A. Culturally, women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world, were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia).

- B. Women in leadership roles
 - 1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
 - 2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
 - 3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
 - 4. Philip's four daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
 - 5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
 - 6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
 - 7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
 - 8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
 - 9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)
- III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?
 - A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths which only apply to the original context from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?
 - 1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice
 - 2. We must deal with the obviously historically conditioned inspired texts
 - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel
 - b. first century Judaism
 - c. Paul's obviously historically conditioned statements in I Corinthians
 - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome
 - (2) remaining a slave (7:20-24)
 - (3) celibacy (7:1-35)
 - (4) virgins (7:36-38)
 - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (8; 10:23-33)
 - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (11)
 - 3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in the words of men.
 - B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation, but then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Cor. 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship if their heads are covered, yet in 14:34-35, he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Romans 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that

allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches, there were problems with women exercising their new-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *Corinth After Paul Left*), which could have caused difficulty for the church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if trained, articulate women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading

How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77) Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics by Gordon Fee Hard Sayings of the Bible by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

13:18 "sew *magic* **bands on all their wrists"** This group is seen more like sorceresses than prophetesses. The word "magic band" (BDB 492) is found only here in the OT and has been interpreted several ways.

- 1. as amulets
- 2. as phylacteries (Origen's *Hexapla*)
- 3. as pillows (LXX, JPSOA, KJV)

The phrase "on all their wrists" is literally "all joints of the hands" (BDB 69 construct 388). This seems to be similar to modern voodoo with its spells and incantations.

■ "make veils for the heads of *persons* of every stature" The NOUN "veils" (BDB 705) appears only here and in v. 21 in the OT. KB (607) calls it a robe of coarse material, while LXX has "scarf," or "head covering." Whatever these items were, they were attempts to control the destinies of people (both negatively as curses and positively as charms, cf. v. 19). This is the essence of divination and the occult. It is an expression of egocentric fallen humanity!

• "but preserve the lives *of others* for yourselves" This shows that whatever their occultic practices were, they were done for self interest! These false prophets/prophetesses wanted to destroy some people and protect others, but not for the glory of YHWH rather for their own selfish, manipulative purposes! Religion can be superstitious and destructive!

13:19 "for a handful of barley and fragments of bread" It seems improbable that this refers to the payment that these false prophetesses will receive because it is so meager. However, this phrase is very ambiguous because of the rarity of the words "handful" (BDB 1043) and "fragments" (BDB 837). In Anatolia and later in Syria handfuls of barley and bread were used as a means of divination and this seems to be the possible historical allusion.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:20-23

²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against your *magic* bands by which you hunt lives there as birds and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let them go, even those lives whom you hunt as birds. ²¹I will also tear off your veils and deliver My people from your hands, and they will no longer be in your hands to be hunted; and you will know that I am the LORD. ²²Because you disheartened the righteous with falsehood when I did not cause him grief, but have encouraged the wicked not to turn from his wicked way *and* preserve his life, ²³therefore, you women will no longer see false visions or practice divination, and I will deliver My people out of your hand. Thus you will know that I am the LORD."

13:20-21 YHWH will destroy these false spiritualists! He will free their deluded followers!

13:20 "birds" The term (BDB 827 III) occurs twice. It is translated "birds" or "flying things" because of the context of "hunt" (BDB 844, KB 1010, *Polel* PARTICIPLE, twice). However, the term normally means "to break out" (BDB 827 II, like leprosy, cf. Lev. 13:39) or "to bud" or "to sprout" (BDB 827 I, cf. Exod. 25:31-34; 37:17-20; Isa. 18:5). This passage is the only place in the OT that the translation "buds" is used. Because of the occultic context it may refer to giving people diseases by means of incantations! See the TEV translation.

13:22 This verse assumes that the superstition or magic had some psychological effect!

The VERBAL "disheartened" (BDB 456, KB 454, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is found only here in this form. Many (KB 454) have assumed it could be a *Hiphil* PERFECT of a similar root meaning "to cause pain."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. Why were the Jewish people (who had the OT) so reluctant to hear the voice of God?
- 2. What is divination?
- 3. Did the lying false prophets know they were false prophets?
- 4. Does God speak through women?

EZEKIEL 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Idolatrous Elders Condemned	Idolatry Will Be Punished	Of Prophets and People (12:21-14:23)	God Condemns Idolatry	Against Idolatry
14:1-5	14:1-5	14:1-5	14:1-3	14:1-5
			14:4-5	
14:6-11	14:6-11	14:6-8	14:6	14:6-11
			14:7-8	
		14:9-11	14:9-11	
The City Will Not Be Spared	Judgment on Persistent Unfaithfulness		Noah, Daniel and Job	Individual Responsibility
14:12-20	14:12-14	14:12-20	14:12-14	14:12-20
	14:15-16		14:15-16	
	14:17-18		14:17-18	
	14:19-20		14:19-20	
14:21-23	14:21-23	14:21-23	14:21-23	14:21-23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-5

¹Then some elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me. ²And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ³"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts and have put right before their faces the stumbling block of their iniquity. Should I be consulted by them at all? ⁴Therefore speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and *then* comes to the prophet, I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, ⁵in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols.'''

14:1 "elders of Israel" This must refer to tribal leaders already in exile in Babylon (cf. 8:1, where a group of faithful elders were called "elders of Judah"). These particular ones are idolaters (cf. 20:1). This is Judah's problem, her leaders are not faithful YHWHists!

- 1. kings, princes
- 2. priests
- 3. prophets
- 4. elders

14:3 "these men have set up idols in their hearts" Apparently the idolatry of Jerusalem described in chapter 8 had already spread to the leaders in exile in Babylon (cf. vv. 4,6,11; 7:19; 20:7-8). These elders looked like YHWHists, but in the secret place of their hearts (God knows the heart), they were corrupted by pagan worship and theology.

For the term "idols" (BDB 165, NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 864-865) see note at 6:4. The term is used almost exclusively in Ezekiel (39 times) and only once in Jeremiah (i.e., 50:2) and never in Isaiah. It originally occurred in the key covenant passages of Lev. 26:30 and Deut. 29:17.

• "stumbling block" This term (BDB 506) is used often in Ezekiel (cf. 3:20; 14:3,4,7; 18:30; 21:15; 44:12). Its basic meaning is "to stumble" or "the means by which one stumbles." The origin of its idiomatic usage comes from

- 1. God's word or covenant was characterized as a clearly marked path
- 2. faith originally meant to be stable, walking easily in the path
- 3. therefore, to stumble is parallel to leaving the path, to stumbling in the path

This term came to have a Messianic aspect in Isaiah (cf. 8:14; Rom. 9:33; I Pet. 2:8). The Messiah (the Cornerstone, Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16) will become a stumbling block to some.

■ "Should I be consulted by them at all" This is a grammatically emphatic sentence (an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB of the same root [BDB 205, KB 233, *Niphal*, cf. 20:3,31]). The covenant leaders were consulting idols and false prophets, not YHWH (cf. 20:3,21). So why should YHWH now allow them to consult Him?

14:4 "speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD'" This is an emphatic construction.

- 1. a Piel IMPERATIVE, "speak," BDB 180, KB 201
- 2-3. two Qal PERFECTS, "says," BDB 55, KB 65

God's prophet must address this situation of "apparent" faith!

• "I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer" See note at v. 7.

14:5 "who are estranged from Me" The VERB "estranged" (BDB 266, KB 267, *Niphal* PERFECT) describes the alienation of YHWH's people from Him because of idolatry. YHWH's people are now strangers/foreigners (cf. 7:21; 11:9; 16:22; 28:7,10; 30:12; 31:12) and thus enemies (cf. Isa. 1:4; Ps. 69:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:6-8

⁶"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations. ⁷For anyone of the house of Israel or of the immigrants who stay in Israel who separates himself from Me, sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and *then* comes to the prophet to inquire of Me for himself, I the LORD will be brought to answer him in My own person. ⁸I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from among My people. So you will know that I am the LORD."

14:6 The phrase "Thus says the Lord GOD" is used in several senses in Ezekiel.

- 1. positive
 - a. a call to repentance, 14:6
 - b. forgiveness of the covenant people, 36:33
 - c. resurrection, 37:12
 - d. gathering exiles, 37:21
 - e. restoration of the fortunes of Jacob and having mercy on the whole house of Israel, 39:25
- 2. negative
 - a. YHWH gives Ezekiel a message that His people will not listen to, 2:4; 3:11
 - b. prophecies against the false prophets, 13:3,8
 - c. prophecies against
 - (1) apostasy, 20:30
 - (2) social injustice, 45:9
 - d. prophecies against the surrounding nations
 - (1) Ammon, 25:3
 - (2) Tyre, 28:2
 - (3) Cush, Put, Lud, Arabia, Libya, 30:2-5
 - (4) Gog, 39:1
 - e. prophecies against Judah, 5:8; 6:3; 12:19

As verse 4 was emphatic, so too, verse 6.

- 1. "say" BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. "say" BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT

YHWH commands them to do three things (all using one VERBAL root, BDB 996, KB 1427).

- 1. "repent" (cf. 18:30,32; 33:11; Isa. 55:6-7)
- 2. "turn away from your idols"
- 3. "turn away from all your abominations" (see Special Topic at 5:11)

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial, but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a "set" theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this "set" definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

- 1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)
- 2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant "to draw a deep breath," is used in several senses.

- a. "rest" or "comfort" (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:12; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)
- b. "grieved" (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. "changed mind" (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. "compassion" (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to "repent" (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God's compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek. 24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means "to turn" (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are "repentance" and "faith" (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one's sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, "you have not returned to Me" [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, "seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil").

The first great example of the power of repentance regards David's sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

14:7 "the immigrants" Non-Jews were to be treated as equals in the legal realm (cf. Lev. 19:33-34,35). Israel was to deal with them graciously (cf. Lev. 23:22; Deut. 10:19; 24:17; 27:19). Israel had also been an alien in Egypt (cf. Exod. 22:21; 23:9) and knew how it felt!

• "who separates himself from Me" This VERB (BDB 634, KB 684, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) means to dedicate oneself by separating oneself from ceremonial evil. The NOUN form is used of those in Numbers 6 who separate themselves by vow and restrictions to God (i.e., Nazirites, both male and female). There is a play on words here.

- 1. holy, means separated to God for His service
- 2. *nzr*, means those who separate themselves (men and women) to God by special vow (Num. 6)
- 3. these idolaters have separated themselves from God and to idols

• "I the LORD will be brought to answer him in My own person" What an ominous phrase. YHWH comes personally, not for blessing, but for destruction (cf. 14:4; also note Heb. 10:31).

14:8 "I shall set My face against that man" As the idolater sets his idol "right before his face" (cf. v. 4), so now YHWH sets His face against him (cf. 15:7). The face (BDB 815) is an idiom of personal presence (cf. vv. 4,7).

Notice what YHWH threatens to do to the idolater.

- 1. make him a sign (BDB 16)
- 2. make him a proverb (BDB 605, possibly "byword," cf. Deut. 28:37; I Kgs. 9:7; II Chr. 7:20; Ps. 44:14; Jer. 24:9; Joel 2:17)
- 3. cut him off from the covenant people (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* PERFECT)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:9-11

⁹"But if the prophet is prevailed upon to speak a word, it is I, the LORD, who have prevailed upon that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. ¹⁰They will bear *the punishment of* their iniquity; as the iniquity of the inquirer is, so the iniquity of the prophet will be, ¹¹in order that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me and no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions. Thus they will be My people, and I shall be their God,"' declares the Lord GOD."

14:9 YHWH reveals Himself to true prophets, but hides His word from false prophets. He uses them for His own purposes (i.e., I Kgs. 22:22-23). These false prophets were prophesying "peace" and "security" (cf. Jer. 14:15), but they were lying! The refusal of Judah to repent caused YHWH's judgment to come!

YHWH uses even "evil" for His purposes and plans! One way the ancient Hebrew Scriptures demonstrated monotheism was by attributing all causality to God (i.e., Deut. 32:39; Job 5:18; 12:13-25; Isa. 30:26; 45:7; Hosea 6:1; Amos 3:6).

14:11 The purpose of judgment is restoration (cf. 14:22-23)! However, for this to occur, some other things must happen first.

1. "Israel may no longer stray" (BDB 1073, KB 1766, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 44:10,15; 48:11)

2. Israel "no longer defile themselves" (BDB 379, KB 375, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. 37:23)

If these criteria are not met, then they will not be His covenant people (cf. 11:20; 34:30; 36:28; 37:27; Exod. 6:7; Lev. 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12,44,45).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:12-20

¹²Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹³"Son of man, if a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it and cut off from it both man and beast, ¹⁴even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁵"If I were to cause wild beasts to pass through the land and they depopulated it, and it became desolate so that no one would pass through it because of the beasts, ¹⁶*though* these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord God, "they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the country would be desolate. ¹⁷Or *if* I should bring a sword on that country and say, 'Let the sword pass through the country and cut off man and beast from it,' ¹⁸even *though* these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* does. ¹⁹Or *if* I should be deliver either *their* sons or *their* and beast from it,' ¹⁸even *though* these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* and beast from it,' ¹⁸even *though* these three men were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* sons or *their* daughters, but they alone would be delivered. ¹⁹Or *if* I should send a plague against that country and pour out My wrath in blood on it to cut off man and beast from it, ²⁰even *though* Noah, Daniel

and Job were in its midst, as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "they could not deliver either *their* son or *their* daughter. They would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."

14:13 The Jewish Study Bible marginal note (p. 1066) asserts that the "ifs" of vv. 13,15,17,19 are textual markers for a legal case (i.e., casuistic law).

■ "committing unfaithfulness" This VERB (BDB 591, KB 612, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) comes from the priestly realm and denotes acts of idolatrous treachery (i.e., idolatry). It is used of marital infidelity in Num. 5:12,27. It is used several times in Ezekiel for unfaithfulness towards YHWH (cf. 15:8; 17:20; 18:24; 20:27; 39:23,26).

This phrase is emphatic by the repetition of the Hebrew root (BDB 591) in the INFINITIVE and the NOUN.

Notice YHWH's reactions.

- 1. "I stretch out My hand against it" (i.e., His nation, His capital), which is an idiom of purposeful action
- 2. "I destroy (lit. "break the staff," cf. 4:16; 5:16) its supply of bread," which denotes famine
- 3. "I send famine against it"
- 4. "I cut off (i.e., destroy completely) from it both man and beast" (cf. vv. 7,19,21)
- 5. "cause wild beasts to pass through the land" (v. 15, cf. Lev. 26:22)
- 6. "bring a sword on that country"
- 7. "send a plague against that country" (v. 19)

All of them are summarized in four severe judgments (v. 21; 5:12; Deut. 32:23-24)

- 1. sword (BDB 352)
- 2. famine (BDB 944)
- 3. wild beasts (BDB 312, cf. Lev. 26:22)
- 4. plague (BDB 184)

14:14 "even *though* **these three men"** It is clear from the OT who Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9) and Job (cf. Job) are. It is not so clear who Daniel (BDB 193) is.

- 1. the father-in-law of Enoch, *Jubilees* 4:20, who surprisingly is not mentioned as our ancient righteous person
- 2. a son of David, I Chr. 3:1
- 3. a priest of the line of Ithamar, Ezra 8:2; Neh. 10:7
- 4. a well known Canaanite sage, Ezek. 14:14,20; 28:3
- 5. a prophet, hero, administrator under Nebuchadnezzar from the biblical book of Daniel
- 6. an unknown famous righteous person

Daniel is a contemporary with Ezekiel and did not have time for his faith and life to be well known (i.e., become a proverb of wisdom and faithfulness). Daniel might really be Daniel (or Dan-El, Ezekiel's spelling is different from Dan. 6:16 and is spelled like the hero of the Ugaritic text), a Canaanite sage (from Ras Shamra Ugaritic texts) known for his upright thoughtful life. The problem is that he is involved with the Canaanite pantheon! Therefore, even with all the questions the biblical Daniel seems the best option (cf. Ezek. 28:3).

■ "by their own righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves" This phrase reflects OT theology of a performance-based righteousness (cf. 3:21, or better an OT sense of "blamelessness, like Noah," Gen. 6:9 or Job, Job 1:1). This section is a theological precursor to chapter 18. The people thought that a few faithful worshipers of YHWH would cause YHWH to withhold His wrath (like Gen. 18:22-33, also note Jer. 15:1-4), but this proved not to be a deterrent! See Special Topic: Righteousness at 3:20.

The term "deliver" (BDB 664, KB 717, *Piel* IMPERFECT) in the *Piel*, usually means "to strip off" in the sense of "plunder" (cf. Exod. 3:22; 12:36; II Chr. 20:25). Only here is it translated "deliver" or "save," although the *Niphal* (cf. 14:16,18) and *Hiphil* (cf. 3:19,21; 14:20; 33:19; 34:10) stems use it in this sense.

A righteous person (in the OT Mosaic sense, cf. 3:20-21; 14:12-20; 18:5-32; 33:12-20) can only deliver himself/herself. OT righteousness is not transferable to others. It is an individual performance-based concept. I am so glad that my hope is in the "new" covenant, which is grace-based!!!

14:15

- NASB "depopulate"
- NKJV "empty"
- NRSV "ravage"
- TEV "kill"
- NJB "rob it of its children"

The NJB captures the essence of the VERB (BDB 1013, KB 1491, *Piel* PERFECT). This is part of the Deuteronomic curse. If the Israelites violate YHWH's covenant, their children will die (no posterity, no family joy)

- 1. by sword, Deut. 32:25; I Sam. 15:33; Lam. 1:20
- 2. by wild beasts, Lev. 26:22; Ezek. 5:17; 14:15

14:17 "Let the sword pass through" This VERB (BDB 710, KB 778) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. The sword (i.e., invasion and exile) became the will and command of YHWH against His own covenant people!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:12-20

²¹For thus says the Lord GOD, "How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it! ²²Yet, behold, survivors will be left in it who will be brought out, *both* sons and daughters. Behold, they are going to come forth to you and you will see their conduct and actions; then you will be comforted for the calamity which I have brought against Jerusalem for everything which I have brought upon it. ²³Then they will comfort you when you see their conduct and actions, for you will know that I have not done in vain whatever I did to it," declares the Lord GOD.

14:21 The four judgments mentioned were common in the ancient world (i.e., Lev. 26:22,25-26; they are also mentioned in the Babylonian flood texts).

14:22-23 The terrible judgments on Judah and Jerusalem were for the purpose of redemption! A new Israel will rise out of the ashes of the old rebellious one. There will be a believing remnant (cf. 6:7-9). There will be days of repentance (cf. 14:6)! There will be a new day of righteousness (cf. Isaiah 55-66).

14:22 "you will see their conduct and actions" This phrase has been interpreted two contrasting ways.

- 1. the wicked receive their just judgment ("actions," BDB 760 is always used in a negative sense)
- 2. the wicked are changed by God's judgment and repent (cf. 18:21-23)

The question is, does this refer to an illustration of God's justice or an example of a believing, faithful remnant?

It is possible that the message to the exiles was "the current generation does not have to bear the sins of their fathers" (or fellow Israelites). Each person's personal faith and action (cf. Ezekiel 18) will determine one's relationship with YHWH. This is a rare example of an individual emphasis in a corporate society. This will form a crucial aspect of "new" covenant theology (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13).

EZEKIEL 15

I AKAGKAI II DIVISIONS OF MODERN I KANSLAHONS					
NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB	
Jerusalem Like A Useless Vine	The Outcast Vine	Allegory of the Vine	A Parable About A Vine	A Parable of the Vine	
15:1-8	15:1-5	15:1-5	15:1-5	15:1-5	
	15:6-8	15:6-8	15:6-8	15:6-8	

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-8

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²"Son of man, how is the wood of the vine *better* than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? ³Can wood be taken from it to make anything, or can *men* take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel? ⁴If it has been put into the fire for fuel, *and* the fire has consumed both of its ends and its middle part has been charred, is it *then* useful for anything? ⁵Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything! ⁶Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; ⁷and I set My face against them. *Though* they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I set My face against them. ⁸Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully,''' declares the Lord GOD.

15:1 "how is the wood of the vine *better*" The vine is often used as a symbol of Israel (cf. 19:10; Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; Hosea 10:1; Rom. 11:17-22). In this brief parable Judah and Jerusalem are given to Babylon for the burning (cf. 19:12; 23:25; Jer. 21:10; 32:28-29; 39:8; 52:13; II Chr. 36:19). Grapevines

are not good fuel for cooking because they burn too hot and too quickly! It is also too soft to be used for furniture or construction. One cannot even make a tent peg out of vine wood! It is useless except for producing fruit, but Israel did not produce (cf. Deut. 32:32; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21)!

The prophets often symbolized idolatry as an imported vine (cf. Isa. 17:10; Ezek. 8:17).

The personification of trees is not unusual in the OT. Note Jdgs 9:7-15! Parables and riddles are common ways for eastern people to express themselves. In reality chapters 15, 16, and 17 form this genre of literature. See Special Topic: The Bible as Eastern Literature at 12:3.

15:4 "fuel. . .consumed" There are two terms (the NOUN, lit. "food," BDB 38 and the VERB, BDB 37, KB 46) which form a wordplay found only in Ezekiel (cf. 15:4,6; 21:32).

• "fire" See Special Topic at 1:4.

15:6 "give" The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT) is used twice in this verse and again in vv. 7 and 9. YHWH's judgment of Jerusalem is sure.

15:7 "I set (lit. "give") My face against them" See note at 14:8. This phrase also appears in the Levitical passage on covenant disobedience (cf. Lev. 26:17), which is alluded to three times in this chapter (and often in Ezekiel).

■ *"Though* they have come out of the fire, yet fire will consume them" If they (i.e., the inhabitants of Jerusalem) escape one of the four judgments of YHWH, another will get them (cf. I Kgs. 19:17; Isa. 24:18; Amos 9:1-4).

It is possible that this refers to the first two groups of Judeans who were exiled in 605 and 597 B.C. and who were currently in Babylon. They are the potential repentant remnant that YHWH will begin again with (cf. 6:7-9; 14:22-23).

15:8 "I will make the land desolate" This (BDB 1031) is a recurrent threat in Jeremiah (15 times) and Ezekiel (21 times). This threat is first stated in Lev. 26:33 and reiterated by Isaiah (6 times).

■ "acted unfaithfully" This VERB (BDB 591, KB 612, *Qal* PERFECT) is first used in 14:13 (see note there) and 17:20; 18:24; 20:27; 39:29. The term is mentioned specifically in the penalties for covenant disobedience in Lev. 26:40. It does not appear in Isaiah or Jeremiah. In 20:27 the covenant people had a history of disobedience starting from the Exodus (i.e., Exodus 32; Neh. 9:16-32) and continuing.

This parable's imagery sets the literary stage for Jesus' condemnation of Israel in His day (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)!

EZEKIEL 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Grace to Unfaithful Jerusalem	God's Love for Jerusalem	The Allegory of the Unfaithful Wife	Jerusalem the Unfaithful	An Allegorical History of Jerusalem
16:1-5	16:1-5	16:1-5	16:1-3a	16:1-5
			16:3b-5	
16:6-14	16:6-14	16:6-7	16:6-7	16:6-14
		16:8-14	16:8	
	Jerusalem's Harlotry		16:9-14	
16:15-22	16:15-30	16:15-22	16:15-19	16:15-19b
				16:19c-22
			16:20-22	
			Jerusalem's Life As A Prostitute	
16:23-29		16:23-29	16:23-26	16:23-29
			16:27	
			16:28-29	
16:30-34	Jerusalem's Adultery	16:30-34	16:30-34	16:30-34
	16:31-34			
	Jerusalem's Lovers Will Abuse Her		God's Judgment on Jerusalem	
16:35-43	16:35-43	16:35-43a	16:35	16:35-43a
			16:36-39	
			16:40-43	
	More Wicked Than Samaria and Sodom	16:43b-52	Like Mother, Like Daughter	16:43b-51a
16:44-52	15:44-52		16:44-45	
			16:46-47	
			16:48-50	
			16:51-52	
			Sodom and Samaria Will Be Restored	16:51b-52
16:53-59	16:53-59	16:53-58	16:53-58	16:53-58
			A Covenant That Lasts Forever	
	An Everlasting Covenant	16:59-63	16:59-63	16:59-63
16:60-63	16:60-63			

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- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-5

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²"Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations ³and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths. ⁵No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.""

16:2 "Son of man" This phrase is a literary marker of a new topic or new revelation. See note at 2:1.

■ "make known" The VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) means "to announce." The *Niphal* stem is often used of making YHWH known (cf. 20:5,9; 38:23; 35:11) and also in the *Hiphil* (cf. 39:7). However, in this context it means declaring to Jerusalem her "abominations" (see Special Topic at 5:11). YHWH made Himself and His will clear to His people, but they would not draw near to Him and follow Him!

16:3 "origin" This term (BDB 468) occurs only three times in the OT and are all in Ezekiel (cf. 16:3; 21:30; 29:14). The etymology is uncertain. The same letters can mean "a kind of weapon" (cf. Gen. 49:5). Some scholars think the meaning is related to the VERB (BDB 468 II) "dig" or "hew" (cf. Ps. 22:16). Others think it is from BDB 500 II "to get by trade" or "purchase."

• "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite" This could have two senses.

- 1. This explains the source of their idolatrous tendencies
- 2. They were not a people until YHWH chose them and delivered them from Egypt
 - a. from the land of Canaan

- b. father was an Amorite, v. 45
- c. mother was a Hittite, v. 45
- 3. refers exclusively to the physical city of Salem, Jebus, and later Jerusalem

The term "father" may refer to tribal ancestors (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 219) and not Abraham, who is called "a wandering Aramean" in Deut. 26:5. This verse is figurative, meaning that Judah's parents were non-Israelite. This was revealed by their idolatrous actions. This is not a text on genealogy, but on idolatry! Israel was unfaithful from the very beginning (cf. Deut. 32:5; Isa. 1:2-3; Jer. 7:24-26; 11:7-8; Ezek. 2:6-8; 3:9,26; 12:2-3; 16:3,45; Hos. 6:7; 9:10; 11:1-4; 13:4-6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE

A. There are several lists of peoples.

1. Genesis 15:19-21 (10)

	a.	Kenite	d.	Hittite	a	Amorite	i	Jebusite
			u.		g.		J.	Jeousne
	b.	Kenizzite	e.	Perizzite	h.	Canaanite		
	c.	Kadmonite	f.	Rephaim	i.	Girgashite		
2.	Exc	odus 3:17 (6)						
	a.	Canaanite	c.	Amorite	e.	Hivite		
	b.	Hittite	d.	Perizzite	f.	Jebusite		
3.	Exc	odus 23:28 (3)						
	a.	Hivites	b.	Canaanites	c.	Hittites		
4.	Dei	uteronomy 7:1 (7)						
	a.	Hittites	c.	Amorites	e.	Perizzites	g.	Jebusites
	b.	Girgashites	d.	Canaanites	f.	Hivites		
5.	Jos	hua 24:11 (7)						
	a.	Amorite	c.	Canaanite	e.	Girgashite	g.	Jebusite
	b.	Perizzite	d.	Hittite	f.	Hivite		

B. The origin of the names is dubious because of lack of historical data. Genesis 10:15-19 includes several of them as related to Canaan, a son of Ham.

C. Brief descriptions from the longest list in Gen. 15:19-21

	a a competions		
1.	Kenite	-	BDB 884
		-	non-Israelite
		-	names related to "forger" or "smith," which could refer to metal working
			or music (cf. Gen. 4:19-22)
		-	connected to the area of Sinai north to Hebron
		-	name connected to Jethro, Moses' father-in-law (cf. Jdgs. 1:16; 4:11)
2.	Kenizzite	-	BDB 889
		-	relative of Jews
		-	a clan of Edom (cf. Gen. 15:19; 30:15,42)
		-	lived in Negev
		-	possibly absorbed into Judah (cf. Num. 32:12; Josh. 14:6,14)
3.	Kadmonite	-	BDB 870 II
		-	non-Israelite, possibly a descendant of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 25:15).
		-	name relates to "easterner"
	1.	 Kenite Kenizzite 	1. Kenite - - - 2. Kenizzite - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

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:10)
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16:4-5 These verses describe, in birthing symbolism, Israel's predicament at birth without YHWH's help.

- 1. the umbilical cord was not cut
- 2. they were not washed with water for cleansing
- 3. they were not rubbed with salt
- 4. they were not wrapped in cloths (this was meant to protect the limbs, the opposite of squirming, cf. 6)
- 5. no eye looked on them with pity
- 6. there was no compassion on them
- 7. they were thrown out into the open field (female babies were sometimes abandoned in the Ancient Near East)

Israel was neglected and abandoned by all! None of the traditional birthing rites were observed! Death was certain!

Numbers 1-4 details practices of Arab groups, which are still present in Palestine today. It would have been the expected procedures for a "wanted" child.

The word "cleansing" (BDB 606) is found only here and its meaning is unknown. The Aramaic Targums translate it "wash" from an Arabic root.

16:5 "abhorred" Literally this is a NOUN (BDB 172) which appears only here in the OT. However, the VERB is used in v. 45 (BDB 171, KB 199, *Qal* PARTICIPLE and *Qal* PERFECT) twice. It denotes something hated because it is unclean (i.e., dung or spoilage).

Much of Ezekiel's terminology is drawn from Leviticus 26. In this chapter this word is used of both Israel and YHWH.

- 1. Israel
 - a. they abhorred YHWH's commandments, v. 15
 - b. they abhorred YHWH's commandments, v. 43
- 2. YHWH
 - a. YHWH will not abhor them, v. 11
 - b. YHWH abhors them because of their idolatry, v. 30
 - c. YHWH abhors them because of their covenant disobedience, v. 44

Leviticus 26 is parallel to Deut. 28:15-68.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:6-7

⁶"When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you *while you were* in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!' ⁷I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; *your* breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare."

16:6-14 This describes YHWH's loving acts toward Israel.

- 1. saw her predicament and commanded life (two *Qal* IMPERATIVES, BDB 310, KB 309), v. 6
- 2. made her numerous, like the plants of the field, v. 7
- 3. Israel grew like a young woman to maturity (full height, full breasts, long hair or pubic hair), but was uncared for (i.e., naked and bare). YHWH proposed to her and made promises to her (i.e., marriage covenant), vv. 7-8
 - a. bathed with water, v. 9
 - b. anointed with oil, v. 9
 - c. clothed, v. 10
 - d. put shoes on her feet, v. 10
 - e. wrapped in fine shawl, v. 10

- f. gave jewelry, vv. 11-13a
- g. gave good food, v. 13b
- 4. her beauty was renowned because of YHWH's care and gifts, v. 14

She was nothing, yea despised, until YHWH chose her, cared for her, and married her (i.e., "swore," BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* IMPERFECT).

16:6

NASB, TEV	"squirming"
NKJV	"struggling"

NRSV "flailing about"

NJB "kicking"

The term (BDB 100) normally means "to tread down" or "trample," but in the *Hithpolel* stem (here and v. 22) it seems to refer to the random movement of an infant's limbs.

16:7

NASB	"numerous"
NKJV	"thrive"
NRSV	"grow up"
TEV, NJB	"grow"

"A myriad" (BDB 914) literally refers to ten thousand, but it is often used in a figurative sense (i.e., Gen. 24:60; Ps. 3:6; Song of Songs 5:10).

NASB	"reached the age for fine ornaments"
NKJV	"became very beautiful"
NRSV	"arrived at full womanhood"
TEV	"became a young woman"
NJB	"reached marriageable age"

This is literally "with ornament of ornaments" (BDB 725 CONSTRUCT 725). Remember, context, context, context is crucial for word meaning!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:8-14

⁸"Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD. ⁹"Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. ¹²I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. ¹⁴Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord GOD.

16:8

NASB	"I spread My skirt over you"
NKJV	"I spread My wing over you"
NRSV	"I spread the edge of my cloak over you"

TEV "I covered your naked body with my cloak"

NJB "I spread my cloak over you"

This was a gesture of proposal (cf. Ruth 3:9) or an idiom for marriage (cf. Deut. 22:30).

The term "skirt" (BDB 489) literally means "wing," but here it refers to the corner of one's robe (cf. Deut. 22:12).

The prophets often used the intimate covenant of marriage as a metaphor of the relationship between YHWH and His covenant people (cf. Isa. 66:7-14; Jeremiah 2-3; Ezekiel 16; 23; Hosea 1-3).

• "entered into a covenant with you"

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God's sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God's character and actions.

- 1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
- 2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
- 3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
- 4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

- 1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
- 2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
- 3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
- 4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37 (YHWH's action). Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved <u>by</u> their performance, but <u>unto</u> obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes <u>the evidence</u> of salvation, <u>not the means</u> of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

16:9 This describes what the prospective husband (YHWH) did for His wife-to-be.

- 1. bath of cleansing, still done before the wedding rite
- 2. blood washed off, this refers to her menstrual period, denoting she is of marriageable age (this may also be implied in v. 7)
- 3. anointed with oil, preparation for the wedding feast

16:10 "embroidered cloth" This term (BDB 955) is used several times in Ezekiel of expensive multicolored or embroidered cloth (cf. 16:10,13,18; 26:16; 27:7,16,24). It is used in 17:3 to describe a multicolored great eagle.

NASB "porpoise skin"

- NKJV "badger skin"
- NRSV, NJB "fine leather"
- **TEV** "of the best leather"

The term (BDB 1065) refers to a type of animal skin. Exactly which animal is uncertain.

- 1. dolphin, Arabic (JPSOA)
- 2. sheep, conjecture
- 3. leather, Egyptian (NRSV, "fine leather")
- 4. seal, NASB, Exod. 35:23
- 5. sea cows, NASB, Exod. 25:5

Elsewhere, this term is used for the construction of the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 25:5; 26:14; 35:7,23; 36:19; 39:34; Num. 4:6,8). The best choices seem to be #1 or #4, both found in the Red Sea in large numbers having skins large enough to make durable sheeting for the tabernacle.

• "fine linen" The etymology of this word is uncertain. Most scholars relate it to an Egyptian word for fine woven linen.

- 1. for fine garments, Gen. 41:42; Pro. 31:22
- 2. for sails, Ezek. 16:10,13; 27:7
- 3. for priestly garments, Exod. 28:5,39
- 4. for hangings in the tabernacle, Exod. 27:9,16,18; 38:9,16,18
- 5. for curtains in the tabernacle, Exod. 26:1,31,36; 36:8,35,37

16:12-13a This is a list of jewelry.

- 1. ornaments, v. 11, BDB 725
- 2. bracelets, v. 11, BDB 855
- 3. chain (necklace), v. 11, BDB 914, cf. Gen. 41:42
- 4. ring in your nose, v. 12, BDB 633, cf. Gen. 24:47; Isa. 3:21
- 5. earrings, v. 12, BDB 722, cf. Num. 31:50
- 6. crown of beauty, v. 12, BDB 742
- 7. adorned with gold and silver, v. 13

16:13 "exceedingly beautiful" The ADVERB "exceedingly" comes from a repetition of BDB 547, cf. 9:9; Gen. 17:2,6,20; Exod. 1:7.

• "advanced to royalty" This orphan child (i.e., Israel) is elevated to the royal family status, both by adoption and marriage.

16:14 "it was perfect" This ADJECTIVE (BDB 483) is used in the sense of wholeness or an entire state of completion. It is used

- 1. of the report of Jerusalem's beauty, 16:14; Ps. 50:2; Lam. 2:15
- 2. of the King of Tyre, 27:3; 28:12

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:15-22

¹⁵"But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be *willing*. ¹⁶You took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen. ¹⁷You also took your beautiful jewels *made* of My gold and of My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them. ¹⁸Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them. ¹⁹Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened," declares the Lord GOD. ²⁰"Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter? ²¹You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through *the fire*. ²²Besides all your abominations and harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood."

16:15 "you trusted in your beauty" This VERB (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT) basically meant "to be extended on the ground." In this context it denotes Judah's reliance on idolatry (cf. 33:13; Isa. 42:17; Jer. 13:25).

■ "played the harlot" This VERB (BDB 275, KB 275, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means "commit fornication." Idolatry is metaphorically described as sexual unfaithfulness (cf. 16:28; 23:30; Jer. 3:1). Israel and Judah were married to YHWH (cf. v. 8), but they pursued other gods of Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, and Babylon. This could have been done in one of two ways.

- 1. official governmental relations which were done in the name of these national gods (cf. vv. 26,28; 23:5,7; Isa. 23:17)
- 2. the worship of these foreign gods (cf. chapter 8; Exod. 34:15-16; Lev. 20:5; Deut. 31:16)

This sexual (marriage, cf. Eph. 5:21-31) imagery is used because of the personal nature of faith. Marriage is often used as a way of referring to intimacy (cf. Hosea 1-3). Faith is a spiritual intimacy! YHWH takes human commitment (i.e., free will) seriously.

16:16-21 The apostasy of Jerusalem took Judah's beauty and wealth given to her by YHWH (cf. vv. 10-14) and turned it into pagan shrines and worship practices.

- 1. decorated shrines ("high places," cf. vv. 24,31,39) of multi-colored cloth, given by YHWH, used as a place to commit adultery
- 2. made idols with ornaments and jewels given by YHWH, v. 17
- 3. offered YHWH's oil and incense, v. 18
- 4. offered YHWH's food, v. 19
- 5. offered the fruit of the womb (i.e., children, v. 36), which YHWH had bestowed, vv. 20-22 (see Special Topic following)

SPECIAL TOPIC: *MOLECH*

He, YHWH, prohibits the worship of *Molech* (BDB 574), the Canaanite (Ammon) fire god, who was worshiped by sacrificing the firstborn child of every family in the community. This was to insure fertility. His name (as used by Israelites) is a Hebrew pun on the consonants for "king" and the vowels for "shame." Israel is warned about this god early and often (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2,3,4,5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Micah 6:7). This worship was often characterized by the phrase, "passing through the fire" (cf. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17,31; 21:6; Ps. 106:37; Jer. 7:31; 19:5).

16:17 "made for yourself male images" These could refer to phallic statues (i.e., *Ba'al*) or jewelry. The gold and silver were YHWH's gifts to His bride (Israel). They turned these gifts into fertility idols, just as they turned the beautiful clothing given by YHWH into mats and blankets on which to fornicate (cf. v. 16).

They took other clothing (v. 18) and dressed up their images and took YHWH's oil, incense, and food and offered it to these lifeless fertility idols (cf. vv. 18-19).

They were so caught up in their commitment and superstition that they sacrificed their own children to *Molech* to insure the fertility of land, cattle, and the human population (cf. vv. 20-21; 20:26,31; 23:37).

16:19 "a soothing aroma" This is an idiomatic way of referring to an accepted sacrifice. Again Ezekiel is influenced by Leviticus 26, where this terminology is used in a threat (cf. Lev. 26:30-31). Ezekiel uses this idiom mostly in connection with pagan idolatries (cf. 6:13; 16:19; 20:28), however, 20:41 is a future-oriented exception (i.e., the Messianic temple).

16:22 "you did not remember the days of your youth" The VERB "remember" (BDB 269, KB 219, *Qal* PERFECT) occurs twice. Jerusalem's idolatries are more egregious because

- 1. she was chosen by YHWH
- 2. she was blessed by YHWH
- 3. she was married to YHWH

It was a violation of love as well as law!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:23-29

²³"Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD), ²⁴that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square. ²⁵You built yourself a high place at the top of every street and made your beauty abominable, and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry. ²⁶You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry. ²⁷Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct. ²⁸Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied. ²⁹You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied."

16:23-29 This is a list of the nations with which Judea made political connections and, thereby, introduced their gods into its culture.

- 1. Egypt, v. 26
- 2. Philistia, v. 27
- 3. Assyria, v. 28
- 4. Babylon, v. 29

16:23 "('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD)" This interjection implies "grief and despair to you" (cf. 24:6,9). It is used mostly by Jeremiah (cf. 4:13,31; 6:4; 10:19; 13:27; 15:10; 45:3; 48:46). There are consequences of human choices! Infidelity brings a sharp response from a faithful, loving God! Judgment is painful for Judah and for YHWH!

16:24	
NASB, NKJV	"a shrinea high place"
NRSV	"a platforma lofty place"
TEV	"places to worship"
NJB	"a mounda high place"
	1

These two terms denote a raised platform.

- 1. "shrine," BDB 146, literally "mound" (in this sense only in this chapter, vv. 24,31,39)
- 2. "high place," BDB 928, in this chapter (vv. 24,25,31,39) are the only occurrences of this term in the sense of a manmade, raised platform. It is used in I Sam. 22:6 as a natural height. These same Hebrew letters (BDB 941 II) form the VERB "to deal treacherously" (in *Piel* stem). This might be a wordplay.

Fertility worship was usually performed on hills, but Israel moved the worship onto manmade platforms in every town square.

16:25

10120	
NASB	"you spread your legs"
NKJV, TEV	"you offered yourself"
NRSV	"offering yourself"
NJB	"opening your legs"
	(DDD 0) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1) (1

The VERB (BDB 832, KB 979, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is used as a euphemism with "feet" (BDB 919) to refer to genitalia (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1048).

- 1. male, Exod. 4:25; Jdgs. 3:24; Ruth 3:4,7; I Sam. 24:3; Isa. 7:20
- 2. female, Deut. 28:57; Ezek. 16:25
- 3. possibly angels (*Seraphim*), Isa. 6:2

16:26

NASB, NKJV,

TEV "your lustful neighbors"

NKJV "your very fleshly neighbors"

NJB "your big-membered neighbors"

The Hebrew construct (BDB 152 and 142) literally means "great of flesh," which in this context, would refer to aroused male genitalia.

■ "to make Me angry" The VERB (BDB 494, KB 491, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is often used of the covenant community provoking YHWH by covenant infidelity, 8:17; Jdgs. 2:12; I Kgs. 14:9,15; 16:33; 22:54; II Kgs. 17:11; 23:19; Isa. 65:3; Jer. 7:18-19; 11:17; 32:29,32; 44:3. This is where the metaphor of YHWH as "jealous" begins (cf. Deut. 32:16,21)! Idolatry is a violation of faithful love. It is personal and purposeful! Notice these emotional words.

- 1. wrath, vv. 38,42; (BDB 404)
- 2. jealousy, vv. 38,42 (BDB 888)
- 3. enraged, v. 43 (BDB 919, KB 1182)

See Special Topic: Anthropomorphic Language Used to Describe God at 1:3.

16:27 "I have stretched out My hand" This is an idiom for action.

■ "who are ashamed of your lewd conduct" Even the pagans were ashamed (i.e., "humiliated," BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) by Judah's idolatry, cf. v. 57; 5:14-15; 22:4. Instead of being a light to the nations Judah was a stumbling block.

The term "lewd" (BDB 273) is a term used several times in Leviticus to denote improper sexual partners (cf. 18:17; 19:29; 22:11). This lewdness would result in exile from the Promised Land (cf. Lev. 18:24-30; 20:22-23). Ezekiel uses this priestly terminology (i.e., he was a priest of the line of Zadok) to shock Judah about their sins (cf. 16:27,43,58; 22:9,11; 23:21,27,29,35,44,48[twice],49; 24:13; see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1113).

16:29

NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB "merchants" NKJV "traders"

This term (BDB 488) is related to the term Canaan or Canaanite (BDB 489). Its basic meaning was "trader" (cf. 17:4). However, in the OT it has a negative connotation because of the idolatries of the ten tribes of Palestine (see Special Topic at 16:3).

When God's people act like unfair traders, they are characterized as Canaanites (cf. Hosea 12:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:30-34

³⁰"How languishing is your heart," declares the Lord GOD, "while you do all these things, the actions of a bold-faced harlot. ³¹When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every square, in disdaining money, you were not like a harlot. ³²You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband! ³³Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries. ³⁴Thus you are different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money and no money is given you; thus you are different."

16:30-34 Judah was so desperate for political alliances that she pursued the surrounding nations for help. She never felt secure (i.e., "never satisfied," cf. vv. 28,29). She was an unusual harlot in that she paid to be loved (cf. v. 41, i.e., protected)!

16:30 "how languishing is your heart" This is the only occurrence of this VERB (BDB 51, KB 63, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) in the *Qal* stem. Its basic meaning is "weak," implying weak-willed. But this does not fit the context of the next phrase. Some early copies of the Hebrew OT were found in a hidden room behind the shelves that contain the Scripture scrolls in Cairo, Egypt. These copies have "How inflamed was your heart," which fits the context much better and may be the source of the Septuagint and Vulgate translations of "how strong" (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 426).

- NASB "a bold-faced harlot"
- NKJV "a brazen harlot"
- NRSV "a brazen whore"
- **TEV** "a shameless prostitute"

NJB "a professional prostitute"

The ADJECTIVE (BDB 1020) is used only here in this sense. The term's basic meaning is "domineering" (cf. Gen. 42:6). The sense of "hardened" is found in Jer. 3:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:35-43

³⁵Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD. ³⁶Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols, ³⁷therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, even all those whom you loved and all those whom you hated. So I will gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness. ³⁸Thus I will judge you like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy. ³⁹I will also give you into the hands of your lovers, and they will tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and will leave you naked and bare. ⁴⁰They will incite a crowd against you and they will stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women. Then I will stop you from playing the harlot, and you will also no longer pay your lovers. ⁴²So I will calm My fury against you and My jealousy will depart from you, and I will be pacified and angry no more. ⁴³Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged Me by all these things, behold, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own head," declares the Lord GOD, "so that you will not commit this lewdness on top of all your other abominations."

16:37 "I shall gather" This VERB (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* PARTICIPLE and *Piel* PERFECT) is used twice in this verse. It is YHWH who brings the mercenary Babylonian army into Judah (v. 40). All of Judah's political alliances are useless. Most of them are now part of the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar II.

The theological tragedy is that this word is often used of YHWH gathering His people as a flock from exile (cf. Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:13; 37:21), but here, because Judah would not repent, her enemies are gathered to attack her!

16:39 "and will leave you naked and bare" The innocent imagery of v. 7 has now been replaced with the violent treatment by the invaders sent by YHWH to punish His unfaithful bride (v. 48).

The Jews developed this contrast between a time of innocence and a time of responsibility by their theological concept of the two *yetzers* ("intents"). Until the age of knowledge and commitment (i.e., *Bar Mitzvah*, males, age 13 or *Bath Mitvah*, females, age 12) children were not responsible for keeping the Law, but after study and vows, they were responsible.

16:40 This verse makes clear that it is YHWH behind the judgment. Two judgments are mentioned.

- 1. stoning was a way for the community to remove evil from its midst
 - a. worship of *Molech* by child sacrifice, Lev. 20:2
 - b. mediums, Lev. 20:27
 - c. blasphemer, Lev. 24:23
 - d. false prophets, Deut. 13:5
 - e. idolaters, Deut. 13:9; 17:5
 - f. rebellious son, Deut. 21:21
 - g. adultery or fornication, Deut. 22:21
 - h. rape, Deut. 22:24
- 2. death by the sword to idolatrous cities, Deut. 13:15

16:42 This is the first note of hope (cf. vv. 60-63). YHWH's jealousy will pass!

- 1. I shall calm My fury, BDB 628, KB 679, Hiphil PERFECT
- 2. My jealousy will depart, BDB 693, KB 747, Qal PERFECT

- 3. I shall be pacified, BDB 1052, KB 1641, *Qal* PERFECT
- 4. I will no more be angry, BDB 494, KB 491, *Qal* IMPERFECT

This is similar to 5:13!

16:43 "you have not remembered" This VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT) is a recurrent theme (cf. 16:22,43; 23:19). Judah's violation of YHWH's love was very painful for Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:44-52

⁴⁴"Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote *this* proverb concerning you, saying, 'Like mother, like daughter.' ⁴⁵You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. ⁴⁶Now your older sister is Samaria, who lives north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lives south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. ⁴⁷Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or done according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they. ⁴⁸"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. ⁵⁰Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it. ⁵¹Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. Thus you have made your sisters appear righteous by all your abominations which you have committed. ⁵²Also bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear righteous."

16:44-59 This is another parable in a series of parables (i.e., chapters 15-18).

16:44 "like mother, like daughter" This denotes that the children take on the characteristics of the families in which they are raised (note Deut. 5:9).

16:46 This verse specifies that Ezekiel is talking about three sinful capital cities that experienced the judgment of God.

- 1. Samaria (i.e., Israel), taken captive for her unfaithfulness by Assyria in 722 B.C.
- 2. Sodom (and Gomorrah), destroyed for their wickedness in Genesis 18
- 3. Jerusalem (i.e., Judah), who has been (i.e., 605, 597 B.C.) and would be, taken captive (i.e., 586 B.C.) by Babylon (even another exile in 582 B.C.)

This comparison is very similar to chapter 23 (Oholah/Samaria and Oholibah/Jerusalem). Also note Jer. 3:6-10,11.

• "and her daughters" This phrase (cf. vv. 49,55,57,61) refers to the surrounding villages, socially and economically connected to these large walled cities.

16:49 In Genesis 19 Sodom is described as a city of sexual deviation (i.e., homosexuality) and is destroyed by God. But here, she is later condemned for her lack of care for the poor and needy. She could help, but she would not! YHWH cares for the poor, alien, outcast, orphaned, and socially disenfranchised (cf. Deut. 10:18; 14:29; 24:17-22; 26:13; 27:19)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOMOSEXUALITY

There is much modern cultural pressure to accept homosexuality as an appropriate alternate lifestyle. The Bible condemns it as a destructive lifestyle, out of the will of God for His creation.

- 1. it violates the command of Genesis 1 to be fruitful and multiply
- 2. it characterizes pagan worship and culture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and Jude 7)
- 3. it reveals a self-centered independence from God (cf. I Cor. 6:9-10)

However, before I leave this topic let me assert God's love and forgiveness to all rebellious human beings. Christians have no right to act hatefully and arrogantly towards this particular sin, especially when it is obvious that all of us sin. Prayer, concern, testimony, and compassion do far more in this area than vehement condemnation. God's Word and His Spirit will do the condemning if we let them. All sexual sins, not just this one, are an abomination to God and lead to judgment. Sexuality is a gift from God for mankind's well-being, joy, and a stable society. But this powerful, God-given urge is often turned into rebellious, self-centered, pleasure-seeking, "more-for-me-at-any-cost" living (cf. Rom. 8:1-8; Gal. 6:7-8).

16:51-52 Judah's sins were even more egregious than the other two! Judah should have known better

- 1. because of the judgments of God that befell the other two (i.e., Sodom and Samaria)
- 2. because of the presence of the temple in Jerusalem with its leadership

16:52 There is a series of IMPERATIVES of judgment.

- 1. bear your disgrace, BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. be ashamed, BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. #1 is repeated

Jerusalem's sins are so base that they make Sodom and Samaria appear righteous (cf. v. 54b)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:53-59

⁵³"Nevertheless, I will restore their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own captivity, ⁵⁴in order that you may bear your humiliation and feel ashamed for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them. ⁵⁵Your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will also return to your former state. ⁵⁶As *the name of* your sister Sodom was not heard from your lips in your day of pride, ⁵⁷before your wickedness was uncovered, so now you have become the reproach of the daughters of Edom and of all who are around her, of the daughters of the Philistines — those surrounding *you* who despise you. ⁵⁸You have borne *the penalty of* your lewdness and abominations," the LORD declares. ⁵⁹For thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant."

16:57 NASB, NJB "Edom" NKJV "Syria" NRSV "Aram" TEV "Edomites"

The Masoretic Hebrew text has a similar word "Aram," as do the Septuagint and Vulgate, but some Hebrew manuscripts and the old Syriac and the Peshitta have "Edom," which fits the context better.

16:59 "you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant" These are serious charges!

- 1. "despised," BDB 102, KB 117, Qal PERFECT, cf. 17:16,18,19; Isa. 24:5
- 2. "breaking," BDB 830, KB 924, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Covenants were confirmed by a sacrifice (i.e., cutting an animal) and an oath of obedience to its obligations. In the Ancient Near East, breaking an oath (BDB 46)/covenant (BDB 136) resulted in the curses and negative consequences spelled out in the covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29). Israel had reaped these curses and now Judah!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:60-63

⁶⁰"Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, *both* your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant. ⁶²Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ⁶³so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," the Lord GOD declares.

16:60-63 YHWH will remember His covenant and restore His people (cf. Gen. 17:7,19; Lev. 26:11,44-45; Deut. 4:31) because of His eternal plan of redemption (see Bob's Evangelical Biases at 12:16).

Notice the reciprocal actions

- 1. God's sovereign choices
 - a. "I will remember My covenant with you," v. 60, BDB 269, KB 209, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Lev. 26:42,45
 - b, "I will establish an everlasting covenant with you," v. 60, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* PERFECT. This is referring to the "new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34, which is described in Ezek. 36:22-38
 - c. "when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," v. 63, BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
- 2. the covenant people's actions
 - a. you will remember your ways, vv. 62,63; 20:43; 36:31
 - b. you will be ashamed, vv. 62,63; 36:32

Both divine initiative and human repentance are required for covenant!

16:60 "I will establish an everlasting covenant" This is surprising because the Mosaic covenant was meant to be perpetual. However, it was also conditional on human obedience. It was the inability for obedience on the part of fallen mankind (cf. Genesis 3), even covenant people, that necessitated a "new" different approach. The "new" covenant would be based on divine performance (cf. Isaiah 53 and Ezek. 36:22-38). It would provide internal motivation for obedience (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). The contrast can be seen by comparing Ezek. 18:30-32 with Ezek. 36:26-27.

God still wants a righteous people who will reflect His character to the nations, but now the focus has shifted from human performance-based covenant to a divine performance-based covenant. Gratitude and family love replace the wages of a hireling! We serve and obey because we are already accepted! Obedience is not what makes us accepted, but the evidence that we have been accepted (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:8-<u>10</u>; James 2:14-26). The goal is Christlikeness!

EZEKIEL 17

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Parable of Two Eagles and A Vine	The Eagles and the Vine	The Allegory of the Eagles	The Parable of the Eagles and the Vine	The Allegory of the Eagle
17:1-6	17:1-10	17:1-10	17:1-6	17:1-10
	(3b-6)	(3b-8)		(3b-6)
17:7-10	(7-8)		17:7-8	(7-8)
	(9-10)	(9-10)	17:9-10	(9-10)
Zedekiah's Rebellion			The Parable Is Explained	
17:11-21	17:11-21	17:11-21	17:11-15	17:11
				17:12-18
			17:16-18	
			17:19-21	17:19-21
	Israel Exalted at Last	Allegory of the Cedar	God's Promise of Hope	
17:22-24	17:22-24	17:22-24	17:22-24	17:22-24

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1-6

¹Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, propound a riddle and speak a parable to the house of Israel, ³saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''A great eagle with great wings, long pinions and a full plumage of many colors came to Lebanon and took away the top of the cedar. ⁴He plucked off the topmost of its young twigs and brought it to a land of merchants; he set it in a city of traders. ⁵He also took some of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil. He placed *it* beside abundant waters; he set it *like* a willow. ⁶Then it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine with its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and yielded shoots and sent out branches.''

17:2 This verse has two parallel IMPERATIVES.

- 1. "propound a riddle," BDB 295, KB 295, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Jdgs. 14:12-19
- 2. "speak a parable," BDB 605 II, KB 647, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 12:23; 16:44; 17:2; 18:2; 20:49; 24:3

The term "riddle" (BDB 295, note the relation of the verb, BDB 295, and noun, BDB 295) means a statement that needs to have some information hinted at or supplied to be understood (cf. Pro. 1:6).

The term "parable" (BDB 605 II, note the relation of the VERB, BDB 605 II, and NOUN, BDB 605 II) implies a brief poetic structure, possibly a proverb which uses comparison as a way to illustrate truth.

Ezekiel has been using highly figurative language to convince the exiles of the just and sure judgment of Jerusalem.

17:3 "a great eagle" The imaginary bird (eagle or vulture, a large bird of prey) is described as

- 1. "great," BDB 152
- 2. "great wings," BDB 152 construct BDB 489
- 3. "long pinions," BDB 74 construct BDB 7
- 4. "rich in plumage," BDB 570 construct BDB 663
- 5. "of many colors," BDB 955

This is a description of the large mercenary and conscripted army of Babylon who captured Jerusalem in 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C. In this context it is the 597 B.C. exile (i.e., "took the top of the cedar") of Ezekiel and thousands of other craftsmen and leaders, which is alluded to (cf. vv. 12-13; II Kgs. 24:24,15).

• "Lebanon" This is imagery referring to Judah. Possibly it is used because the parable will involve tall cedars and Lebanon was famous for hers (cf. 31:3).

• "top" This term (BDB 856) is found only in Ezekiel (i.e., 17:3,22; 31:3,10,14). Its etymology is unknown. The meaning is derived from the context.

17:4 The destination of the Judean society is described as

1. "to a land of trade," BDB 488 II

2. "a city of traders," BDB 746, and BDB 940, KB 1237, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

Back in 12:13 Chaldea is the destination of the exiles (cf. 1:3). The term Chaldea (BDB 505) may be related to the term Canaanite (BDB 489, "merchants" in 16:29, where they appear together).

17:5 This is a description of the relatively easy treatment of the first exiles. They were settled by a canal and given limited autonomy.

NASB	<i>"like</i> a willow"
NKJV, NJB	"like a willow tree"
NRSV	"like a willow twig"
TEV	"young plant"

This term (BDB 861) is found only here in the OT. It seems to be of onomatopoeic origin from the Arabic term for "rustling." Context implies an easily germinating tree twig (cf. v. 22).

17:6 This verse describes the low growth of the remaining Judeans in Judea. They were still in the Promised Land, but were very weak as a vassal nation (cf. vv. 13-14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:7-10

⁷"But there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage; and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him and sent out its branches toward him from the beds where it was planted, that he might water it. ⁸It was planted in good soil beside abundant waters, that it might yield branches and bear fruit *and* become a splendid vine." ⁹Say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its fruit, so that it withers—so that all its sprouting leaves wither? And neither by great strength nor by many people can it be raised from its roots *again*. ¹⁰Behold, though it is planted, will it thrive? Will it not completely wither as soon as the east wind strikes it — wither on the beds where it grew?''''

17:7 "another eagle" This refers to Egypt (cf. v. 15). Judah looked to Egypt for military aid and protection (i.e., Jeremiah 37).

17:8 There is a series of *Qal* infinitive constructs. They describe in this verse (1) how Zedekiah viewed that an alliance with Egypt would help Judah or (2) a repeat of v. 5, illustrating that there was no need for Zedekiah to rebel and seek help from Egypt

- 1. that it might yield branches
- 2. that it might bear fruit
- 3. that it might become a splendid vine

17:9-10 These are parallel and describe Judah's attempt to seek help from Egypt, but YHWH will not allow it.

17:9 "leaves" This term (BDB 383) normally refers to the prey of a lion, killed and torn apart (cf. 19:3,6; 22:25,27). Only here does it refer to plucked leaves (although the same consonants with different vowels refer to plucked olive leaves in Gen. 8:11).

17:10 "completely wither" This is an emphatic grammatical construction that uses the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 386, KB 384) together. The VERB is used twice in v. 9 and twice in v. 10.

• "the east wind" This construct (BDB 924 and 870) is used as an active representation of God's power (*ruah*) to accomplish His purposes. The east wind is associated with judgments and the west wind with blessings.

- 1. the Lord directed an east wind. . .brought the locusts, Exod. 13:10
- 2. the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind, Exod. 14:21; 15:10
- 3. with the east wind, Thou does break the ships of Tarshish, Ps. 48:7
- 4. like an east wind I will scatter them (Israel) before the enemy, Jer. 18:17

- 5. completely wither as soon as the east wind strikes it (Judah), Ezek. 17:10
- 6. the east wind dried up its (Israel) fruit, Ezek. 19:12
- 7. the east wind has broken you (Tyre), Ezek. 27:26
- 8. an east wind will come. . .his (Israel) spring will be dried up, Hos. 13:15
- 9. God appointed a scorching east wind, Jonah 4:8
- 10. an east wind is implied in Job 1:19 and Jer. 4:11

The west wind is mentioned once in Exod. 10:19 and implied in Num. 11:31. Rain would come from a northwesterly direction.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:11-21

¹¹Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹²"Say now to the rebellious house, 'Do you not know what these things mean?' Say, 'Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and princes and brought them to him in Babylon. ¹³He took one of the royal family and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took away the mighty of the land, ¹⁴that the kingdom might be in subjection, not exalting itself, *but* keeping his covenant that it might continue. ¹⁵But he rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt that they might give him horses and many troops. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Can he indeed break the covenant and escape? ¹⁶As I live,' declares the Lord GOD, 'Surely in the country of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, in Babylon he shall die. ¹⁷Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company will not help him in the war, when they cast up ramps and build siege walls to cut off many lives. ¹⁸Now he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape."¹⁹Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "As I live, surely My oath which he despised and My covenant which he broke, I will inflict on his head. ²⁰I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. Then I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there *regarding* the unfaithful act which he has committed against Me. ²¹All the choice men in all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to every wind; and you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken."

17:11-21 This is the interpretation of the allegory of vv. 1-10 about the two great eagles.

17:12 "Say" This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 55, KB 65), repeated for emphasis. YHWH is speaking to Judah through His prophet.

■ "the rebellious house" This is a characteristic phrase of Ezekiel referring to Judah (cf. 2:5,6,8; 3:9,26,27; 12:2[twice],3,9,25; 17:12; 24:3). Moses first called Israel rebellious (BDB 598) in Deut. 9:7; 31:27.

• "the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and princes, and brought them to him in **Babylon**" This exile is recorded in II Kings 24. The date would be 597 B.C.

17:13 The new Babylonian puppet king was Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, whose name was changed to Zedekiah (cf. II Kgs. 24:17; II Chr. 36:10).

17:14 Nebuchadnezzar was hoping that the partial deportation would teach Judah a lesson and keep them a vassal nation (cf. Jeremiah 27), but it did not work (cf. v. 16).

17:15 "But he rebelled" See II Kgs. 24:20. He (Zedekiah, King of Judah) rebelled

1. against the prophecy of Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 27 and 37)

2. by breaking his pledge to Nebuchadnezzar, which he had taken in YHWH's name (cf. v. 18; II Chr. 36:13)

17:16 "in Babylon he shall die" See Jeremiah 52:11.

17:18

NASB, NJB "he pledged"

NKJV, NRSV "gave his hand"

This is literally, "he gave his hand" (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT). The giving of one's hand denoted

- 1. friendship, II Kgs. 10:15
- 2. pledge/oath, I Chr. 29:24; II Chr. 30:8; Ezra 10:19; Lam. 5:6; Ezek. 17:18
- 3. allowing one to do something, Exod. 10:25
- 4. giving power to, II Sam. 16:8
- 5. entrusting to, II Chr. 34:16
- 6. giving authority to, Gen. 39:4,8,22

17:19 This verse relates to Zedekiah's oath to Nebuchandezzar (cf. vv. 13,14). It was made in YHWH's name.

- 1. "As I live" This is a wordplay on the covenant name for Judah's God, YHWH (see Special Topic at 2:4), cf. Num. 14:21,28; Isa. 45:23; 49:18
- 2. "My oath" BDB 46, cf. Deut. 29:14. This refers to YHWH's covenant promises which, when violated, become "a curse," cf. Deut. 29:19
- 3. "which he despised"
 - a. Judah, 16:59
 - b. Zedekiah, 17:16,18,19
- 4. "My covenant" See Special topic at 16:8

17:20 This is mentioned earlier in 12:13 and is documented in II Kgs. 25:7; Jer. 39:7; 52:11.

17:21NASB"choice men"NKJV"all his fugitives"NRSV, NJB"the pick of his troops"TEV"his best soldiers"

The MT has "his fugitives" (BDB 138), as do the Septuagint and Syriac versions. The term is found only here in the OT. The term "chosen" (BDB 103) is the reversal of the last two Hebrew letters.

• "the survivors will be scattered to every wind" See note at 5:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:22-24

²²Thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also take *a sprig* from the lofty top of the cedar and set *it* out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant *it* on a high and lofty mountain. ²³On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. ²⁴All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform *it*."

17:22-23 Again, at the end of a judgment oracle there is hope for a future for YHWH's covenant people (cf. 16:60-63).

17:22 "young twigs a tender one" The concept of a "shoot," "stem," or "branch" (cf. Isa. 11:1) becomes a Messianic symbol of the restoration of the Davidic seed (cf. II Samuel 9; Psalm 89). The Branch (cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; Acts 13:23; Rom. 15:12) becomes the hope of all mankind for God to fulfill His promises to Israel and to the nations! Remember Gen. 3:15 is a promise to humanity made in YHWH's image, not Israel!

• "on a high and lofty mountain" This refers to the supremacy of God's universal rule (cf. Micah 5:5) through His people (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4).

17:23 "birds of every kind" This is a universal element, as is "all the trees of the field" in v. 24. Isaiah captures this same planting metaphor that reaches all the world in Isa. 27:6. YHWH has an eternal redemptive plan for all the sons and daughters of Adam, not just Jacob's children!

17:24 YHWH describes His control of His creation in a series of plant metaphors.

- 1. I bring down the high tree
- 2. I exalt the low tree (i.e., here)
- 3. I dry up the green tree
- 4. I make the dry tree flourish

Examples of #1,3 would be Egypt in Ezekiel 31 and Babylon in Daniel 4. An example of #2,4 would be the promises to restore Israel/Judah (16:60-63; 17:24). In the NT the mustard seed and resulting bush become the symbol of a universal tree (cf. Matt. 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19. Also note Dan. 4:12,21), which is the kingdom of our God and His Christ!

The final statement, "I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform *it*," is a key theological statement. Humans can depend on God's word, both His judgments and His promises! He is the creator and controller of all life! History/time are in His hands (cf. 12:25,28; 22:14; Isa. 14:24; 55:11)!

EZEKIEL 18

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Deals Justly With Individuals	A False Proverb Refuted	Individual Responsibility	Individual Responsibility	Individual Responsibility
18:1-9	18:1-9	18:1-4	18:1-2	18:1-2
	(2)			
	(3)		18:3-4	18:3-4
	(4-9)			
		18:5-9	18:5-9	18:5-9
18:10-13	18:10-13	18:10-13	18:10-13	18:10-13
18:14-18	18:14-18	18:14-18	18:14-18	18:14-18
	(14-17)			
	(18)			
	Turn and Live			
18:19-20	18:19-20	18:19-20	18:19-20	18:19-20
18:21-23	18:21-23	18:21-24	18:21-23	18:21-23
18:24-29	18:24		18:24	18:24
	18:25-29	18:25-29	18:25-29	18:25-32
18:30-32	18:30-32	18:30-32	18:30-32	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. This chapter provides a good opportunity to mention how the interpreter's presuppositions often distort the original author's intent. As an evangelical I have often used this text as an example of individual, personal response being necessary for salvation (i.e., personal relationship). However, in context, it is referring to Judah's claim that it was because of their ancestors' sins that they were suffering (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9). This chapter is more related to the current generation (corporate) rather than individuals of that generation.

Another way this chapter is used is seen in v. 32. It is often linked with John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; and II Pet. 3:9 to show YHWH's love for all humans (which is surely true), but this text is really about Israel's descendants (cf. v. 30). We tend to read our systematic theology into every text. We tend to assign theological content to certain words and then read that definition into every usage of the term (i.e., "repent," "live"). We must discipline ourselves to let the inspired authors speak to their day before we use it in our systematic theologies (which often say more about us than about God!).

Ezekiel is addressing a sinful people who do not think they are sinful, but rather blame their parents and previous generations for YHWH's judgment.

- B. This chapter also offers an opportunity to show how biblical authors present truths in tension-filled pairs. Notice how v. 31 demands that the believers "make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit," yet 36:26-27 asserts that YHWH will give them a new heart and a new spirit. There are two ways to view these statements.
 - 1. OT
 - a. The first way reflects the first covenant based on human performance (i.e., Deut. 4:1; 5:33; 8:1; 30:16,19).
 - b. The "new" covenant focuses on God's performance (i.e., 36:22-38; Jer. 31:31-34).
 - 2. NT
 - a. These statements describe a covenant relationship where God initiates and sets the conditions for fellowship.
 - b. Humans must respond initially and continually in repentance and faith. Salvation is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy, but a daily personal relationship.
- C. Note that the NKJV prints vv. 4-18 (i.e., 4-9, 10-13, 14-17,18) as poetry; NIV prints vv. 5-17 (i.e., 5-9, 10-13a, 15-17a) as poetry and 13b-14 as prose, however, the NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA, and REB print the whole chapter in prose.
- D. I like the brief outline in the Oxford Study Bible, p. 874. "Maintaining right relations with God frees one from
 - 1. the past of one's parents, vv. 1-20
 - 2. the past of one's own life, vv. 21-32"

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-4

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²"What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying,

'The fathers eat the sour grapes,

But the children's teeth are set on edge'?

³As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. ⁴Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die. ⁴Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die. "

18:2 "proverb" The use of this word (BDB 605, KB 647) ties this chapter to a unified context (i.e., chapters 12-18, cf. 12:22,23; 14:8; 17:2; 18:2,3).

• "The fathers eat the sour grapes,

But the children's teeth are set on edge"

One person's (or generation's) actions affect others. This is uniquely an eastern viewpoint. Eastern peoples are far more tribal, clan, and family-oriented. One is a member of a group and lives to serve that group. One's attitudes and actions affect that group. Here are some biblical examples.

- 1. Adam and Eve affect the whole human family and earth, Genesis 3
- 2. Parent's sin or faithfulness affects the children, Exod. 20:5-6; 34:7; Deut. 5:9; 7:9; Ezekiel 18
- 3. Achan's sin affects all of Israel and even some Israeli soldiers die because of his sin, Joshua 7
- 4. David sins, but his first son by Bathsheba dies and Israel languishes, II Samuel 11-12; Psalm 32, 51
- 5. Jesus' substitutionary, vicarious death on behalf of all humans, John 1:29; Rom. 5:18-19; II Cor. 5:21.

18:3 "As I live" This is an oath based on the covenant name of God, YHWH (cf. 5:11; 14:16,18,20; 16:48; 17:16,19; 18:3; 20:3,31,33; 33:11,27; 34:8; 35:6,11). See Special Topic at 2:4. YHWH is the only-living, ever-living God. All life is derived from Him, belongs to Him, and remains through Him (i.e., "all souls are Mine," v. 4).

• "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel any more" This same proverb is mentioned in Jer. 31:29, but in the setting of "the last days." This proverb impugns the justice and fairness of God (cf. Lam. 5:7).

18:4 "soul" This is not the Greek concept that we have a soul (i.e., divine spark), but the Hebrew concept that we are a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). The Hebrew word (BDB 659, KB 711-713) describes the life force (i.e., breath) in both animals and humans (cf. Gen. 1:20-30; 2:7,19; 7:22; Job 34:14-15; Ps. 104:29, 30; 146:4; Eccl. 3:19-21). Humans are uniquely related to God by His personal formation of them and His breathing into them (cf. Gen. 2:7), yet they are also creatures of this planet. We eat, breathe, reproduce just like other animals of this planet. However, we are also created in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). We are a physical and spiritual unity (i.e., Ps. 42:1).

■ "all souls are Mine" This is not a theological statement of monotheism (as in Num. 16:22; 27:16; Isa. 42:5; 57:16). The original author is speaking of the covenant people and particularly of Judah's royal line (i.e., Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah).

■ "The soul who sins will die" The emphasis is on individual covenant responsibility (cf. 14:20; Deut. 24:17). Remember it is not "either/or," but "both/and" between individual responsibility and corporate responsibility. This same tension can be seen between original sin and volitional sin (cf. Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6:23). This truth is also seen in Deut. 24:16.

What does "die" (BDB 559, KB 562) mean here? It must be more than physical death! It is the opposite of true "life" (cf. v. 9). There is "life" (BDB 310, KB 309) beyond this reality. This "life" is characterized by the presence and character of God.

One wonders how the *Qal* PARTICIPLE should be understood. Does it imply that a one-time sin brings death or is that already a reality in the Fall (cf. Genesis 3)? How would one relate this statement to I John 3:6,9 (PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)? Are we speaking of sin that characterizes the life or acts of sin? I would assume, because of the idolatrous actions of v. 7 and the covenant partners' violations of v. 8, that we are speaking of a life characterized by covenant rebellion (cf. v. 9).

The Bible mentions three kinds of death or possibly progressive stages of death. The first is Genesis 3. Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, but they were still alive physically. The "death" referred to was relational (i.e., God to human, human to human, and human to self), as well as contextual (i.e., the planet, the ethos was altered).

The second aspect of death is personal, physical death (cf. Genesis 5). Spiritual death (cf. Eph. 2:1) resulted in the physical cessation of life.

- The third aspect (or progress) is ultimate, everlasting death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14), which involves
- 1. a permanent separation from fellowship with God
- 2. a permanent isolation from God's purpose for creation (i.e., loss of heaven)
- 3. a permanent fellowship of punishment with evil persons and rebellious angels

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:5-9

⁵"But if a man is righteous and practices justice and righteousness, ⁶and does not eat at the mountain *shrines* or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period—⁷if a man does not oppress anyone, *but* restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing, ⁸if he does not lend *money* on interest or take increase, *if* he keeps his hand from iniquity *and* executes true justice between man and man, ⁹if he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully—he is righteous and will surely live,'' declares the Lord GOD.

18:5-9 Notice the characteristics of a righteous covenant follower.

- 1. practices justice (lit. "what is lawful," BDB 1048), v. 5
- 2. practices righteousness (lit. "what is right," BDB 842), v. 5
- 3. does not eat at the mountain shrines, cf. 18:15; 22:9; (this refers to *Ba'al* worship, cf. 6:13), v. 6
- 4. does not lift up his eyes to the idols, v. 6, cf. 18:12,15; 20:24; 33:25; Deut. 4:19 (this denotes looking to them for favors and answers to prayers)
- 5. does not defile his neighbor's wife, v. 6, cf. 18:15; 22:11; 33:26; Exod. 20:14; Lev. 18:20; 20:10; Deut. 5:18
- 6. does not approach a woman during her menstrual period, v. 6, cf. 22:10; Lev. 15:19,20,24,25
- 7. does not oppress anyone, v. 7, cf. 18:12,16; 22:7,29; Exod. 20:21; Lev. 19:33; 25:14,17; Deut. 23:16
- 8. restores to the debtor his pledge, v. 7, cf. Deut. 24:13
- 9. does not commit robbery, v. 7, cf. Lev. 19:13 (e.g., Exod. 22:7-15,21-27)
- 10. gives his bread to the hungry, v. 7, cf. v. 16; Deut. 15:11
- 11. covers the naked with clothing, v. 7, cf. Isa. 58:7; Matt. 25:35; Luke 3:11
- 12. does not lend money on interest, v. 8, cf. Exod. 22:25; Deut. 23:19-20 (next phrase "or take increase" is parallel to Lev. 25:36)
- 13. keeps his hand from iniquity, v. 8
- 14. executes true justice between man and man, v. 8, cf. Zech. 7:9; 8:16
- 15. walks in My statutes, v. 9
- 16. so as to deal faithfully, v. 9

Notice some of these are prohibitions and some are mandated actions; some deal with ceremonial issues, others with sins against a covenant brother. They reflect the Mosaic Covenant.

18:5 "practices justice and righteousness" These two often appear together in describing the person who lives pleasing to God (cf. II Sam. 8:15; I Kgs. 10:9; I Chr. 18:14; II Chr. 9:8; Ps. 99:4; Isa. 9:7; 32:16; 33:5; 59:14; Jer. 4:2; 9:24; 22:3,15; 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 18:5,19,21,27; 33:14,16,19; 45:9; Amos 5:7,24). Pleasing God involves the inner life (heart, mind) and the outer life (worship, ethical actions, compassion). These cannot be divided. Faith permeates all of life! It is not an isolated ritual, liturgy, or worship time, but a daily, personal relationship!

18:6 "eat at the mountain *shrines*" This is a reference to idolatrous worship at the high places of the Canaanite fertility god *Ba'al* and goddess *Asherah* or *Astarte* (cf. 20:28). These high places were located on natural hills and manmade raised platforms in the cities. Ritual eating implied a covenantal relationship.

• "defile his neighbor's wife" Adultery was so serious because one's children were involved in the concept of the afterlife (one's name cut off). Also, it caused great problems in inheritance rights (cf. Leviticus 25), which were so important to the Israelites.

■ "approach a woman during her menstrual period" This is a cultural element dealing with ceremonial defilement (cf. Lev. 12:2,5; 18:19). The Israelites felt any bodily emission made one ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:1-24).

18:7 "restores to the debtor his pledge" Often a poor person's outer cloak was used as collateral for a loan. It was to be returned before evening because it was used to sleep in (cf. Exod. 22:26-27; Deut. 24:17; Amos 2:8), but land owners often kept it to insure the laborer would return to work the next day.

• "does not commit burglary" This refers to the rich landowners taking advantage of the poor people of the land (cf. vv. 18:7,12,16; 22:7,29; 45:8; 46:18; Exod. 22:21; Lev. 19:13; Jer. 22:3).

• "gives bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing" God cares for the underprivileged and socially powerless (i.e., widow, orphan, alien); those who know God will also (cf. Deut. 15:11; Isa. 58:7; Matt. 25:31-45; James 2:15-16).

18:8 "does not lend money on interest" This was forbidden to fellow Israelites, but permitted to foreigners (cf. vv. 13,17; 22:12; Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-38; Deut 23:19-20; Ps. 15:5). To be sure, this is mostly an issue of the heart! One's attitude and actions toward the needy are the focus of these verses.

18:9 "he walks" This is the biblical metaphor for lifestyle faith.

" "My statutes and My ordinances" See Special Topic: Terms For God's Revelation at 5:7.

• "will surely live" This is a repeated grammatical form (cf. vv. 17,19,21,28) used for emphasis (i.e., a Qal INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE plus a Qal IMPERFECT of the same VERB). This same grammatical pattern appears with two other terms in this chapter.

- 1. surely die, v. 13
- 2. do not have any pleasure, v, 23

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:10-13

¹⁰"Then he may have a violent son who sheds blood and who does any of these things to a brother ¹¹(though he himself did not do any of these things), that is, he even eats at the mountain *shrines*, and defiles his neighbor's wife, ¹²oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore a pledge, but lifts up his eyes to the idols *and* commits abomination, ¹³he lends *money* on interest and takes increase; will he live? He will not live! He has committed all these abominations, he will surely be put to death; his blood will be on his own head."

18:10 This verse shows that although parents are admonished to train their children in God's way (i.e., Proverbs), the child is ultimately responsible for his own acts. The child commits every sin mentioned in vv. 5-9 (i.e., vv. 11-13).

18:13 "he will surely be put to death" See note at v. 9.

• "his blood will be on his own head" Environment (society) and heredity (parents) are significant factors in social and religious development, but they do not remove individual responsibility (note 33:4,5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:14-18

¹⁴"Now behold, he has a son who has observed all his father's sins which he committed, and observing does not do likewise. ¹⁵He does not eat at the mountain *shrines* or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife, ¹⁶or oppress anyone, or retain a pledge, or commit robbery, *but* he gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing, ¹⁷he keeps his hand from the poor, does not take interest or increase, *but* executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes; he will not die for his father's iniquity, he will surely live. ¹⁸As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed *his* brother and did what was not good among his people, behold, he will die for his iniquity."

18:14 Verse 14 is addressing the next generation of vv. 5 and 10 (i.e., righteous, wicked, righteous, cf. v. 20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:19-20

¹⁹"Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?' When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live. ²⁰The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.''

18:19 This shows the diatribe nature of the chapter. Ezekiel is answering the unspoken (or veiled) questions whispered against YHWH's justice.

NASB "has observed"
 NKJV "done"
 NRSV "has been careful to observe"

TEV "kept...carefully"

NJB "kept"

The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT) means "to keep," "to watch," or "to preserve." It implies a careful diligence in observing God's laws (i.e., Lev. 22:31; Deut. 4:40; 6:2; 26:17). One's love for YHWH was expressed in obedience and love for God, other covenant brothers, and aliens. One could not claim to love God if he did not practice it toward other humans. Righteousness in its OT sense implied a care and concern for others, especially the underprivileged, that goes beyond a strict legal standard. Justice was extended by covenant compassion (see Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, pp. 159-173). This is what Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:21-23

²¹"But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²²All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. ²³Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?"

18:21 "if the wicked man turns" This shows the continuing love of God. Any moment that a human (in this case a covenant member) will repent and execute trust, God is there to forgive and receive him! See Special Topic: Repentance in the OT at 14:6.

• "he shall surely live" See also Lev. 18:5. God wants to bless us!

18:22 "All his transgressions" The term "transgressions" (BDB 833) literally means "to rebel." It is used metaphorically of rebelling against YHWH (cf. Isa. 1:28; 46:8; 53:12[twice]; Hosea 14:9; Amos 4:4[twice]).

• "will not be remembered" This VERB (BDB 269, KB 209, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is also used metaphorically for YHWH forgetting human rebellion (cf. v. 24; 3:20; 33:13). When God forgives, God forgets (i.e., Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). What a wonderful Truth! What a wonderful God!

■ "because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live" This is an OT understanding of "righteousness" (see Special Topic at 3:20). It should not be understood in the sense of "sinlessness," but in the sense it was used to describe Noah (cf. Gen. 6:4) and Job (cf. Job 1:1). They lived up to their understanding of the will of God. True and complete obedience is not a possibility for fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 6:5,11-12; Ps. 14:3; Isa. 53:6; Rom. 1:18-3:20; 5:12-14). Covenant obedience was the criteria for "a ceremonial righteousness" within ancient Israel. Even in the Judaism of Jesus' day "righteousness" was defined as

- 1. almsgiving
- 2. prayer
- 3. fasting (cf. Matt. 6:1-18)

as well as required sacrifices, feast days, and Sabbath observance.

18:23 "Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked" The phrase "any pleasure" is a combination of the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 342, KB 339). This grammatical form occurs often in this chapter. See note at v. 9.

This chapter is an allusion to the transgeneration communication of sin through families (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9). However, it also alludes to the gracious character of YHWH (cf. Deut. 5:10; 7:9). The mercy of God vs. the judgment of God can be compared to judgment, 3-4 generations but mercy to a 1,000 generations! But Ezekiel even removes the 3-4! Each human created in God's image and likeness will stand before God as an individual based on his/her actions and motives (i.e., Deut. 24:16).

Notice that "the wicked" is parallel with "anyone" in v. 32. Contextually this must refer to covenant people (i.e., Israelites), but the OT inclusion of (1) non-Israelites such as Job and Ruth; (2) the Mosaic covenant's concern for the alien; and (3) Isaiah's revelations of YHWH's love for and inclusion of "the nations" (i.e., Isa. 66:23), causes one to expand (i.e., systematic theology) the reference to all humans, which is surely the focus of the "New Covenant" (i.e., John 1:12; 3:16; 4:42; Rom. 11:32; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; Heb. 2:9; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14).

• "rather than that he should turn and repent" See Special Topic: Repentance in the OT at 14:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:24-29

²⁴"But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die. ²⁵Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right? ²⁶When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has committed he will die. ²⁷Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life. ²⁸Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right?''

18:24 This verse demonstrates that an OT covenant person could

- 1. be righteous, v. 24
- 2. become wicked, v. 24
- 3. become righteous again, vv. 27,28

The OT is a performance-based, conditional covenant! The question remains, is the NT a conditional covenant? It is not performance-based, but the goal of both the OT and NT is a righteous people who reflect God's character to a lost world! The problem of "easy believism" is the issue. The NT is a conditional covenant, which requires

- 1. repentance
- 2. faith, trust, belief
- 3. obedience
- 4. perseverance

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (APHISTĒMI)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term "apostasy" is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the PREPOSITION *apo*, which means "from" or "away from" and *histēmi*, "to sit," "to stand," or "to fix." Notice the following (non-theological) usages.

- 1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
- 2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
- 3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
- 4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
- 5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
- 6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
- 7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
- 8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage

- 1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, Exod.32:32 (LXX); Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
- 2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
- 3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:13

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens and they turn away.

I. Old Testament

- A. Korah, Num. 16
- B. Eli's sons, I Sam. 2, 4
- C. Saul, I Sam. 11-31
- D. False prophets (examples)
 - 1. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22
 - 2. Jer. 28
 - 3. Ezek. 13:1-7
- E. False prophetesses
 - 1. Ezek. 13:17
 - 2. Neh. 6:14
- F. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 - 1. Jer. 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 - 2. Ezek. 22:23-31
 - 3. Micah 3:5-12
- II. New Testament
 - A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus'

words in the Parable of the Soils found in Luke 8:13. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture true, but immature, believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

- 1. Judas, John 17:12
- 2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
- 3. those spoken of in Matt. 7:21-23
- 4. those spoken of in Matthew 13
- 5. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
- 6. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
- 7. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
- 8. false teachers, II Peter 2:19-20; Jude 12-19
- 9. antichrists, I John 2:18-19
- C. Fruitless faith
 - 1. Matthew 7
 - 2. I Corinthians 3:10-15
 - 3. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural, or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g. Rom. 9:6).

■ Notice the phrases used to describe one who turns from righteousness.

- 1. commits iniquity (lit. "injustice," BDB 732, cf. 3:20; 18:24,26 [twice]; 33:13 [twice],15,18; Lev. 19:15,35; Deut. 25:16
- 2. does according to all the abominations (BDB 1072, see Special Topic at 5:11)
- 3. wicked man does (lit. "wicked," BDB 957, cf. 3:18 [twice]; 7:21; 21:30; 33:8 [twice])
- 4. treachery which he has committed (lit. "act unfaithfully," BDB 591, cf. 14:13; 15:8; 17:20; 20:27; 39:23,26)
- 5. sin which he has committed (BDB 308, cf. 16:51; 18:14; 21:29; 33:10,16)

All of these phrases refer to covenant people. Their genealogy in the family of Abraham did not protect them (note John 8:31-59) from the consequences of evil acts (cf. Isa. 65:7; Jer. 31:29-30; Lam. 5:7).

18:25	
NASB	"not right"
NKJV	"not fair"
NRSV, JPSOA	"unfair"
TEV	"isn't right"

NJB"unjust"REB"acts without principle"

This VERB (BDB 1067, KB 1733, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) refers to a standard of weight or measurement (cf. 18:29; 33:17,20). YHWH judges precisely because He weighs the human heart and knows the actions of all (cf. Pro. 16:2,11).

This verse shows the purpose of the chapter (cf. v. 2). The Judeans in Jerusalem are trying to explain God's judgment by blaming

- 1. their ancestors
- 2. their parents
- 3. God (He is unjust in His actions, cf. 18:29; 33:17,20)

They were attempting to deflect spiritual responsibility. This whole chapter must contextually be seen in this light!

"Hear now" is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570). YHWH is still dealing with His covenant people. He wants them to repent and return to Him (cf. vv. 30-32).

18:28 "because he considered" This is literally "see" (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT), but used in the sense of mental enlightentment (TEV "realizes"). It is similar to "came to himself" of Luke 15:17. Spiritual choices all begin in the mind! The new thoughts resulted in modified behavior!

The phrase "he shall surely live" is a repeated divine affirmation (see vv. 9,17,19,21).

18:29 The VERB "is not right" (BDB 1067, KB 1733, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is used three times; once as an accusation against God, but twice of the Judeans' sinful actions.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:30-32

³⁰"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord GOD. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. ³¹Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."

18:30-32 This is a key theological summary. "Each according to his conduct" is a spiritual principle recurrent throughout Scripture (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

■ This summary has a series of IMPERATIVES.

- 1. repent, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE repeated in v. 32, see Special Topic at 14:6
- 2. turn away- BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, used in an exclamatory sense
- 3. cast away- BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 20:7,8
- 4. make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 5. live BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, this is the key term used 17 times in this chapter (and 10 times in the parallel, chapter 33). YHWH lives, v. 3, and He wants us to live, but spiritual life has conditions and requirements.

18:30 "a stumbling block" This (BDB 506) can be understood as the means or occasion of stumbling or literally of a rock in the road. See note at 3:20.

18:31 It is obvious that even with YHWH's available mercy, some covenant people will not return to Him. Did they ever know Him? There are two inseparable ways this "knowledge" is manifest.

- 1. personal faith (cf. Gen. 15:6)
- 2. personal obedience (cf. vv. 21-22)

The second is evidence that the first is present. The "new" covenant will accentuate (not initiate) this relationship. YHWH enables the fallen human to do what the human desires to do (i.e., Romans 7).

One more theological point on these verses, Israel's physical condition was related to her spiritual condition. Israel's problems were related to her disobedience to YHWH, not YHWH's weakness related to the other national gods (i.e., Babylonian Marduk). This truth emphasizes the tension between a sovereign monotheistic deity and a covenant people with true free will! Israel reaped the consequences of her choices, not YHWH's (i.e., vv. 23,32)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. Why is this chapter so important in understanding the OT?
- 2. Are we affected by the sins of others? How? Can we be corporately guilty for our society?
- 3. Does God love all humans or just a chosen group?
- 4. What spiritual principle is mentioned in v. 30?

EZEKIEL 19

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Lament for the Princes of Israel	Israel Degraded	Two Laments	A Song of Sorrow	A Lament for the Queen- Mother and the Princes of Israel
19:1-14	19:1-9	19:1-14	19:1-14	19:1-14
	(2-4)		(2-9)	(2-9)
	(5-9)			
	19:10-14		(10-14)	(10-14)

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-14

¹"As for you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel ²and say, 'What was your mother? A lioness among lions! She lay down among young lions, She reared her cubs.
³'When she brought up one of her cubs, He became a lion, And he learned to tear *his* prey;

He devoured men. ⁴Then nations heard about him; He was captured in their pit, And they brought him with hooks To the land of Egypt. ⁵When she saw, as she waited, That her hope was lost, She took another of her cubs And made him a young lion. ⁶And he walked about among the lions; He became a young lion, He learned to tear *his* prev: He devoured men. ⁷He destroyed their fortified towers And laid waste their cities: And the land and its fullness were appalled Because of the sound of his roaring. ⁸Then nations set against him On every side from *their* provinces, And they spread their net over him; He was captured in their pit. ⁹They put him in a cage with hooks And brought him to the king of Babylon; They brought him in hunting nets So that his voice would be heard no more On the mountains of Israel. ¹⁰Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard, Planted by the waters; It was fruitful and full of branches Because of abundant waters. ¹¹And it had strong branches *fit* for scepters of rulers, And its height was raised above the clouds So that it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches. ¹²But it was plucked up in fury; It was cast down to the ground: And the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong branch was torn off So that it withered; The fire consumed it. ¹³And now it is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land. ¹⁴And fire has gone out from *its* branch; It has consumed its shoots and fruit,

So that there is not in it a strong branch, A scepter to rule.'''

This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.

19:1 "take up" The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) literally means "to lift" or "to carry." Here it is used in an idiom for "speak loudly" or "make heard."

It is surprising that this chapter does not start with "the word of the LORD came to me saying" (cf. 1:3; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1,8,17,21,26; 13:1; 14:2,12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1; 18:1; 20:2,45; 21:1,8,18; 22:1; etc.). Does this imply that chapters 18 and 19 form a literary unit? I think not since chapter 19 is a poetic lamentation.

■ "lamentation" This term (BDB 884) refers to a specific type of funeral song (cf. 2:10; 19:1,14; 26:17; 27:2,32; 28:12; 32:2,16). It becomes a literary marker for a new topic (genre, cf. Isa. 14:3-21; Amos 5:1-3). In prophetic literature there are several standard oracle forms.

- 1. promise oracle
- 2. court terminology
- 3. funeral dirge

A good brief discussion of funeral rites in Israel can be seen in Roland DeVaux's *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 57-61.

• "the princes of Israel" This (BDB 672) title (prince) is used in Ezekiel to refer to several groups.

- 1. King Zedekiah, 7:27; 12:10,12; 21:25
- 2. leaders of Judah, 21:12; 22:6; 45:8,9
- 3. future Davidic kings, 34:24; 37:25; 44:3; 45:7,16,17,22; 46:2,4,8,10,12,16,17,18; 48:21,22
- 4. foreign kings, 26:16; 27:21; 30:13; 32:29; 38:2,3; 39:1,18

The term implies members of a royal family. Here, because it is PLURAL, it refers to the king and others of his extended family in places of leadership.

19:2-9 This section of the lamentation refers to the kings of Judah, from the death of Josiah until the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

- 1. Jehoahaz (Shallum, cf. Jer. 22:11), II Kgs. 23:31-33, who was Josiah's son and successor, but exiled by Pharaoh Neco II after three months and replaced by
- 2. Jehoiakim (Eliakim), II Kgs. 23:34-24:7, who was also a son of Josiah. He reigned eleven years and died. He was replaced by
- 3. Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah), II Kgs. 24:8-17, who reigned three months and was exiled to Babylon (cf. v. 9, 597 B.C.) by Nebuchadnezzar II and replaced with
- 4. Zedekiah, II Kgs. 24:18-20, who was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar II. He rebelled and was captured, blinded, and exiled to Babylon.

19:2 "your mother" This refers to national Israel (cf. v. 10) producing a line of Davidic kings (cf. Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24; Rev. 5:5). This ceased with Zedekiah's exile. In a sense Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar, Ezra 1:8) continued the Davidic line (cf. Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 4).

19:7	
NASB	"destroyed"
NKJV	"knew"
NRSV, JPSOA	"ravaged"
TEV	"wrecked"
NJB	"tore down"

The MT has "knew" (אידע), BDB 393), but most English translations assume an emendation "destroyed" (אירע), following the Targums. With it, this poetic line is parallel to v. 7b. However, the UBS Hebrew OT Project gives the emendation a "C" rating.

NASB	"fortified towers"
NKJV	"desolate places"
NRSV	"strongholds"
TEV	"forts"
NJB	"palaces"
JPSOA	"windows"

The MT has "windows" (אלמנותינ, BDB 48), but most English translations use an emendation "citadel" or "strongholds" (ארמנותינ, BDB 74), which is primarily a change of the second consonant from "L" to "R." The MT is understandable in context as it is. The UBS Hebrew OT Project gives it an "A" rating.

19:10-14 These verses change the metaphor describing Judah's royal family not as a lion pride but a huge, tall grapevine. They also change time frames back to the beginnings of a unified kingdom (i.e., Saul, David, Solomon). The vine is described as

- A. Positive
 - 1. planted by waters, v. 10
 - 2. fruitful, v. 10
 - 3. full of strong branches, vv. 10-11
 - 4. tall above the clouds, v. 11
- B. Negative
 - 1. plucked up in fury, v. 12
 - 2. cast down to the ground, v. 12
 - 3. east wind dried up its fruit, v. 12
 - 4. strong branch torn off, v. 12
 - 5. planted in a wilderness, v. 13
 - 6. planted in a dry land, v. 13
 - 7. burned, v. 14

The royal family was decimated (similar to chapter 17).

The lion metaphor for Judah may refer to Jacob's prophecies about his children (esp. Judah, cf. Gen. 49:9). Balaam also used this imagery to describe Israel (cf. Num. 23:24; 24:9).

19:10

NASB, NRSV	"vineyard"
NKJV	"bloodline"
TEV	"grapevine" (Targums and LXX, "vine")
NJB	omitted
Deck:44a IDCOA	(fin warm blaad?)

Peshitta, JPSOA "in your blood"

The MT has "blood" (בדמך, BDB 196). Most English translations have an emendation.

- 1. "to be like" (תדמה)
- 2. "height"
- 3. "vineyard" (בכרמ)
- 4. omit the phrase (cf. REB).

The Ancient Near East often used the metaphor of a giant tree to describe world powers (e.g., 17:3,22-24; 19:10-14; 31:2-18; Dan. 4:4-17,19-27; and possibly Amos 2:9).

19:11 NASB, NKJV, TEV "branches" NRSV, NJB "stem"

There is a wordplay between "branches" (BDB 641), which can mean "staff," and "scepter" (BDB 986), also notice the same play in v. 14.

NASB, TEV "the clouds"

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB "the thick branches"

NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 310, reads "In Ezek. 19:11; 31:3,10,14 one should read 'clouds' from 'āb, rather than 'branches' from 'ābōt." The UBS Hebrew OT Project gives "clouds" an "A" rating.

19:12 "the east wind" This term (construct BDB 924 and 870) is used in Ezekiel many times (over fifty), but most often in chapters 40-48 simply as "the east." It denotes (1) the direction of the rising sun or (2) a metaphor for destruction (i.e., desert wind), often with the added theological connotation of being sent by YHWH to accomplish His purposes.

- 1. Gen. 41:6,23,27
- 2. Exod. 10:13; 14:21(positive)
- 3. wisdom literature, Job 27:21; 38:24; Ps. 48:7; 78:26 (representative sample)
- 4. Isa. 27:8
- 5. Jer. 18:17
- 6. Ezek. 17:10; 19:12; 27:26
- 7. Hosea 13:15
- 8. Jonah 4:8
- 9. Hab. 1:9

The hot desert wind (Arabic, "sirocco" wind), like the rain, is at YHWH's disposal! Wind (BDB 924, *ruah*) is often associated with YHWH's power (i.e., Spirit) in the OT.

19:14 Fire is YHWH's instrument of judgment (cf. 15:4; 20:47-48, see Special Topic at 1:4). There will be no Davidic king after the exiled Zedekiah. Even Zerubbabel (Sheshbazzar, Ezra 1:8) was only a prince of the line, not a direct son. The direct son of II Samuel 7 will be the Messiah.

EZEKIEL 20

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Dealings With Israel Rehearsed	The Rebellions of Israel	The Fall and Rise of Israel	The LORD'S Will and Human Defiance	An Account of Israel's Infidelities
20:1-8a	20:1-4	20:1-8a	20:1-3	20:1-3
			20:4-9	20:4-17
	20:5-9			
20:8b-17		20:8b-13a		
	20:10-17		20:10-16	
		20:13b-17		
			20:17-20	
20:18-26	20:18-26	20:18-21a		20:18-26
			20:21-24	
		20:21b-26		
			20:25-26	
20:27-32	20:27-32	20:27-31	20:27-32	20:27-29
				20:30-44
		20:32		
God Will Restore Israel to Her Land	God Will Restore Israel		God Punishes and Forgives	
20:33-38	20:33-38	20:33-38	20:33-36	
			20:37-38	
30:39-44	20:39-44	20:39	20:39-44	
	Fire in the Forest	20:40-44	Fire in the South	The Sword of Yahweh (MT 21:45-49)
20:45-49	20:45-49	20:45-49	20:45-48	
			20:49	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-8a

¹Now in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me. ²And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ³''Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Do you come to inquire of Me? As I live,'' declares the Lord GOD, ''I will not be inquired of by you.''' ⁴''Will you judge them, will you judge them, son of man? Make them know the abominations of their fathers; ⁵and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God, ⁶on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. ⁷I said to them, 'Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.' ⁸But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.''

20:1 "in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, **on the tenth of the month**" Ezekiel makes an attempt to date his prophecies (i.e., 591 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 25:8; compare with Jer. 52:12; also note the dates in Ezek. 1:1; 8:1; 20:1; 26:1; 29:1,17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1,17; 33:21). The purpose for this may be

- 1. a literary way of asserting that YHWH spoke to him
- 2. a way of showing he was a true prophet (i.e., YHWH spoke to him before the event)
- 3. just his meticulous personality or possibly priestly training

The elder's question is not stated, but the date causes one to imagine it was related to Egypt's power and Zedekiah's proposed alliance with Pharaoh Psammetik II (595-589 B.C.).

• "the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD" They had done this before (cf. 8:1,11,12; 14:1). We do not know what they came to ask because Ezekiel receives another vision while they sat there. This revelation relates to their questions.

20:3 The motives and sins of this (these) group(s) of elders are consistently negative (cf. 8:1; 14:1). They came as if they were seeking YHWH's advice and guidance (cf. 14:3; 20:31), but in reality, they were idolaters (cf. 14:7). The wickedness of Jerusalem (chapters 8-10) has already affected the exiles (leaders reflect the populace). This uniform evil demonstrates that YHWH's choosing the exiles to reconstitute Israel, while judging and destroying those in Palestine, was an act of mercy, not merit (cf. 36:22-38). He chose them because of His eternal redemptive purposes for all mankind! See Bob's Evangelical Biases at 12:16.

One day YHWH will listen again (cf. 36:37-38)!

• "Son of Man" See note at 2:1.

• "speak" This (BDB 180, KB 210) is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE (cf. 3:1; 12:23; 14:4; 20:27; 29:3; 33:2; 37:19,21).

• "the Lord GOD" This is literally *Adon* YHWH. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4. Notice the number of titles used for God in this chapter. This is a chapter about God and His intentions for Israel, but they would not!

- 1. LORD (YHWH), v. 2
- 2. Adon YHWH, vv. 3(twice),5,27,30,31,33,36,39,40,44,47,49
- 3. YHWH your *Elohim*, vv. 5,7,19,20
- 4. I am the LORD (YHWH), vv. 26,38,42,44
- 5. I, the LORD (YHWH), v. 48
- Also notice the personal PRONOUNS and phrases.
 - 1. Myself, vv. 5,9
 - 2. against Me, vv. 8,13,21,27,38
 - 3. My wrath, vv. 8,13,21
 - 4. My anger, vv. 8,21
 - 5. My name, vv. 9,14
 - 6. My statutes, vv. 11,13,16,19,21,24
 - 7. My ordinances, vv. 11,13,16,19,21,24
 - 8. My sabbaths, vv. 11,13,16,20,21,24
 - 9. My eye, v. 17
 - 10. My hand, v. 22
 - 11. blasphemed Me, v. 27
 - 12. listen to Me, v. 39
 - 13. My holy name, v. 39
 - 14. My holy mountain, v. 40
 - 15. serve Me, v. 40
 - 16. prove Myself holy, v. 41
 - 17. My name's sake, v. 44

20:4 YHWH seems to be asking Ezekiel if he is ready to act as His mouthpiece in confronting (cf. 16:2; 22:2) these idolatrous elders. The repeated VERB (BDB 1047; KB 1622) could be *Qal* IMPERFECT or *Qal* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE (cf. vv. 7,18[thrice]).

■ "Make them know" This VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, see Special Topic at 22:4) is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (*Hiphil* PERFECT in 22:2). It implies both

- 1. truth
- 2. a relationship with YHWH (e.g., Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5)

• "abomination" See Special Topic at 5:11.

■ "of their fathers" This is surprising in light of chapter 18. Are these elders being confronted because of their parents' or ancestors' sins? Our parents and society often set destructive patterns or licenses which reap judgment (cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9,10). There is both an individual and corporate ethical, moral, religious responsibility. It is not an either/or situation. These elders are affected, but also responsible, as were the Davidic kings of chapter 19.

20:5-7 These verses describe YHWH's actions/admonitions towards the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ("the seed of the house of Jacob," v. 5).

- 1. "I chose Israel," BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, this election terminology, so common in Deuteronomy and Isaiah, occurs only here in Ezekiel
- 2. "I swore" (lit. "lifted hand"), v. 5(twice), BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT (i.e., that I would be their God)
- 3. "I made Myself known to them," v. 5, BDB 393, KB 390, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
- 4. "I swore," v. 6, BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT (that I would bring them out of bondage, out of Egypt)
- 5. "that I had selected for them," v. 6, BDB 1064, KB 1707, *Qal* PERFECT (I would give them the land of Canaan, cf. Gen. 15:12-21)
- 6. "cast away. . .the detestable things," v. 7, BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 7. "do not defile yourselves," v. 7, BDB 379, KB 375, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 18:15; 20:7,18,31; 22:3-4; 23:7,30; 36:18,25; 37:23

20:5 "swore" This is literally "lift the hand" and is used twice in this verse. This forms the central theme of this chapter (cf. vv. 6,15,23,28,42): God's gracious provisions and covenant promises in contrast to Israel's repeated covenant failures (cf. Psalm 106; Nehemiah 9).

The gesture of raising/lifting (BDB 669, KB 724) the hand can have several meanings.

- 1. oath taking, Exod. 6:8; Num. 14:30; Ps. 106:26; Ezek. 20:5-6
- 2. rebellion, II Sam. 20:21
- 3. positive action, Ps. 10:12 (YHWH); 119:48 (human)
- 4. blessing, Lev. 9:22; Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 134:2; I Tim. 2:8
- 5. prayers, Lam. 2:19

20:6 "to bring them out" This VERB (BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. vv. 6,9,10, 14,22,34,38,41) is often used (in the *Hiphil*) of YHWH's act of (1) prophetic fulfillment (cf. Gen. 15:12-21) and/or (2) mercy in delivering Israel from Egypt. It is also used of YHWH delivering Israel from the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles (cf. vv. 34,38,41; 34:13).

NASB	"that I had selected for them"
NKJV, NRSV	"that I had searched out for them"
TEV	"I had chosen for them"
NJB	"which I had reconnoitered for them"
LXX	"that I spied for them"
REV IDSOA	"that I had sought out for thom"

REV, JPSOA "that I had sought out for them"

The VERB (BDB 1064, KB 1707, *Qal* PERFECT) means "to seek out," "to spy out," or "to explore," in light of the fact that (1) it is used so often for the twelve spies (cf. Num. 13:2,16,17,25,32; 14:6,7, 34,36,38) and (2) it is found only here in the Prophets. The translation "spy out" seems best in light of Deut. 1:33. YHWH took special, personal care of young Israel (cf. Ezekiel 16)!

■ "flowing with milk and honey" This phrase is first used in Exod. 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; 14:8; 16:13-14. It became a technical name used in Aramaic sources (i.e., Persian) for the land of Palestine/ Canaan (cf. Jer. 3:19). It was a very fertile place (cf. v. 15).

20:7,8 "cast away" This VERB (BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is often used of people rejecting God's revelation, word (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 127).

1. I Kgs. 14:9, Jeroboam I cast YHWH behind his back (i.e., out of sight, out of mind)

- 2. Neh. 9:26, Israelites, during the period of the Judges, cast God's law behind their backs
- 3. Ps. 2:3, the kings of the earth reject the Lord's anointed
- 4. Ps. 50:17, the wicked reject YHWH's word
- 5. Ezek. 23:35, Judah forgot YHWH and cast Him behind their backs

What these rebels should have cast away was their rebellion (cf. 18:31; 20:7-8). One day they will throw their idols out in the street (cf. 7:19).

20:7 "defiled yourselves with the idols of Egypt" This could refer to the golden calf of Exodus 32 or the idols mentioned in Josh. 24:14.

20:8a This describes Israel's rebellion against their covenant God (i.e., during and after the Exodus).

- 1. they rebelled against Me, v. 8 BDB 598, KB 632, Hiphil IMPERFECT
- 2. they were not willing to listen to Me, v. 8, "listen," BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 3:7; 12:2
- 3. they did not cast away the detestable things, v. 8, BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 5:11; 11:21
- 4. they did not forsake the idols of Egypt, v. 8, BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exodus 32; Ps. 106:19-23

The foolishness of idol worship is highlighted in Ps. 115:4-8; 138:15-18; Isa. 44:9-17; Jer. 2:27-28; 10:3-5; Hab. 2:18-19!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:8b-17

^{8b}"Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. ⁹But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they *lived*, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁰So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. ¹¹I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live. ¹²Also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. ¹³But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; and My sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them. ¹⁴But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out. ¹⁵Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands, ¹⁶because they rejected My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned My sabbaths, for their heart continually went after their idols. ¹⁷Yet My eye spared them rather than destroying them, and I did not cause their annihilation in the wilderness."

20:8b This describes YHWH's reaction to Israel's rebellions (i.e., bondage in Egypt).

- 1. I resolved to pour out My wrath, v. 8
- 2. I resolved to accomplish My anger, v. 8
- 3. I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned ("profane" lit. "pollute," BDB 320, KB 319, cf. vv. 13,14,16,21,22,24,39; 36:22-38)

20:9-12 God's actions towards Israel during the Exodus and beyond (v. 9c).

- 1. I took them out of Egypt.
- 2. I brought them into the wilderness.

- 3. I gave them My statutes, I informed them of My ordinances.
- 4. I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them (a regular worship time and place, Exod. 31:13).
- 5. That they might know. This Hebrew word (BDB 393, KB 390, cf. v. 20) implies both
 - a. a personal relationship
 - b. knowledge about something

20:9 Notice that YHWH has a concern for "the nations." Israel was meant to reveal YHWH to the nations (cf. vv. 14,39; 36:22-38; 39:7). I think there is a direct link to Gen. 3:15; 12:4; Acts 3:24-26; Gal. 3:8-9!

■ "I acted for the sake of My name" This idea that historical actions related to Israel defined the character of YHWH seems to have begun with Moses' intercessory prayer in Exod. 32:11-14. It becomes a recurrent theme (cf. II Kgs. 19:34; 20:6; Ps. 23:3; 25:11; 31:3; 79:9; 106:8; 119:21; 143:9; Isa. 37:35; 43:25; 48:9,11; Jer. 14:7,21; Ezek. 20:9,14,22,44; 36:21,22-38).

See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 12:16! YHWH's choice, love, and care for Israel was redemptively purposeful! There was/is an eternal redemptive plan: YHWH created humanity in His image and likeness for fellowship (cf. Genesis 1-2). See Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 377-381.

20:11 "statutes. . .ordinances" See Special Topic at 5:7.

• "by which, if a man observe them, he will live" This alludes to the promises of Lev. 18:5; Deut. 30:15-20 and Ezekiel 18 (cf. vv. 13,21).

Life on earth is both physical and spiritual, similar to John 5:40; 10:10. Life is far more than mere physical existence. There is a quality of life that only God can give, which involves more than things or time. Augustine put it well when he said, "there is a God-shaped hole in every person." This is the image, likeness of the Creator, which only He can fill!

20:12-13 A brief content outline (compare with Nehemiah 9 and Acts 7):

- 1. verses 7 and 8 show the rebellion of the people of God during the Exodus
- 2. verses 12 and 13 show the rebellion of the people of God during the wilderness wandering period
- 3. verses 20 and 21 show the rebellion of the second generation during the wilderness period
- 4. verses 24 and 25 show the continual rebellion of the people of God even in the Promised Land
- 5. in the midst of all this rebellion, God's grace and provision remain steadfast

20:12 "sabbaths" This term (BDB 992) is surprisingly mentioned several times in this chapter in correlation with words for God's revelation (statutes, ordinances, cf. vv. 11-12,13,16,19-20,21,24). The exact reason is uncertain. For a good brief discussion on the origin of the Sabbath see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 475-483.

• "who sanctifies them" This PARTICIPLE (BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) is from the root term "holy" (i.e., set apart for service to YHWH). Israel was made holy by God (cf. Exod. 31:13) in order to reveal holiness to the nations. Their holiness would be YHWH's way to manifest Himself to the nations (cf. vv. 9,14,22,39; 36:22-38).

Holiness is a covenant position (i.e., related to YHWH), but also a call to holy living!

SPECIAL TOPIC: NT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Romans 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

Initial Response	A Progressive Christlikeness		
Acts 20:23; 26:18	Romans 6:19		
Romans 15:16	II Corinthians 7:1		
I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11	Ephesians 1:4; 2:10		
II Thessalonians 2:13	I Thess. 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23		
Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12	I Timothy 2:15		
I Peter 1:12	II Timothy 2:21		
	Hebrews 12:14		
	I Peter 1:15-16		

20:13 Israel sins during the wilderness wandering period (i.e., from Egypt to Canaan).

- 1. They did not walk in My statutes, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. vv. 16(twice), 18, 19, 21,39
- 2. They rejected My ordinances, BDB 549, KB 540 *Qal* PERFECT, cf. vv. 16,24
- 3. They profaned My sabbaths, BDB 320, KB 319, Piel PERFECT

20:14 Again YHWH's concern for His name before the nations is emphaasized (cf. vv. 9,22,39; Isa. 48:9). YHWH has a personal interest in Israel (i.e., the coming Messiah). See Special Topic at 12:16.

20:15 Here the reason for the forty years in the wilderness is explained. It was Israel's continuing sin (i.e., idolatry [cf. v. 16b, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE] and other covenant disobedience).

20:17 Even amidst their sin YHWH limited His wrath so as not to destroy Israel (cf. Isa. 48:9). In my opinion, so that Messiah would/could come from Abraham's line and fulfill Gen. 3:15! There has always been an eternal redemptive plan for all humanity (i.e., Isa. 66:23). Israel was a tool, a servant in that plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:18-26

¹⁸"I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers or keep their ordinances or defile yourselves with their idols. ¹⁹I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and observe them. ²⁰Sanctify My sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.' ²¹But the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, *if* a man observes them, he will live; they profaned My sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness. ²²But I withdrew My hand and acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. ²³Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them among the lands, ²⁴because they had not observed My ordinances, but had rejected My statutes and had profaned

My sabbaths, and their eyes were on the idols of their fathers. ²⁵I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live; ²⁶and I pronounced them unclean because of their gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through *the fire* so that I might make them desolate, in order that they might know that I am the LORD.'''

20:18-26 Again we return to the issue of multi-generational sin. Chapters 18-20 are related by this theme. If one generation rebels, YHWH tries to encourage and inform the next one. Tragically Israel continued its rebellion through time. It ultimately resulted in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles (the bondage of Egypt in another land). Moses predicted this (cf. Deut. 4:25-31; 28:64-68), as did Joshua (cf. Josh. 24:19-20).

20:18-20 A series of commands expresses YHWH's intent for the second generation of the Exodus.

- 1. Negative (Israel's reality), v. 18
 - a. do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, v. 18, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. do not keep their ordinances, v. 18, BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. do not defile yourselves with their idols, BDB 379, KB 375, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 2. Positive (YHWH's hope), vv. 19-20
 - a. walk in My statutes, v. 19, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. keep My ordinances, v. 19, BDB 1036, KB 1581, Qal IMPERATIVE
 - c. observe them (lit. "do"), v. 19, BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - d. sanctify My sabbath, v. 20, BDB 872, KB 1073, Piel IMPERATIVE
- **20:21-26** Israel did not obey, but rebelled against YHWH (several of this list are parallel).
 - 1. They did not walk in His statutes, v. 21
 - 2. They were not careful to observe His ordinances, v. 21
 - 3. They profaned His sabbaths (cf. v. 20), v. 21
- So YHWH
 - 1. resolved to pour out His wrath, v. 21
 - 2. accomplished His anger against them in the wilderness, v. 21
 - 3. withdrew His hand, v. 22, cf. Ps. 74:11; Lam. 2:3
 - 4. acted for the sake of His name, v. 22 (cf. 36:22-38)
 - 5. scattered them among the nations, v. 23 (cf. Ps. 106:19-27 describes the wilderness period, vv. 26-27 make the threat)
 - 6. dispersed them among the lands, v. 23 (parallel to #5)
 - 7. gave them statutes that were not good, v. 25
 - 8. gave them ordinances by which they could not live, v. 25 (apparently from false prophets or faithless leaders)
 - 9. pronounced them unclean (i.e., worship of *Molech*, child sacrifice), v. 26
 - 10. made them desolate, v. 26
- 20:25 "I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live" This verse has been a great concern to many commentators because it seems to impugn God's character.
 - 1. Rashi says that YHWH let their inner evil loose (cf. Ps. 81:12; Isa. 66:4; Rom. 1:24, 26, 28).
 - 2. Kimchi, another Jewish expositor, says that they were given over to the enemy (i.e., Canaanite tribes) and they tried to live by their standards (i.e., worship of *Molech*, cf. v. 26).

- This may be sarcasm, like vv. 29 and 39; they were using His guidelines (cf. vv. 11-13,16,19-21,24) in Canaanite ways (one example, Genesis 22 became a model for child sacrifice, cf. v. 26). These people had the appearance of being faithful worshipers (like the elders of vv. 1-4), but in reality were idolaters.
- 4. Compare 14:29; Isa. 29:13-14; 63:17

20:26 "they caused all their first-born to pass through *the fire*" This refers to the worship of the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (cf. 16:20; Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; II Kings 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; 11 Chr. 28:3; Jer. 32:35). This may have been a misunderstanding about the death of the first-born recorded in Exodus 12, 13 or even Genesis 22. See Special Topic: *Molech* at 16:16-21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:27-32

²⁷"Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed Me by acting treacherously against Me. ²⁸When I had brought them into the land which I swore to give to them, then they saw every high hill and every leafy tree, and they offered there their sacrifices and there they presented the provocation of their offering. There also they made their soothing aroma and there they poured out their drink offerings. ²⁹Then I said to them, 'What is the high place to which you go?' So its name is called Bamah to this day.''' ³⁰Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and play the harlot after their detestable things? ³¹When you offer your gifts, when you cause your sons to pass through the fire, you are defiling yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live,'' declares the Lord GOD, ''I will not be inquired of by you. ³²What comes into your mind will not come about, when you say: 'We will be like the nations, like the tribes of the lands, serving wood and stone.'''

20:27 Israel was meant to be a light to the nations (cf. vv. 9,14,22,41), but idolatry turned their witness into confusion, darkness, and blasphemy (e.g., "to throw accusations," BDB 154, KB 180, *Piel* PERFECT). Their covenant disobedience was seen as "unfaithfulness" or even "treachery" (BDB 591, KB 612, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 14:13; 17:20; 18:24; 20:27; 39:26) against YHWH.

20:28 "which I swore to give them" This refers to the repeated promise by YHWH to give Abraham and his seed the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan).

- 1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1,7; 13:15; 15:18
- 2. Isaac, Gen. 50:24; Exod. 13:11; 33:1; Num. 11:12; 14:23; 32:11; Deut. 1:8; 9:5; 29:13
- 3. Jacob, Gen. 26:3
- 4. Israel, Num. 14:16; Deut. 4:21; 6:23; 8:1; 11:9; 19:8; 26:3,15; 28:11; 31:7,23; 34:4; Josh. 1:6; 21:43-44

• "then they saw every high hill and every leafy tree" This refers to the worship of the gods of the Canaanite fertility cult of *Ba'al* and *Ashterah/Astarte*. They turned every hill and valley into a place of sexual idolatry (cf. 6:13; 16:23-29; Isa. 57:5-8; Jer. 2:20; 3:6,13; 17:2; Hosea 4:13).

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NASB, NRSV	"the provocation"
NKJV	"provoked Me"
TEV	"made Me angry"
NJB	"provoked My anger"
	• • •

The term (BDB 495) means "vexation" or "anger." It often refers to YHWH's anger at idolatry (cf. I Kgs. 15:30; 21:22; II Kgs. 23:26).

The phrase "they poured out their libations" is mentioned as part of pagan rituals which provoked YHWH several times in Jeremiah (cf. 7:18; 19:13; 32:29; 44:17-19). YHWH is a jealous God (cf. Lev. 26:30-31). He will not accept rivals!

■ "soothing aroma" This (BDB 629) is a metaphor for an acceptable sacrifice (incense or meat, cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25,41; Lev. 1:9,13,17; Ezek. 6:13; 16:19; 20:28). It must be stated that this phrase does not imply that sacrifices were seen as a "feeding" of YHWH, which is part of the Mesopotamian texts (i.e., Gilgamesh Epic). It is an idiom!

• "poured out their libations" This refers to liquid offerings (usually wine), which often accompanied other sacrifices.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)

- I. Biblical Terms
 - A. Old Testament
 - 1. *Yayin* This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
 - 2. *Tirosh* This is "new wine" (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
 - 3. *Asis* This is obviously alcoholic beverages ("sweet wine" BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
 - 4. *Sekar* This is the term "strong drink" (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term "drunk" or "drunkard." It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).
 - B. New Testament
 - 1. Oinos the Greek equivalent of Yayin
 - 2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
 - 3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).
- II. Biblical Usage
 - A. Old Testament
 - 1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
 - 2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Judg. 9:13).
 - 3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
 - 4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah Gen. 9:21; Lot Gen. 19:33,35; Samson Judg. 16:19; Nabal I Sam. 25:36; Uriah II Sam. 11:13; Ammon II Sam. 13:28; Elah I Kin. 16:9; Benhadad I Kin. 20:12; Rulers Amos 6:6; and Ladies Amos 4).

- 5. Wine can be abused (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
- 6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and Rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
- 7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).
- B. Interbiblical
 - 1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
 - 2. The rabbis say, "Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed." (BB 58b).
- C. New Testament
 - 1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
 - 2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
 - 3. Peter accused of drunkenness on "new wine" at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
 - 4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
 - 5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
 - 6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
 - 7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).
- III. Theological Insight
 - A. Dialectical tension
 - 1. Wine is the gift of God.
 - 2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
 - 3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).
 - B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds
 - 1. God is the source of all good things.
 - 2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.
 - C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).
- IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation
 - A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
 - B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."
 - C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
 - D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth 6:1*).
 - E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good but had to be strained well before use.
 - F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.

- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.
- V. Closing Statements
 - A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation does not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
 - B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.
 - C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.
 - D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

20:29 "Bamah" This is the Hebrew word for "high place" (BDB 119). Originally they were local shrines (cf. I Sam. 7:17; 9:12-25; 10:5,13; I Kgs. 3:2-4), which were not condemned.

However, the same places became the sites of fertility worship (cf. Num. 22:41; I Kgs. 11:7; 12:31-32; 14:23; 15:14; 22:43; II Chr. 21:11; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Hosea 4:13; 10:8; Amos 7:9; Micah 1:5). Josiah ordered them to be destroyed (cf. I Kgs. 13:2,32,33; II Kgs. 23:5-20; II Chr. 34:3-4). The centralization of worship in Jerusalem (cf. Lev. 17:3-5; Deut. 12:13-14) was meant to control this potential abuse.

20:30-32 The question is to whom does "your fathers" refer?

- 1. immediate past generation
- 2. wilderness wandering generation
- 3. early settlers in the Promised Land
- 4. or, collective of all past generations

The specific idols referred to are the fertility gods of Canaan (i.e., *Ba'al, Asherah, Molech*). Verse 32 describes the enormity of the problem in the statement "we will be like the nations, like the tribes of the land, serving wood and stone." Remember that the Israelites were given the land of Canaan because of the continuing idolatry of the tribes of the land (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). If Israel repeats their abominations, she will also be removed from the land (uniquely dedicated/owned by YHWH). Israel loses that which makes her distinct! Israel cannot be a light to the nations because she has become one of the nations! She was lost as a vehicle of revelation!

20:32 This statement of desire by the idolatrous Judeans will never come to pass (the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the *Qal* IMPERFECT of the VERB "to be," BDB 224, KB 243). God's covenant people cannot be allowed to be like the other people. God desires that He (the only true God) be revealed to the nations through His people! They are His people for this very purpose (see Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 12:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:33-38

³³"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. ³⁴I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an

outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,'' declares the Lord GOD. ³⁷I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.''

20:33 YHWH will not allow His covenant people to completely degenerate into idolatry.

- 1. surely with a mighty hand
- 2. with wrath poured out, cf. Lam. 4:11

These phrases (i.e., #1,#2) were originally used of YHWH's great and merciful acts of deliverance (in the Exodus, cf. Deut. 3:24; 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8,19; 9:26,29; 11:2; 26:8; Josh. 4:24). But now they are used to demonstrate that YHWH is fighting against rebellious Israel, not for her!

YHWH will be king! He will accomplish His purposes through national Israel! Even though He exiles them, He will bring them back into the land (cf. vv. 34,41; 11:17; 28:25; 29:13; 34:12-13; Deut. 30:3; Jer. 23:3).

20:37 "pass under the rod" This refers to a shepherd's rod (BDB 986) used for counting sheep (i.e., Lev. 27:32; Jer. 33:13).

• "the bond of the covenant" This may reflect the cursings and blessings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28.

20:38 The exile will "purge" (BDB 140, KB 162, *Qal* PERFECT)

- 1. those who continue to rebel, BDB 597, KB 632, Qal PARTICIPLE
- 2. those who continue to transgress, BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* PARTICIPLE

• "they will not enter the land" See vv. 15, 16, and 13:9. Evil will be purged from the Promised Land!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:39-44

³⁹"As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord GOD, "Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols. ⁴⁰For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things. ⁴¹As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations. ⁴²And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers. ⁴³There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done. ⁴⁴Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD.'''

20:39-40 The verse begins with sarcasm (two *Qal* IMPERATIVES, "go" and "serve"), denoting Israel's current idolatry. However, a new day is coming (i.e., "afterwards," BDB 29)! This is the great news of

chapter 20. Israel has been so consistently unfaithful, but YHWH is consistently faithful. He will restore a repentant and purged Israel!

Note how the text expresses this.

- 1. You will surely listen to Me, v. 39
- 2. My holy name you will profane no longer, v. 39, cf. 36:21,22; Lev. 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6
- 3. All Israel will serve Him, v. 40
- 4. I shall accept them, v. 40
- 5. I shall accept their sacrifices, v. 40
- 6. I shall accept them as an approved sacrifice, v. 41
- 7. I will gather them from the nations, v. 41
- 8. I shall prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations, v. 41

20:40 "For on My holy mountain" In context this refers to Mount Moriah, on which Abraham offered Isaac (i.e., Genesis 22) and on which the temple was built (i.e., I Kings 7-8). This is a symbolic way of asserting the effective working of the Mosaic covenant.

The term "mountain(s)" (BDB 249) is used often in Ezekiel.

- 1. It often is a way of referring to the whole land (as Mt. Seir stands for Edom, cf. 35:2-3), i.e., 6:3; 19:9; 33:28; 34:13,14; 37:22
- 2. It often is a way of identifying the site of fertility worship, i.e., 6:3-4,13; 18:6,11
- 3. It refers to YHWH's special holy mountain (i.e., the temple), cf. 17:22-23; 20:40; 28:14,16 (possibly a divine mountain in the north); 43:12

The phrase "the mountains of Israel" is unique to Ezekiel (i.e., note repetition in chapter 36).

20:41 "As a soothing aroma I shall accept you" This construct (BDB 629 and 926) is metaphorical of a sacrifice (see note at 20:28). In Ezekiel it has been used consistently of pagan offerings (cf. 6:13; 16:19; 20:28). But here it refers to the people of Israel (cf. 43:27). YHWH brought back the remnant from exile and denotes His acceptance of them by this priestly phrase (remember Ezekiel was a trained priest of the line of Zadok)! A people in fellowship with their Creator has always been the goal of the tabernacle and Levitical sacrifices.

20:43 Israel's true repentance will cause them

- 1. to remember (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT) their sin (cf. 16:61,63; 36:31, in 6:9 they will remember how they hurt YHWH).
- 2. to loathe (BDB 876, KB 1083, Niphal PERFECT) themselves for it (cf. 6:9; 36:31).

20:44 "not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt ways" Grace, oh grace! What a marvelous message to share! God will deal with us according to who He is and what He has done, not according to who we are or what we have done! Hallelujah.

The spiritual principle "we reap what we sow" is abrogated by the mercy and eternal redemptive purposes of YHWH. Israel has a place in a larger scheme, as do the nations (cf. Romans 9-11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:45-49

⁴⁵Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁴⁶"Son of man, set your face toward Teman, and speak out against the south and prophesy against the forest land of the Negev, ⁴⁷and say to the forest of the Negev, 'Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it will consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree; the blazing flame will not be quenched and the whole surface from south to north will be burned by it. ⁴⁸All flesh will see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.""⁴⁹Then I said, "Ah Lord GOD! They are saying of me, 'Is he not just speaking parables?"

20:45 A new revelation of a cleansing fire to sweep Canaan of idolatry. See Special Topic: Fire at 1:4. This parable introduces chapter 21. This is where the MT starts a new chapter.

20:46 "set your face toward" This is a literary marker for a judgment pronouncement (cf. 6:2; 13:17; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2), which follows the same imagery used of YHWH (cf. Lev. 26:17; Jer. 21:10; Ezek. 14:8; 15:7).

• "Teman" This is one of three different words which denote the south.

- 1. Temas (BDB 412, cf. 40:24,27,28,44,45; 41:11,12,13,18)
- 2. Darom (BDB 204, cf. 21:2; 40:24,27,28,44; 41:11; 42:12,13)
- 3. Negeb (BDB 616, cf. 21:3; 40:2; 46:9; 47:19; 48:16,28,33)

All of these are allusions to the capital city of Jerusalem (cf. 21:1).

20:47 "it shall consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree" This parable describes a coming judgment that will affect all Israelites. Here again, we are confronted with the two different ways of judgment.

- 1. from father to children to the third and fourth generations, cf. Exod. 20:5; Deut. 5:9
- 2. one individual's life does not affect the children, cf. chapter 18

Somehow both are true! One deals with individuals and one with a national collective. The tension remains! For me personally, my hope lies in Deut. 5:10 and 7:9! My nation may experience the judgment of God, which affects me, but My God knows me and will bring me (and my faithful descendants) to Himself!

20:49 The idolatrous elders listening to Ezekiel (cf. 20:1) heard these words and thought he was speaking only metaphorically. Chapter 21 is a reaction to this!

EZEKIEL 21

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Parable of the Sword of the LORD	Babylon, the Sword of God	Oracles of the Sword	The LORD's Sword	The Sword of Yahweh
21:1-7	21:1-7	21:1-7	21:1-5	[MT 21:6-10]]
			21:6-7	[MT 21:11-12]
21:8-13	21:8-13	21:8-17	21:8-13	[MT 21:13-22]
	(9a-11)	(9a-12)		
	(12)			
	(13)	(13)		
21:14-17	21:14-17		21:14-17	
	(14-15)	(14-17)		
	(16)			
The Instrument of God's Judgment	(17)		The Sword of the King of Babylon	The King of Babylon At the Crossroads
21:18-23	21:18-23	21:18-23	21:18-24	[21:23-32]
21:24-27	21:24-27	21:24-27		
		(25-27)	21:25-27	
	(26-27)		A Sword and the Ammonites	The Punishment of Ammon
21:28-32	21:28-32	21:28-32	21:28-29	[21:33-37]
	(28b-29)	(28b-32)		
	(30-32)		21:30-32	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph

- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-7

¹And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel; ³and say to the land of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD, ''Behold, I am against you; and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked. ⁴Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked. ⁵Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return *to its sheath* again.''' ⁶As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight. ⁷And when they say to you, 'Why do you groan?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming; and every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will happen,' declares the Lord GOD.''

21:1 The context starts in 20:45, which marks off a new vision (the MT starts chapter 21 here) by the characteristic phrase "the word of the LORD came to me saying" (cf. 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1,8,17, 21,26; 13:1; 14:2,12; 15:1; 16:1; 17:1,11; 18:1; 20:2,45; 21:1,8,18; 22:1,17,23; 23:1; 24:1,15,20; 25:1; 26:1; 27:1; 28:1,7; 30:1,20; 31:1; 32:1,17; 33:1,23; 34:1; 35:1; 36:16; 38:1). Remember that the original manuscripts had no chapters, paragraphs, or verse divisions in the ancient Hebrew scrolls. This repeated phrase helped scroll readers find the place to begin reading. It also helped to show (1) new contexts and (2) related contexts.

"saying" This VERB (BDB 55, KB 65) occurs twenty-two times in this chapter. YHWH wants His wayward people to hear Him clearly!

21:2 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "set your face toward Jerusalem" See note at 20:41.

■ Notice the negative parallelism.

- 1. Set your face toward (BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
- 2. Speak against (lit. "preach," BDB 642, KB 694, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE)
- 3. Prophesy against (BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE)

This exactly matches 20:46. YHWH's judgment against His own disobedient people is described by the personification of His sharp (BDB 292) and polished (BDB 598) sword.

His sword will strike

- 1. the capital with its political leaders
- 2. the mountain/hilltop sanctuaries of *Ba'al* and *Asherah*
- 3. the entire Promised Land

21:3 "sword" This is one of the most graphic chapters in all of the Bible on the judgment of God. YHWH's sword (BDB 352, cf. vv. 3,4,5,9,12,14,15,19) is personified and God's attitude of judgment is heightened. In 20:49 (MT 21:5) the leadership in exile said, "Don't speak to us in parables anymore," so Ezekiel graphically described the judgment of God on Jerusalem and Judah (cf. Jer. 12:12).

21:3-4 "cut off from you the righteous and the wicked" In 20:47 the same groups are described as green and dry trees. The Septuagint changes the term "righteous" to the term "unrighteous" because they think this verse violates the truth presented in 14:20; 18:lff; 33:lff (see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 315-316). Isaiah 57:1-2 struggles with this issue and gives an after-life answer.

21:5 "Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD" This "all flesh" (cf. 20:48; 21:4,5) emphasis can be seen in two aspects.

- 1. all humans, Num. 16:22; 27:16; Ezek. 20:48 (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27)
- 2. Israel, Ezek. 21:4,5; Jer. 12:12

YHWH cares about His namesake among the nations (cf. 36:22-38). Israel was YHWH's instrument to reach the nations (e.g., Isaiah, Jonah, Micah).

If will not return to its sheath again" This is an idiom for YHWH's judgment that cannot be stopped (cf. Jer. 23:20). It seems to contrast v. 30. This is literary hyperbole. Judgment was sure (cf. v. 7)! Those left in Jerusalem did not believe judgment was truly coming, not to Jerusalem, not to the temple, not to them! They misunderstood YHWH's longsuffering, patient endurance.

21:6 "groan with breaking heart" This VERB (BDB 58, KB 70) is used twice.

- 1. *Niphal* IMPERATIVE (command)
- 2. *Niphal* IMPERFECT (continuing action)

This VERB denotes a deep distress caused by physical or emotional pain (i.e., Lam. 1:8,22). In Ezek. 9:4 it is used to describe the guilt feelings connected to true repentance (note Jer. 13:17).

"Heart" is literally "loins" (BDB 608). This was the seat of strength (i.e. the largest muscle in the body is the thigh). It is a Hebrew idiom (cf. v. 12; Job 40:16; Ps. 66:11; Isa. 21:3; Nahum 2:10). Verse 6 describes another symbolic drama dictated by YHWH for the purpose of reaching exiled Judah.

21:7 Note the reason for groaning was the arrival of YHWH's sword.

- 1. every hand will be feeble, Isa. 13:7
- 2. all hands will be feeble, Isa. 13:7
- 3. every spirit will faint
- 4. all knees will be weak as water

This description of utter fear and desperation is used to describe YHWH's judgment on the pagan nations.

- 1. Canaan, Josh. 2:11; 5:1
- 2. Babylon, Isa. 13:7; Jer. 50:43
- 3. Egypt, Isa. 19:1
- 4. Assyria, Nah. 2:10
- 5. Syria, Jer. 49:24
- 6. on the wicked, Ezek. 7:17

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:8-13

⁸Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹"Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the LORD.' Say,

'A sword, a sword sharpened

And also polished!

¹⁰Sharpened to make a slaughter,

Polished to flash like lightning!'

Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree? ¹¹It is given to be polished, that it may be handled; the sword is sharpened and polished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. ¹²Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with My people, therefore strike *your* thigh. ¹³For *there is* a testing; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more?'' declares the Lord GOD.

21:9 The urgency of the message is stressed, as it was in 21:2. This verse has

- 1. two IMPERATIVES
 - a. "prophesy," BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. "say," BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. "say" repeated several times
 - a. "saying," *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 8
 - b. "say," *Qal* PERFECT, v. 9
 - c. "say," *Qal* PERFECT, v. 9
 - d. "say," *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 9

21:10 It is often hard to tell the difference between "elevated prose" and poetry.

- 1. NASB has vv. 9b-10a as poetry
- 2. NKJV has vv. 9b-11,12,13,14-15,16,17,26-27,28b-29,30-32 as poetry
- 3. NRSV has vv. 9b-12,14-17,25-27,28b-32 as poetry
- 4. TEV has vv. 9b-13,28b as poetry

• "polished to flash like lightening" This is a Hebrew idiom of both speed and turning many directions (i.e., Nah. 2:3-4).

- NASB "Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree"
- NKJV "It despises the scepter of My son, as it does all wood"
- NRSV "How can we make merry? You have despised the rod, and all discipline"
- TEV "There can be no rejoicing, for my people have disregarded every warning and punishment"
- LXX "ready for slaughter, slay, set at naught, despise every tree"
- Peshitta "and it is sharpened to cut off the family of my son; and to reject every other branch"
- **REB** "(Look, the rod is brandished, my son, to defy all wooden idols)"

JPSOA "How can we rejoice? My son, it scorns the rod and every stick"

Obviously the Hebrew text is in disarray (note the differences in the translations, ancient and modern).

- 1. The mentioning of the word "rod" (BDB 986) in vv. 10,13 seems to be related in context to the word "Shiloh" mentioned in v. 27, which is an allusion to Gen. 49:10.
- 2. These verses are related in the people's concept that the ancient promises of God for a special leader (i.e., "My son"), presented in Gen. 49:10 (cf. Targums, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 1267-8), would be fulfilled instead of judgment.
- 3. The phrase "every tree" somehow refers to the total judgment of 20:47.
- 4. In context it seems best to see the object of the FEMININE VERB "despise," vv. 10,13, to refer to "the sword" of YHWH. The Jerusalemites disregarded the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel's messages of judgment, but in reality the continuous Davidic line of kings from David (cf. II Samuel 7) would be stopped. Zedekiah would be the last. However, one would come in the future (cf. vv. 26b; 27b).

God states that nothing at this point could stop His judgment from falling on Jerusalem, who had despised His prophetic messages.

21:11 "the slayer" This term (BDB 246, KB 255, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) denotes the invading mercenary army of Babylon. It is used of the judgment on Tyre in 28:9. It is also used in Jeremiah's description of Judah's destruction (i.e., 4:27-31, esp. v. 31e).

21:12 Three IMPERATIVES related to mourning are mentioned in this verse.

- 1. "Cry out," BDB 277, KB 277, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 9:8; 11:13; 27:30; Isa. 14:31; Jer. 25:34; 48:20
- 2. "Wail" or "howl," BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 30:2; Isa. 14:31; 49:3; Jer. 25:34; 47:2; 48:20,21; Hosea 7:14; Zech. 11:2
- 3. "Strike," BDB 706, KB 765, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Jer. 31:19

The theme of total slaughter continues as "against My people" is paralleled with "against the officials of Israel" (cf. 21:25; 22:6).

"*strike your thigh"* The thigh (BDB 437) was the largest muscle in the body. To strike one's thigh was a metaphor for (1) incapacitation and (2) pain (cf. Jer. 31:19).

21:13

- NASB "For there is a testing; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more"
- NKJV "Because *it is* a testing and what if *the sword* despises even the scepter"
- NRSV "For consider: What! If you despise the rod, will it not happen"
- TEV "I am testing my people, and if they refuse to repent, all these things will happen to them"
- NJB "for this will be an ordeal"
- LXX "and what if even the tribe be rejected"
- JPSOA "Consider: How shall it fail to happen, seeing that it even scorns the rod"

This may refer to the life and exile of King Zedekiah. He despised YHWH's leadership, now he is rejected as leader. But one of David's line will be king again in the future (vv. 26b, 27b; II Samuel 7). This may parallel v. 10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:14-17

¹⁴"You therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap *your* hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword for the slain. It is the sword for the great one slain, which surrounds them, ¹⁵that *their* hearts may melt, and many fall at all their gates. I have given the glittering sword. Ah! It is made *for striking* like lightning, it is wrapped up *in readiness* for slaughter. ¹⁶Show yourself sharp, go to the right; set yourself; go to the left, wherever your edge is appointed. ¹⁷I will also clap My hands together, and I will appease My wrath; I, the LORD, have spoken."

21:14 This verse also has several commands from YHWH to Ezekiel.

- 1. prophesy, BDB 612, KB 659, Niphal IMPERATIVE
- 2. "clap your hands," BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "let the sword be doubled," BDB 495, KB 493, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. Doubled is metaphorical for a complete and total destruction.

• "clap your hands together" This physical gesture of clapping the hands denotes several different emotions.

- 1. affirmation, II Kgs. 11:12
- 2. anger, Num. 24:10; Ezek. 21:14
- 3. contempt/mockery, Job 27:23; 34:37 (possibly 36:18); Lam. 2:15; Ezek. 6:11; 25:3,6
- 4. pledge/oath, Pro. 11:21; Ezek. 21:17
- 5. joy, Ps. 47:1; 98:8; Isa. 55:12

If you look these up you will see there is some overlap in these categories and the exact emotion meant is often uncertain.

NASB "surrounds them"

NKJV "enters their private chambers"

NJB "threatening them from every side"

This VERB (BDB 293, KB 293, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) occurs only here in the OT. Its basic meaning in the cognate languages is (1) encompass or (2) room, chamber. In Serah 51:19 it means "to enter" (i.e., "a penetrating sword," cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 28).

21:15 This is the fulfillment of v. 7. See note there.

• "many fall at all their gates" The gates would be the key defensive positions. Resistance was futile!

21:16 This is another personification of YHWH's sword. It is addressed in several IMPERATIVES.

- 1. "Show yourself sharp," RSV, NEB, REB, BDB 292 (emendation), *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE (i.e., Targums) or "gather yourself, ASV, NASB margin, root אחד unknown
- 2. "Go to the right," BDB 412, KB 415, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "Set yourself," BDB 962, KB 1321, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 4. "Go to the left," BDB 970, KB 1332, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

21:17 YHWH brings the deserved judgment and He also stops it at His discretion (cf. 5:13; 16:42; 24:13)! Judah's fall and exile are not the result of the power of the invading army (cf. vv. 19-27).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:18-23

¹⁸The word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁹"As for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city. ²⁰You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem. ²¹For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the household idols, he looks at the liver. ²²Into his right hand came the divination, 'Jerusalem,' to set battering rams, to open the mouth for slaughter, to lift up the voice with a battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build a siege wall. ²³And it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes; they have *sworn* solemn oaths. But he brings iniquity to remembrance, that they may be seized.

21:19-20 This is another acted-out parable at YHWH's command (BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). Apparently Ezekiel drew a map ("mark," "make," "appoint," BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in the ground. At the fork in the road, one sign ("cut down," "cut out," "inscribe," "prepare a wooden sign" [BDB 388], BDB 135, KB 153, *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, twice; in other

TENSES this is the term for YHWH creating in Genesis 1) pointed to Riblah, the capital of Ammon, and the other fork pointed to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Ammon had also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. Jer. 27:1-3). Both of these capitals deserved and received judgment, Jerusalem first (v. 22)!

21:21 This verse describes three Babylonian means of knowing the will of the gods by divination.

- 1. putting the names on arrows and drawing one out (or spinning the quiver until one fell out) of the quiver or throwing arrows on the ground and analyzing their patterns
- 2. consulting the household idols or ancestral spirits by prayer and incense (i.e., teraphim, cf. Gen. 31:19ff)
- 3. examining a sheep's liver for signs (i.e., color, shape, deformities)

God is asserting that even by means of pagan divination He will bring judgment on Jerusalem. God used this divination for His own purposes. He uses even evil to accomplish His purposes (i.e., the witch of Endor, I Samuel 28 and Balaam, Numbers 22-24)!

21:22 This verse has a series of INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS that describes the Babylonian commander's (possibly Nebuchadnezzar himself) orders (fulfills 4:2)

- 1. to set battering rams
- 2. to open the mouth for slaughter (possibly, "war cry," which would form a four-part chiasm with #1,2,3,4)
- 3. to lift up the voice with a battle cry
- 4. to set battering rams against the gates
- 5. to cast up mounds
- 6. to build a siege wall

For a good brief discussion of siege techniques see Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel, vol. 1, pp. 236-240.

21:23 This describes the reaction of the people of Jerusalem (cf. TEV). They think they are safe because of their political alliances (i.e., with Babylon or, more probably, Egypt).

The "he" can refer to

- 1. Ezekiel speaking for YHWH
- 2. YHWH Himself

Jerusalem is being judged because of her continuing covenant disobedience. Their God is now fighting against them!

• "they have *sworn* solemn oaths" The Septuagint omits this phrase altogether. However, it may refer to a political alliance (cf. 17:13; II Chr. 36:13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:24-27

²⁴"Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear —because you have come to remembrance, you will be seized with the hand. ²⁵And you, O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,' ²⁶thus says the Lord GOD, 'Remove the turban and take off the crown; this will no longer *be* the same. Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high. ²⁷A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it *to Him*.'''

21:24 YHWH states that Judah's

1. iniquity (BDB 730) will be remembered (BDB 269, KB 269, *HIphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)

- 2. transgressions (BDB 833) will be uncovered (BDB 162, KB 191, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
- 3. sins (BDB 305) will appear (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
- 4. people have come to remembrance (BDB 269, KB 269, Niphal INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
- 5. people will be sieged (BDB 1074, KB 1779, *Niphal* IMPERFECT)

The three words used to describe rebellion against YHWH (i.e., iniquity, transgressions, and sins) appear together in several texts (cf. Exod. 34:7; Lev. 16:21; Job 13:23; Ps. 32:5; Isa. 59:12; Dan. 9:24). They form a summary triad.

21:25-26 Notice the different ways of referring to Zedekiah (Babylon's puppet king of Josiah's line).

- 1. O slain (NKJV, "O profane")
- 2. wicked one
- 3. prince of Israel

Notice what will happen to him when his day (i.e., in the time of the iniquity of the end) has come.

- 1. remove the turban BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 2. take off the crown BDB 926, KB 1202, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (Here "turban" and "crown" are parallel. This is surprising because in every other place the turban is for a priest. In many texts the office of king and High Priest are co-leaders [cf. Psalm 110; Zechariah 3, 4; 6:12-13; Heb. 4:14-5:10; 6:13-7:28]).

The Old Testament Parsing Guide by Beall, Banks, and Smith calls both #1 and #2 *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS from uncertain roots.

21:26b, 27b These two concluding remarks seem Messianic (cf. E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, pp. 683-687). In context 21:26b refers to Babylon, but when 21:27b is brought in it appears to refer to Gen. 49:10 (i.e., Shiloh, see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 107-108). These two taken together would describe Jesus as a humble one (cf. Zech. 9:9) and of the line of David (cf. 34:23-24; 37:24,25; Jer. 30:9; Hosea 3:5).

It is surely possible that this refers to Nebuchadnezzar as YHWH's instrument of judgment, as Cyrus is later YHWH's instrument of release from exile and then restoration (cf. Isa. 44:28-45:1). As a Christian I must be careful of my biases which desire to read the full New Testament revelation back into the Old Covenant in too many places (e.g., Christ in the tabernacle). He is surely in the OT, but not on every page. Here (1) the royal line is the issue and a prediction of a future restoration is possible and also (2) the repeated use of the phrase "whose day has come in the time of the punishment of the end" in vv. 25 and 29 implies an eschatological setting.

21:27 "A ruin, a ruin, a ruin" A threefold repetition is a Hebrew idiom expressing the superlative degree (cf. Isa. 6:3; Jer. 7:4). It possibly links to v. 14. The interpretive issue is to whom or what does the FEMININE form refer?

1. the sword of the Lord

2. the turban, crown, symbol of Davidic reign

Does this verse refer to Nebuchadnezzar or to a future Davidic king? One must not be dogmatic here. The text and context are not determinative.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:28-32

²⁸"And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,' and say: 'A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning—²⁹while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the wicked who are slain,

whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end. ³⁰Return *it* to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you. ³¹I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I will give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction. ³²You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.'''

21:28-32 This prophecy ("prophesy," BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) is against the land of Ammon (cf. v. 20). It is for one of two possible reasons: (1) it possibly relates to Ammon taking advantage, possibly even some participation in the fall, of Judah (as Edom did in chapter 35) or (2) God's sure justice on the iniquity of Ammon.

The flow of thought could be outlined as follows:

- 1. Ammon, mentioned in v. 20, will also be destroyed, v. 28 (cf. 25:1-7).
- 2. This is happening because
 - a. of their reproach (cf. 36:15; Zeph. 2:8-10)
 - b. of their false prophets' messages from their divinations, v. 29 (i.e., v. 30a)
 - c. they are wicked murderers, v. 29
 - d. their time has come, v. 29
- 3. How YHWH will judge (v. 30) is specified in vv. 31-32.
 - a. I shall pour out My indignation on you, v. 31
 - b. I shall blow on you with the fire of My wrath, v. 31
 - c. I shall give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction, v. 31
 - d. you will be fuel for the fire, v. 32
 - e. your blood will be in the midst of the land, v. 32
 - f. you will not be remembered, v. 32

Another possible way to interpret these last three verses is to see them as referring to Babylon (i.e., YHWH's sword), not Ammon (see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 6, p. 1086). This would make sense of v. 30a, "return it to its sheath." Babylon's judgment was in the future. YHWH used her to judge His people (and other surrounding nations), but in return they were responsible for their own sin. Cyrus would be YHWH's sword to destroy them (cf. Isa. 44:28-45:1).

EZEKIEL 22

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Sins of Israel	Sins of Jerusalem	Oracles of Judgment	The Crimes of Jerusalem	The Crimes of Jerusalem
22:1-5	22:1-5	22:1-5	22:1-12	22:1-5
22:6-12	22:6-12	22:6-12		22:6-12
22:13-16	22:13-16	22:13-16	22:13-16	22:13-16
	Israel In the Furnace		God's Refining Furnace	
22:17-22	22:17-22	22:17-22	22:17-22	22:17-22
	Israel's Wicked Leaders		The Sins of Israel's Leaders	
22:23-31	22:23-31	22:23-31	22:23-31	22:23-31

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-5

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²"And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then cause her to know all her abominations. ³You shall say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "A city shedding blood in her midst, so that her time will come, and that makes idols, contrary to her *interest*, for defilement! ⁴You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and defiled by your idols which you have made. Thus you have brought your day near and have come to your years; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations and a

mocking to all the lands. ⁵Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you of ill repute, full of turmoil.''''

22:2 "Then the word of the LORD came to me saying" See note at 21:1.

• "son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "will you judge, will you judge" The repetition of the VERB (BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is for emphasis. Ezekiel acted as both prosecutor and judge on YHWH's behalf. He lays out the charges and the consequences, then because of no intercessor or repentance (cf. vv. 30-31), they are implemented (i.e., 586 B.C.)!

bloody city" This is the key construct (BDB 746, 196) used throughout this chapter (cf. vv. 2 [twice], 3,4,6,9,12,13). It is used of Nineveh in Nahum 3:1. Some think it is used of Jerusalem because of (1) the worship of *Molech* (cf. 16:21; 20:26,31; 23:37) or (2) the killing of the righteous (cf. 22:25).

It is historically possible that Nebuchadnezzar's initial raid in 588 B.C. caused the population of the area to seek refuge in the walled city of Jerusalem, but instead of refuge they found exploitation and death by their own countrymen!

In 586 B.C. the city and temple were destroyed by Babylon's army and the populace who escaped the sword were exiled to Babylon.

• "cause her to know" See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (USING MOSTLY DEUTERONOMY AS A PARADIGM)

The Hebrew word "know" (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the Qal.

- 1. to understand good and evil Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
- 2. to know by understanding Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
- 3. to know by experience Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
- 4. to consider Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
- 5. to know personally
 - a. a person Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 28:35,36; 33:9
 - b. a god Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17 YHWH - Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - c. sexual Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
- 6. a learned skill or knowledge Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
- 7. be wise Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
- 8. God's knowledge
 - a. of Moses Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel Deut. 31:21,27,29

• "abomination" See Special Topic at 5:11.

22:3 "for defilement" This VERB (BDB 379, KB 375, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) means to become unclean because of her creation of and association with foreign pagan idols (cf. v. 4).

This defilement (Qal PERFECT in v. 4, i.e., uncleanness) is also described in v. 4.

1. I have made you a reproach (BDB 357) to the nations, cf. 5:14,15; 16:57

- 2. I have made you a mocking (BDB 887) to all lands, cf. VERB (*Hithpael* IMPERFECT) in v. 5 (*Hithpael* only 3 times in the OT, II Kgs. 2:23; Hab. 1:10; and *Piel* only once, Ezek. 16:31).
- 3. you of ill repute, v. 5

There is a parallelism among

- 1. the nations, v. 4
- 2. all the lands, v. 4
- 3. those who are near. . .far, v. 5

All people will be affected by Judah's sin (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6)! Judah's actions affect the way the world understands YHWH. The same is true as to the way the church's sin confuses the world about Jesus!

• "thus you have brought your day near" YHWH asserts that their sin has hastened the day of their judgment (e.g., II Pet. 3:12)!

22:5 "you of ill repute, full of turmoil" These are two characterizations of Judah.

- 1. "of ill repute" is literally a Hebrew construct (BDB 379, 1027) "polluted name." They are considered ceremonially unclean and thereby cannot approach YHWH.
- 2. "full of turmoil" is literally a Hebrew construct (BDB 912, 223), "full of confusion," which is a "Holy War" term (cf. Exod. 14:24; 23:27; Deut. 7:23). The tragedy is that now YHWH fights against His polluted people (cf. Deut. 28:20)! Isaiah 22:5 describes an eschatological scene (cf. Ezek. 7:5-9, esp. v. 7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:6-12

⁶"Behold, the rulers of Israel, each according to his power, have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood. ⁷They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you. ⁸You have despised My holy things and profaned My sabbaths. ⁹Slanderous men have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood, and in you they have eaten at the mountain *shrines*. In your midst they have committed acts of lewdness. ¹⁰In you they have uncovered *their* fathers' nakedness; in you they have humbled her who was unclean in her menstrual impurity. ¹¹One has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife and another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law. And another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter. ¹²In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord GOD.

22:6-12 First Ezekiel lists (PERFECT TENSE) the continuing sins of Judah's political leaders, especially the kings.

- 1. shed blood, v. 6
- 2. treated fathers and mothers lightly, v. 7
- 3. oppressed the alien, fatherless, and widows, v. 7

Then he lists the sins of the nations (cf. Jer. 7:5-11).

- 1. despised YHWH's holy things, v. 8
- 2. profaned YHWH's sabbaths, cf. 20:13,16,21,24; 23:38
- 3. lied (i.e., slandered, cf. Lev. 19:16), v. 9
- 4. worshiped idols (i.e., shed blood and eaten at mountain shrines, fertility worship, cf. 18:6,11), v. 9
 - a. committed acts of lewdness, v. 9
 - b. uncovered their father's nakedness (sexual contact with mother or another of his father's wives, cf. Leviticus 18), v. 10

- c. sex with women during menstrual period (cf. Lev. 18:19), v. 10
- d. sex with neighbor's wife (cf. Lev. 18:20; 20:10), v. 11
- e. lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law (cf. Lev. 20:12), v. 11
- f. humbled his sister (or half sister), his father's daughter (cf. Lev. 20:17), v. 11
- 5. took money to commit murder (cf. Deut. 27:25), v. 12
- 6. loaned money with interest (cf. 18:13; Lev. 25:36,37; Deut. 23:19,20; Pro. 28:8), v. 12
- 7. took advantage of neighbors, v. 12
- 8. forgot YHWH (cf. 23:35; Deut. 6:12; 8:11,14; Isa. 17:10), v. 12

The Mosaic Covenant and common decency had been lost to Canaanite fertility worship. Ezekiel tries to embarrass Judah by using shocking language related to their fertility worship (cf. 16:27, 43, 58; 22:9,11; 23:21,27,29,35,44,48,49; 24:13)!

22:7 "treated their father and mother lightly" See Exod. 20:12; 21:17; Lev. 20:9; and Deut. 27:16.

" "the widow" See Exod. 22:22-24 and Deut. 24:17; 27:19.

22:9 "slanderous men" See Lev. 19:16.

22:10 "uncover *their* **fathers' nakedness"** This seems to refer to sexual intercourse with a former wife, stepmother, or concubine (cf. Lev. 18:7, 8; 20:11; Deut. 22:30; 27:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:13-16

¹³"Behold, then, I smite My hand at your dishonest gain which you have acquired and at the bloodshed which is among you. ¹⁴Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken and will act. ¹⁵I will scatter you among the nations and I will disperse you through the lands, and I will consume your uncleanness from you. ¹⁶You will profane yourself in the sight of the nations, and you will know that I am the LORD."

22:13 "I strike my hand" See note at 21:14.

22:14 This is an allusion to 21:7.

""I, the LORD, have spoken and will act" This is a recurrent theme of Ezekiel which emphasizes

- 1. YHWH's control of world events
- 2. the fact that YHWH's word can be trusted and depended on
- 3. the fact that judgment is coming, repentance (i.e., conditional covenant) is no longer possible

22:15 The threat of removal from the Promised Land for covenant disobedience goes back to Lev. 26:33 and Deut. 4:27; 28:64; 29:28. YHWH removed the Canaanites from Canaan because of their sins (cf. Gen. 15:12-21), now He will remove Israel. He is no respecter of persons, shows no favoritism!

The VERBS "scatter" (BDB 806, KB 918, cf. 12:15; 20:23,24) and "disperse" (BDB 279, KB 280, cf. 5:10,12; 6:8; 12:15; 20:23; 36:19) are most often used of Israel's and Judah's exiles, but they are also used of YHWH's judgment on Egypt, 29:12,13; 30:23,26. Egypt was the source of Israel's idolatry (cf. 23:27,48). YHWH must cleanse His people of this pollution.

The same VERBS are used to describe YHWH's fighting on Israel's behalf (i.e., Num. 10:35), but now He fights against them because they have become abominations like the ten Canaanite tribes (see Special Topic at 16:3). They must be removed from YHWH's land, which they are polluting!

YHWH's purpose in the exiles was the purification of His people! YHWH wants a righteous people who reflect His character to a lost world so that they may know Him and come to Him!

22:16	
NASB, ASV	"you will profane yourself"
NKJV	"you shall defile yourself"
NRSV, RSV	"I shall be profaned through you"
NJB	"through your own fault, you will be profaned"
JB	"I shall be dishonoured by you"
LXX	"I will take possession of thee"
Peshitta	"I will chastise you"
REB	"I shall sift you"
JPSOA	"you shall be dishonored"
NIV	"when you have been defiled"

The MT has "you," but several ancient versions (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate) change this to "I." The second part of the verse lends support for the MT, but v. 26 tends to support the versions. The UBS Hebrew OT Project gives "I" a "C" rating.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:17-22

¹⁷And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁸"Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace; they are the dross of silver. ¹⁹Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because all of you have become dross, therefore, behold, I am going to gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt *it*, so I will gather *you* in My anger and in My wrath and I will lay you *there* and melt you. ²¹I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted in the midst of it. ²²As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you.'''

22:17-22 This is a metaphor from ancient metallurgy. YHWH calls Jerusalem a mixture of metals, which made them absolutely useless (cf. Jer. 6:27-30). The mixture was the Mosaic Covenant with Egyptian idolatry and Canaanite idolatry. YHWH would melt them so as to remove the useless metals (cf. Isa. 1:22,25).

22:21 As so often Ezekiel uses terms normally reserved for a positive connotation in a shockingly negative way. In this verse "gather" (BDB 488, KB 484, *Piel* PERFECT) is used in a judgment sense, but usually it refers to a gathering of Israelites from among the nations where they have been exiles (cf. 39:28; Ps. 147:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:23-31

²³And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²⁴"Son of man, say to her, 'You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.' ²⁵There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her. ²⁶Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. ²⁷Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood *and* destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain. ²⁸Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken. ²⁹The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have

wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice. ³⁰I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. ³¹Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord GOD.

22:24 "is not cleansed or rained on" This is a very difficult verse. Some think it refers to (1) no human tending and no divine rain or (2) no cleansing rain. For sure God's judgment has fallen and no moisture came (sign of judgment in Deuteronomy).

22:25-28 "There is a conspiracy of the prophets" The Septuagint has "whose princes" (cf. NJB, REB) because the prophets are mentioned in v. 28. This paragraph is a condemnation of all of Judean society (cf. Zeph. 3:3-4).

- 1. the political leaders, v. 25, repeated in v. 27
 - a. acted like ravenous lions (cf. 19:3,6)
 - b. devoured lives
 - (1) took treasure and precious things
 - (2) killed many (i.e., made widows)
- 2. the priests, v. 26
 - a. have done violence to YHWH's law
 - b. profaned YHWH's holy things
 - (1) made no distinction between holy and profane, cf. Lev. 10:10; 11:47; 20:25
 - (2) have not taught the difference between unclean and clean
 - c. hid their eyes from YHWH's sabbaths
- 3. the prophets, v. 28
 - a. have smeared whitewash, cf. 13:10,11,12,14,15 (twice)
 - b. saw false visions, cf. 13:6,7,9,23; 21:29
 - c. divining lies
- 4. the people, v. 29 (cf. 18:7,12,16; Jer. 22:3)
 - a. practiced oppression
 - b. committed robbery
 - (1) wronged the poor and needy
 - (2) oppressed the alien/sojourner

22:29 "The people of the land" This term originally (and here) meant "landed owners with full rights as citizens" (cf. 12:19; 45:16,22; 46:3), but after the Exile it referred to the poorest people of the land (cf. the use in the NT).

22:30 This is such a shocking verse, which mirrors Isa. 59:16; 63:5 and Jer. 5:1. There was <u>no one</u>! What was YHWH looking for? Someone to

- 1. build up the wall, cf. 13:5; Ps. 106:23
- 2. stand in the gap (intercede in prayer on behalf of Israel as Moses and Samuel had, cf. Jer. 15:1, which is similar to Ezek. 14:14,20; 33:1-6)

It is surprising that Ezekiel himself did not fulfill this text, but remember the setting is Jerusalem, not the exiles in Babylon. But then Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, why did he not fulfill this search? The verse is a literary hyperbole. It is not meant to be taken literally. It is for shock value only! There were some righteous people in Jerusalem (cf. 20:47; 21:4).

The good news is that YHWH seeks intercessors! He wants to be convinced to withhold judgment. He wants to forgive, but no one interceded and people did not repent!

22:31 See notes at 7:3,8,9; 9:10; 16:43. We reap what we sow (i.e., Gal. 6:7)!

EZEKIEL 23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Oholah and Oholibah's Sin and its Consequences	Two Harlot Sisters	The Allegory of the Sisters, Oholah anad Oholibah	The Sinful Sisters	An Allegorical History of Jerusalem and Samaria
23:1-4	23:1-4	23:1-4	23:1-10	23:1-8
	(2-4)			
	The Older Sister, Samaria			
23:5-10	23:5-10	23:5-10		
	(5-8)			23:9-10
	(9-10)			
	The Younger Sister, Jerusalem			
23:11-21	23:11-21	23:11-21	23:11-13	23:11-20
	(12-16)			
			23:14-21	
	(17-18)			
	(19-21)			
	Judgment on Jerusalem		God's Judgment on the Younger Sister	23:21-34
23:22-35	23:22-31	23:22-35	23:22-27	
	(22b-24a)			
	(24b-34)			
			23:28-31	
(32-34)		(32b-34)	23:32-34	(32b-34)
	(35)	(35)	23:35	
	Both Sisters Judged		God's Judgment on Both Sisters	23:35-39
22:36-39	23:36-45	23:36-39	23:36-39	
22:40-42		23:40-42	23:40-45	23:40-45
23:43-45		23:43-45		
23:46-49	23:46-49	23:46-49	23:46-49	23:46-49

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 23 is a series of judgment oracles
 - 1. similar in subject matter to chapter 16
 - 2. similar in genre to "the sword oracles" of chapter 21
- B. YHWH's reasons for judging His own people are laid out in the allegory of faithless sisters. This literary form is not meant to support
 - 1. polygamy
 - 2. marrying sisters

It is for shock value. It is designed to be disgusting. It is ironic tragedy, but with a hopeful outcome.

- 1. YHWH found and took special marvelous care of Israel
- 2. Israel was repeatedly unfaithful
- 3. YHWH will restore her (e.g., Hosea 1-3)
- C. Verse 35 is theologically significant, as is the personal PRONOUN'S repeated use in vv. 36-45.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-4

¹The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, ²"Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; ³and they played the harlot in Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and there their virgin bosom was handled. ⁴Their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister. And they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. And *as for* their names, Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

23:2 The NKJV sees most of the chapter as poetry.

- 1. vv. 2-4
- 2. vv. 5-8
- 3. vv. 9-10
- 4. vv. 12-16
- 5. vv. 17-18
- 6. vv. 19-21
- 7. vv. 22b-24e

- 8. vv. 24f-27
- 9. vv. 32-35
- 10. v. 35

Most other modern English translations only view vv. 32-34 as poetry. It is hard to distinguish elevated, emotional, figurative prose from poetry.

23:3 "bosom" This term (BDB 186) occurs uniquely in this chapter (i.e., vv. 3,8,21 [with emendation]) and possibly in Pro. 5:19. The other Hebrew word for "breasts" (BDB 994) is also found in vv. 3,21, and often in Song of Songs.

It seems unusual to have the term "virgin" (BDB 144) in this context because this refers to the wives of YHWH figuratively bearing His children (cf. vv. 4, 37). NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 782, says that this refers to "reputable" and not "wanton."

23:4 "Oholah and Oholibah" Their Hebrew names are a play on the Hebrew word for "tent" (BDB 14). This is an allegory similar to chapter 16 based on Israel's and Judah's infidelity to the covenant (i.e., marriage vow) with YHWH. Oholah (BDB 14, lit. "her tent," which may be an allusion to pagan tent-shrines or to false temples at Dan and Bethel) stands for the capital of Israel, Samaria, Oholibah (BDB 14, lit. "my tent is in her," i.e., temple) stands for the capital of Judah, Jerusalem.

Notice how their disobedience is characterized.

- 1. played the harlot in Egypt, v. 3
- 2. played the harlot in their youth
 - a. breasts pressed, v. 3
 - b. virgin bosom handled, v. 3
- 3. they were wed to YHWH and bore children, v. 4

Israel's idolatry in Egypt is a recurrent theme unique to Ezekiel, see 16:26; 20:4-17. The judgment of Egypt is described in 29:1-32:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:5-10

⁵"Oholah played the harlot while she was Mine; and she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, *her* neighbors, ⁶who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses. ⁷She bestowed her harlotries on them, all of whom were the choicest men of Assyria; and with all whom she lusted after, with all their idols she defiled herself. ⁸She did not forsake her harlotries from the time in Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her, and they handled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her. ⁹Therefore, I gave her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, after whom she lusted. ¹⁰They uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, but they slew her with the sword. Thus she became a byword among women, and they executed judgments on her.''

23:5-8 This describes the acts of Oholah (Samaria).

- 1. played the harlot (BDB 275, KB 275, *Qal* IMPERFECT) while married (lit. "under me" BDB 1065,1,c) to YHWH (cf. Isa. 54:5-6; Jer. 3:1,20; Hosea 2:2 and note 2:16), v. 5
- 2. lusted (BDB 721, KB 783, *Qal* IMPERFECT) after other lovers, v. 5
- 3. lusted especially after Assyria, vv. 5,7,9
 - a. leader dressed in purple, v. 6
 - b. governor and officials, v. 6
 - c. desirable young men, v. 6
 - d. riding on horses, v. 6
 - e. the choicest men of Assyria, v. 7
- 4. accepted their gods (idols) and defiled herself (BDB 379, KB 375, Niphal PERFECT), v. 7

- 5. harlot from her youth (i.e., Egypt), v. 8 (see note at v. 4)
- 6. "they poured out their lusts," v. 8, cf. 16:15; this refers to the desire for political alliances, but these attempts at security involved the ritual acknowledgment of their national idols

23:5	
NASB, NJB,	
LXX	"her neighbors"
NKJV	"the neighboring"
NRSV, JPSOA,	
NIV	"warriors"
REB	"officers"

This Hebrew term (BDB 898) usually means "come near," "approach" and can be used for bringing an offering. It is only in this context (i.e., vv. 5,12 [i.e., "the ones near"]) that it can mean "warlike" or "warrior" (from an Akkadian root). It is also possible that it refers to a governmental official (i.e., one who is near the king).

• "her lovers" In context this refers to political alliances, but this also involved the acknowledgment of their gods, which led to idolatrous practices with the fertility gods (cf. Hosea 11:7, 8:9; 12:1).

23:6 "governors and officials" These refer to Assyrian government leaders.

1.	"governor"	-	BDB 808, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 602, notes that this term referred to the
			chief local Assyrian official when Israel was a vassal region after the fall
			of Samaria in 722 B.C. by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II.
2.	"officials"	-	BDB 688, cf. vv. 6,12, this would denote the chief local Assyrian official
			when Israel became a province in 841 B.C. under Shalmaneser III.

23:9-10 YHWH's response to His unfaithful wife Oholah.

- 1. I gave her into the hands of her lovers
- 2. They uncovered her nakedness
- 3. They took her children (i.e., exile)
- 4. They killed many inhabitants of Israel (i.e., invasion in 724 B.C., Samaria fell in 722 B.C.)
- 5. He made her a byword among women
- 6. Assyria became the "rod" (cf. Isa. 8:7; 10:5) of YHWH's anger and judgment

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:11-21

¹¹"Now her sister Oholibah saw *this*, yet she was more corrupt in her lust than she, and her harlotries were more than the harlotries of her sister. ¹²She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and officials, the ones near, magnificently dressed, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men. ¹³I saw that she had defiled herself; they both took the same way. ¹⁴So she increased her harlotries. And she saw men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, ¹⁵girded with belts on their loins, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers, like the Babylonians *in* Chaldea, the land of their birth. ¹⁶When she saw them she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. ¹⁷The Babylonians came to her to the bed of love and defiled her with their harlotry. And when she had been defiled by them, she became disgusted with them. ¹⁸She uncovered her harlotries and uncovered her nakedness; then I became disgusted with her, as I had become disgusted with her sister. ¹⁹Yet she multiplied her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt. ²⁰She lusted after their paramours, whose flesh is *like* the flesh of donkeys and

whose issue is like the issue of horses. ²¹Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom because of the breasts of your youth.''

23:11-17 These verses describe the acts of Oholibah (Jerusalem).

- 1. more corrupt in her lusts than her sister, v. 11
- 2. more harlotries than her sister, v. 11
- 3. lusted after Assyrian (possibly related to II Kgs. 15:17-22; 17:1-6) officials, v. 12
 - a. governors, officials
 - (1) magnificently dressed
 - (2) riding on horses
 - (3) desirable young men
 - b. "The Assyrians were famous for their rich and costly apparel. The expression 'Assyrian garments' became synonymous with elegant and expensive clothing," James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 307-308.
- 4. defiled herself, v. 13
 - a. Babylonian and/or Assyrian men portrayed on the wall, vv. 13-14
 - (1) girded with bells, v. 15
 - (2) flowing turbans
 - (3) looking like Babylonian officers, v. 15
 - b. sent messengers to Chaldea (Babylon, cf. II Kings 16; 20:11-19), v. 16
 - c. Babylon came, v. 17
 - (1) to her bed of love
 - (2) they defiled her with harlotry
 - (3) uncovered her nakedness
- 5. her soul became disgusted with them, vv. 17c,22,28, their rich and costly apparel.

"The expression 'Assyrian garments' became synonymous with elegant and expensive clothing." James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 307-308.

23:11 Judah should have learned from the excesses of her northern sister, but she did not. This description relates to the Syro-Ephraimatic War (cf. II Kings 16:8; Isa. 7:7-9).

23:14 "portrayed on the wall" These wall paintings, carvings, and inlays (BDB 348, KB 347, *Pual* PARTICIPLE) are the source of much of the historical and cultural information moderns possess about the culture of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Ezekiel uses this VERB to describe

- 1. the idolatry of the temple, 8:10
- 2. the glory of the Babylonian officers and soldiers, 23:14

• "with vermilion" This (BDB 1059, KB 1666) refers to a red pigment used for wall painting cf. Jer. 22:14, here of Babylonian soldiers. The pigment came from one of two sources.

- 1. a certain insect
- 2. Egyptian ochre from Sinopis

23:15

NASB, NRSV,

TEV "officers"

NKJV "captains"

This term (BDB 1026) means "the third one" and refers to

- 1. the third person in a war chariot, cf. Exod. 14:7
 - a. one to drive

- b. one to shield
- c. one to fight
- 2. a high court official, cf. II Kgs. 7:2,17,19;10:25; 15:25
- 3. a military officer, cf. II Sam. 23:8; II Kgs. 9:25; Ezek. 23:15,23

23:18-21,22-35 YHWH's response to His unfaithful wife Oholibah.

- 1. YHWH became disgusted (BDB 429, KB 431, *Qal* IMPERFECT) with her, as with her sister, v. 18, cf. Jer. 6:8
- 2. The repeated reasons for YHWH's disgust.
 - a. uncovered her harlotries, v. 18
 - b. uncovered her nakedness, v. 18
 - c. multiplied her harlotries, v. 19
 - d. remembered the days of her youth (i.e., idolatry in Egypt), v. 19
 - e. lusted after their Egyptian paramours, vv. 20-21 (this may refer to Judah seeking help from Egypt against Babylon, who was her supposed ally, cf. II Kgs. 24:1-7)
- 3. YHWH arouses (BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) her lovers against her, v. 22
 - a. a large mercenary army of Babylon will attack them from every side, v. 23
 - b. description of their weaponry, v. 24
 - c. treat Jerusalem according to their customs (i.e., slaughter and exile), v. 24
- 4. YHWH sets His jealousy (BDB 888) against them, v. 25
- 5. YHWH sets His wrath (BDB 404) against them, v. 25
- 6. Wrath described in vivid terms, vv. 25-27
 - a. remove your nose
 - b. remove your ears
 - c. death by the sword
 - d. death by fire
 - e. take their wealth
 - (1) children
 - (2) clothes, cf. v. 29; 16:39
 - (3) jewels from Egypt, cf. 16:39
- 7. YHWH will deal with them in hatred (BDB 971), v. 29
 - a. take property (i.e., that which they have worked for all their lives, CONSTRUCT BDB 481, 388, cf. Deut. 28:33; Jer. 20:5) and leave them naked and bare, v. 29, cf. 16:39. Nakedness was part of the curses of Deuteronomy (cf. 28:48).
 - b. because of their idolatry, v. 30
 - c. because they walked in the way of their sister, v. 31
 - d. because they forgot YHWH and cast Him behind their back, they now face the judgment, v. 35 (i.e., lived as if there were no covenant and no YHWH)

23:20

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV	"paramours"
TEV	"oversexed men"
NJB	"big-membered"
NIV Interlinear	"genitals"
Peshitta	"male organs"
REB	"members"

The MT has "concubine" (BDB 811), which in context seems not to balance the second phrase well. Though it is crude to modern standards Ezekiel is suggesting

- 1. large penis
- 2. strong ejaculation

The NIV translation captures the sense well! These sexual metaphors are meant to shock and nauseate God's people about their idolatry (i.e., foreign alliances). Often the sexual metaphors are also literal because the fertility gods of the Ancient Near East are the national gods.

NASB, NKJV	"issue of horses"
NRSV	"emission of stallions"
NJB	"ejaculating as violently as stallions"
LXX	"members of horses"
Peshitta	"whose privates are like those of horses"
JPSOA	"whose organs were like those of stallions"

This term (BDB 281) refers either to a sexually ready male organ or a powerful ejaculation. It occurs only here in the Bible, but similar allusions are made to Israel acting in idolatrous ways as animals long for reproduction (i.e., Jer. 2:24; 14:6).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:22-35

²²"Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold I will arouse your lovers against you, from whom you were alienated, and I will bring them against you from every side: ²³the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and officials all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. ²⁴They will come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons, and with a company of peoples. They will set themselves against you on every side with buckler and shield and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they will judge you according to their customs. ²⁵I will set My jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in wrath. They will remove your nose and your ears; and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and your survivors will be consumed by the fire. ²⁶They will also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels. ²⁷Thus I will make your lewdness and your harlotry brought from the land of Egypt to cease from you, so that you will not lift up your eves to them or remember Egypt anymore.' ²⁸For thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I will give you into the hand of those whom you hate, into the hand of those from whom you were alienated. ²⁹They will deal with you in hatred, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your harlotries will be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotries. ³⁰These things will be done to you because you have played the harlot with the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols. ³¹You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore l will give her cup into your hand.' ³²Thus says the Lord GOD,

'You will drink your sister's cup,

Which is deep and *wide*.

You will be laughed at and held in derision;

It contains much.

³³You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,

The cup of horror and desolation,

The cup of your sister Samaria.

³⁴You will drink it and drain it.

Then you will gnaw its fragments

And tear your breasts;

for I have spoken,' declares the Lord GOD. ³⁵Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, bear now the *punishment* of your lewdness and your harlotries.'''

23:22 "from whom you were alienated" This refers to v. 17c and is repeated in v. 28. This phrase (BDB 668, KB 722, *Qal* PERFECT and BDB 659) occurs only here and in v. 28 in the entire OT. A related phrase occurs in vv. 17,18. This refers to the emotional results of a faithless relationship. Judah was unfaithful (idolatry) throughout her history. Finally YHWH had enough and abrogated the covenant relationship! But He would restart it.

- 1. the post-exilic return (cf. Ezra-Nehemiah)
- 2. the new covenant (i.e., NT, cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38)

23:23 Judah became a Babylonian vassal in 605 B.C., when General Nebuchadnezzar II (later king) invaded. This did not stop the rebellion so he invaded again in 597 and 586 (destruction of the temple and Jerusalem). At this point Judah became a province. Even then Nebuchadnezzar had to send an invasion in 582 because of the assassination of his appointed governor Gedaliah (cf. II Kgs. 25:22-24).

■ "Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa" These refer to Armenian tribes in the eastern part of Babylon (cf. Jer. 50:21). This whole verse implies that the army was made up of mercenary troops including the remnant of the Assyrian army. The IVP *Bible Background Commentary* notes that these names meant "punishment," "war cry," and "shriek" (p. 709).

23:24 This is a list of all the military equipment arrayed against besieged Jerusalem.

- 1. mobile weaponry
 - a. NASB, "weapons"
 NRSV, TEV, NJB, "from the north" (from LXX)
 BDB 246, KB 254, meaning uncertain; it is future only here in the OT
 - b. "chariots," BDB 939, cf. Isa. 2:7; 22:18
 - c. "wagons" (lit. "wheels," BDB 165, possibly related to the vision of chaps. 1 and 10). Used in Isa. 5:28 and Jer. 47:3 for war chariot wheels
- 2. fully equipped infantry
 - a. "buckler," BDB 857 III, full body shield, cf. 26:8; 38:4; Jer. 46:3
 - b. "shield," BDB 171, small personal shield, cf. 38:4,5; 39:9; Jer. 46:3,9
 - c. "helmet," BDB 875, loan word used only twice in the OT, cf. 27:10; 38:5; I Sam. 17:38; Jer. 46:6

All of Assyria's arsenal of weaponry was arrayed against God's special city, now abandoned by Him!

23:25 "I will set My jealousy against you" The VERB "set" or "direct" (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT) is a common VERB (e.g., vv. 7,9,24,25,28,31,42,46,49).

"My jealousy" is a way of referring to the monotheistic character of YHWH (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 5:7; 32:39; 33:26; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 7:22; Isa. 43:9-11; 45:21-22; 46:9; Jer. 2:11; 5:7,10; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19).

They will remove your nose and your ears" These were the places where women wore jewelry. This violent removal of jewelry was practiced in the Ancient Near East as punishment of adulteresses (i.e., Middle Assyrian Law Code).

23:31 "her cup into your hand" This is a biblical metaphor for one's destiny. It can be positive (cf. Ps. 23:5) or negative (cf. Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17-22; Jer. 25:15-29; Lam. 4:21; Hab. 2:16). In many ways Judah was more responsible for her sin because

- 1. she saw what happened to Samaria, but did not change
- 2. she had the temple, priests, and Davidic rulers

23:32-34 This is a poem about "the cup" (BDB 468) of judgment mentioned in v. 31.

- 1. description of the cup
 - a. your sister's cup, vv. 32,33
 - b. deep and *wide*
 - c. cup of horror and desolation, v. 33
 - d. contains much

2.

- description of its event
 - a. you will be laughed (BDB 850) at and held in derision (BDB 541)
 - b. You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow
 - c. you will drink it and drain it (i.e., experience every last drop of YHWH's judgment)
 - d. you will gnaw its pieces and tear your breasts

This metaphor of a cup of judgment is recurrent in Scripture, see Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22; Jer. 25:15,16, 27,28; also Matt. 20:22; 26:39,42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13.

23:34	
NASB	"then you will gnaw its fragments"
NKJV	"you shall break its shards"
NRSV, JPSOA,	
REB	"you shall gnaw its shards"
TEV	"with its broken pieces"
NJB	"then will you break it in pieces"
LXX	"I will take away her feasts and her new moons"
Peshitta, RSV	"you shall cut off your hair"
NIV	"you shall dash it to pieces"

It is obvious from the Septuagint and Peshitta that the ancient versions were confused by this line of poetry. In context it seems that one of two options seems logical.

- 1. the large cup of judgment is drunk to the last drop (i.e., full measure)
- 2. it is an idiom of regret, as is the next line, "tear your breasts," possibly the broken pieces are used to mutilate her erotic regions (cf. vv. 3,8,21)

The UBS Hebrew OT Project gives "and you will chew on its broken pieces" a "B" rating.

23:35 Amazingly the people of God have knowingly, purposefully turned away from Him (cf. Genesis 3). Oh, the tragedy.

- 1. forgotten Me, BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 22:12; Ps.106:21; Isa. 17:10; Jer. 3:21; Hosea 2:13; 8:14; 13:6
- 2. cast Me behind your back, BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (i.e., modern idiom, "out of sight, out of mind"), cf. I Kgs. 14:9; Ps. 50:17; Jer. 2:27; 32:33

Notice the number of times in this context where phrases containing a PRONOUN denoting YHWH are used.

- 1. they have forgotten Me, v. 25
- 2. they have cast Me behind their back, v. 35
- 3. (killed children) whom they bore to Me, v. 37
- 4. they have done this to Me, v. 38

- 5. they have defiled My sanctuary, v. 38
- 6. they have profaned My sabbath, vv. 38,39
- 7. they practiced idolatry in My house, v. 39
- 8. they used His incense and oil to impress foreigners at a special meal, v. 41

Sin is rebellion against a personal God! This is a fulfillment of Deut. 31:16.

The goal of humanity is fellowship with our Creator. Nothing in the world can take His place. The essence of sin is "self." Salvation is freedom from the tyranny of self-focused living and the restoration of the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), which allows an intimate, daily fellowship with God.

Because humans turn away from God they bear (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) the full consequences of their deeds.

23:36-45 The two sister's sins are enumerated again.

- 1. committed adultery, v. 37
- 2. committed murder, v. 37
- 3. committed idolatry, v. 37
- 4. defiled My sanctuary, v. 38
- 5. defiled My sabbaths, v. 38
- 6. sacrificed children, v. 39 (see Special Topic: *Molech* at 16:16-20)
- 7. played the harlot with foreigners (i.e., political alliances), vv. 40-44

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:36-39

³⁶Moreover, the LORD said to me, "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations. ³⁷For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through *the fire* to them as food. ³⁸Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My sabbaths. ³⁹For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo, thus they did within My house."

23:36 As Ezekiel was commanded to act as judge (BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, lit. "declare") in 20:4 (twice) and 22:2 (twice), now again (compare Jer. 1:10).

23:37 "their sons, whom they bore to me, to pass through *the fire*" This idiomatic language refers to the redemption of the firstborn found in Exodus 13. But these idolatrous Jerusalemites were sacrificing their children to *Molech* (cf. v. 39; 16:20,36), not presenting them to God.

23:38 The accusation against God's people acting inappropriately in their worship of God is recurrent.

- 1. defiled (BDB 379, KB 375, *Piel* PERFECT) His sanctuary, cf. 5:11; 7:20
- 2. profaned (BDB 320, KB 319, *Piel* PERFECT) His sabbaths, cf. 20:13,16,21,24; 22:8

YHWH took these actions personally as an attack on Himself (cf. v. 38a).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:40-42

⁴⁰"Furthermore, they have even sent for men who come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and lo, they came—for whom you bathed, painted your eyes and decorated yourselves with ornaments; ⁴¹and you sat on a splendid couch with a table arranged before it on which you had set My incense and My oil. ⁴²The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and drunkards were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort. And they put bracelets on the hands of the women and beautiful crowns on their heads."

23:40 Israel and Judah decorated themselves for the idolatrous meals (cf. v. 41) with foreign gods (i.e., political alliances).

- 1. bathed, BDB 934
- 2. painted their eyes, cf. II Kgs. 9:30; Jer. 4:30 (usually black or blue around the eyes to highlight them)

3. decorated themselves with ornaments, BDB 725, cf. 16:13-16; Isa. 3:18-23

Verse 42b seems to describe presents brought by the foreign officials.

- 1. bracelets, BDB 855, cf. 16:11,12; Gen. 24:22,30,47; Isa. 3:19
- 2. crowns, BDB 742, this action may be mimicking YHWH's actions in 16:9-14. The crown can refer to royalty or a wedding crown (cf. Song of Songs 3:11)

23:42-43 These verses are difficult to translate and, therefore, difficult to interpret. The context helps, but does not reveal the specifics related to the lovers of v. 42.

The ADJECTIVE "worn out" (BDB 115) is meant to express that Judah is an experienced prostitute, as a matter of fact, a prostitute used so often that she has become unattractive.

The MT Hebrew text offers a suggested change (i.e., *Qere*, "what is read") to a VERB (BDB 275, KB 275, *Qal* IMPERFECT). The original unchanged text was "Will they commit adultery with her now, and she with them?" The emended text reads "Will they now commit adultery with her when she is *thus*?"

23:42

NASB, NRSV "drunkards" NKJV, REB "Sabeans" LXX, TEV,

NJB, JPSOA "a crowd of men"

Peshitta "men who had come from Sheba"

The MT has "drunkards" (BDB 685, *Qere* [it is read] the NOUN; BDB 684, KB 738, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, *Kethibh* [it is written]), whose only occurrence is here, so some change it to Sabeans, which is spelled exactly the same, but without the letter *waw*. Sheba is an ancestor of the Sabeans (i.e., raiders, cf. Gen. 25:3), who lived in southwest Arabia.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:43-45

⁴³"Then I said concerning her who was worn out by adulteries, 'Will they now commit adultery with her when she is *thus*?' ⁴⁴But they went in to her as they would go in to a harlot. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women. ⁴⁵But they, righteous men, will judge them with the judgment of adulteresses and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

23:43 See note at 23:42-43.

23:44 "they went in to" This is a Hebrew idiom for sexual intercourse (e.g., Gen. 6:4; 24:67; 38:2,8, 9,16,18; 39:14; Deut. 22:13).

23:45	
NASB	"But they, righteous men, will judge them"
NKJV	"But righteous men will judge them"
NRSV	"But righteous judges shall declare them"
TEV	"Righteous men will condemn them"
NJB	"All the same, there are upright men who wi

'All the same, there are upright men who will judge them"

This is the use of "righteous" (BDB 843) as "fair." This does not refer to people who know and follow YHWH. In context it refers to YHWH's instruments of judgment, Assyria and Babylon, and that His judgment on Israel and Judah was deserved!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:46-49

⁴⁶"For thus says the Lord GOD, 'Bring up a company against them and give them over to terror and plunder. ⁴⁷The company will stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; they will slay their sons and their daughters and burn their houses with fire. ⁴⁸Thus I will make lewdness cease from the land, that all women may be admonished and not commit lewdness as you have done. ⁴⁹Your lewdness will be requited upon you, and you will bear the penalty of worshiping your idols; thus you will know that I am the Lord GOD.""

23:46-49 These verses list the consequences of their acts.

- invasion, v. 46 1.
- 2. given over to terror (cf. Deut. 28:25) and plunder (in the sense of shame, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 632), v. 46
- 3. many/most killed, v. 47
 - by stones a.
 - b. by swords
 - by fire c.
- idolaters cut off, v. 48 4.
- 5. idolaters judged, v. 49

23:47 "stone them" This was the punishment for adultery (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut. 21:21). It is also mentioned in Ezekiel's parallel allegory (cf. 16:40).

23:48 This verse uses "women" as a metaphor for all of God's people. "Admonish" (lit. "discipline," BDB 415, KB 418, Nithpael PERFECT) is often used of YHWH's judgment on the disobedience of His covenant people (cf. Lev. 26:18,28; Ps. 6:1; 38:1; 39:11; 118:18; Jer. 31:8).

EZEKIEL 24

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS				
NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB

NASB	NKJV	NKSV	TEV	NJB
Parable of the Boiling Pot	Symbol of the Cooking Pot	The Allegory of the Pot	The Corroded Cooking Pot	Announcement of the Siege of Jerusalem
24:1-5	24:1-14	24:1-14	24:1-5	24:1-11
(3b-5)	(3b-5)	(3b-5)	(3b-5)	(3b-5)
24:6-14		(6-13)	24:6-8	
(6b-13)	(6b-8)			(6b-8)
	(9b-10)		24:9-14	(9b-11)
	(11-14)			
				24:12-14
(14)		(14)		
Death of Ezekiel's Wife is a Sign	The Prophet's Wife Dies	Oracles at the Death of Ezekiel's Wife	The Death of the Prophet's Wife	Ordeals for the Prophet
24:15-24	24:15-18	24:15-18	24:15-17	24:15-24
			24:18-19	
	24:19-24	24:19-24		
			24:20-24	
24:25-27	24:25-27	24:25-27	24:25-27	24:25-27

READING CYCLE THREE *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-5

¹And the word of the LORD came to me in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month, saying, ²''Son of man, write the name of the day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. ³Speak a parable to the rebellious house and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Put on the pot, put *it* on and also pour water in it;
⁴ Put in it the pieces,
Every good piece, the thigh and the shoulder;
Fill *it* with choice bones.
⁵Take the choicest of the flock,
And also pile wood under the pot.
Make it boil vigorously.
Also seethe its bones in it."

24:1 This is the fourth date (cf. 1:2; 8:1; 20:1) listed in Ezekiel. Surprisingly one would expect another date at chapter 25, which starts the judgment context on the nations. This may mean chapters 24 and 25 are a literary unit.

This dates the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (cf. II Kgs. 25:1; Jer. 39:1; 52:4). It was begun on January 15, 588 B.C. It took until 586 B.C. for the city to fall.

In a book of prophecy the question of final revision always comes into play. Did Ezekiel know the exact date of the siege and later fall of Jerusalem? Of course he could; he was a prophet of YHWH. YHWH often used this predictive quality to encourage His people that He was in control of history. However, it is also surely possible, without distracting from the power of YHWH or the foresight of His prophets, to see these dates as literary. These books were, at some point, the collected and arranged prophecies of Ezekiel. Literary design does not diminish prophetic predictions!

24:2 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

write" The MT has "write" (BDB 507, KB 503) as a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, but the Masoretic scholars suggested it be read (*Qere*) as a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (same kind of problem as in v. 10).

There are many IMPERATIVES in this chapter (cf. vv. 2,3[three],4,5[two],6,10[two],11,17[two],21. Most of them occur in the poetic section (i.e., vv. 3b-5, 6-13) and are directed to the rebellious house (i.e., Judah).

• "the name of the day, this very day" Judgment on Jerusalem was not a future prediction, but a terrible reality!

• "has laid siege" The VERB (BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* PERFECT) is literally "lean on," but is used here as an idiom of besiege (Jerusalem's siege is begun, cf. II Kgs. 25:1; Jer. 39:1; 52:4).

24:3-5 This first poetic stanza has several commands from YHWH which set the stage for the parable/proverb.

- 1. put on the pot, BDB 1046, KB 1636, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 3
- 2. put it on, BDB 1046, KB 1636, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 3
- 3. pour, BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 3
- 4. put (lit. gather), BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 4

- 5. fill, BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, v. 4
- 6. pile, BDB 189, KB 217, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 5
- 7. boil, BDB 958, KB 1299, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, v. 5

24:3 "speak a parable" This (BDB 605, KB 647) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. See note at 12:22,23; 17:2; 18:2, 3; 20:49. Ezekiel used several poems to communicate YHWH's messages.

- 1. poem of the sharp, bright, swift sword of judgment, 12:8-17
- 2. poem of the large cup of drunkenness, 23:32-34
- 3. poem of the corrupted, large, bronze (cf. v. 11) cooking pot, 24:3-13

" "to the rebellious house" This (BDB 598, cf. 2:5,6,8; 3:9,26,27; 12:2[twice],3,9,25; 17:12; Isa. 30:9) is a derogatory way of referring to Judah (cf. 2:6,8).

The idiom is repeated with the PARTICIPLE of the VERB (BDB 597, KB 632) in 2:3 (also note the use of the parallel terms (1) BDB 833, KB 981 in Isa. 1:2 and (2) BDB 710 in Isa. 30:1.

Judah's stubborn rebellion (cf. Deut. 9:5-6,13; 10:16; 31:27) has been continual and purposeful! I think YHWH chose Israel with all her weaknesses to clearly reveal His faithfulness in the stark light of their unfaithfulness! If YHWH can continue to love, forgive, and use Israel, then there is a great hope for all of Adam's children, based solely on the unchanging, merciful, gracious character of YHWH!

This chapter is based on Jeremiah's parable about a boiling pot (cf. Jer. 1:13, 14).

24:4-5 The very best pieces of the very best of the flock were put in the pot. Who does this refer to?

- 1. the royal, priestly, and civic leaders who remained in Jerusalem, cf. Jer. 39:6; 52:10,24-27
- 2. Israel herself when YHWH found her in the wilderness, 16:4-14

In this context of the citizens of Jerusalem seeing themselves as the "lucky ones," "spared ones," "better ones" than those taken into exile, this phrase may well refer to all of them! However, they will be destroyed and YHWH will choose to work with and restore the early exiles! This was shocking to the arrogant, sinful Judeans still in Jerusalem and Judah.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:6-14

⁶Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,

"Woe to the bloody city,

- To the pot in which there is rust
- And whose rust has not gone out of it!
- Take out of it piece after piece,

Without making a choice.

⁷For her blood is in her midst;

She placed it on the bare rock;

She did not pour it on the ground

To cover it with dust.

⁸That it may cause wrath to come up to take vengeance,

I have put her blood on the bare rock,

That it may not be covered."

⁹Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD,

- "Woe to the bloody city!
- I also will make the pile great.

¹⁰ Heap on the wood, kindle the fire,
Boil the flesh well
And mix in the spices,
And let the bones be burned.
¹¹ Then set it empty on its coals
So that it may be hot
And its bronze may glow
And its filthiness may be melted in it,
Its rust consumed.
¹² She has wearied <i>Me</i> with toil,
Yet her great rust has not gone from her;
<i>Let</i> her rust <i>be</i> in the fire!
¹³ In your filthiness is lewdness.
Because I would have cleansed you,
Yet you are not clean,
You will not be cleansed from your filthiness again
Until I have spent My wrath on you.
¹⁴ I, the LORD, have spoken; it is coming and I will act. I will not relent, and I will not pity and I
will not be sorry; according to your ways and according to your deeds I will judge you," declares
the Lord GOD.'''

24:6 "Woe" This interjection (BDB 17, cf. v. 9) expresses deep emotion often connected to judgment (cf. 16:23; Jer. 4:13; 6:4; 10:19; 13:27; 15:10; Hosea 7:13).

• "the bloody city" See note at 22:2.

"rust" This Hebrew word is uncertain ((BDB 316, KB 315). It is found only in this chapter in the OT. The same trilateral root means "rust" in Arabic. God had tried to cleanse His people over and over again, but their sin was too deep (i.e., Genesis 3).

• Without making a choice" This VERB (lit. "fall," BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT) was used of casting lots to know YHWH's will.

- 1. dividing the Promised Land among the tribes, Num. 34:2; Josh. 13:6; 23:4; Ezek. 45:1
- 2. dividing the duties in the temple, I Chr. 24:31; 26:13,14
- 3. determining who would supply wood for the new sacrificial system, Neh. 10:34
- 4. determining who would live in the rebuilt Jerusalem, Neh. 11:1
- 5. determining the guilty party, Jonah 1:7

This phrase seems to imply that death would come indiscriminately to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

24:7 This seems to refer to the openness and flagrant nature (i.e., "places it on a bare rock," i.e., in the sight of all) of Israel's sin. This refers to (1) an allusion to a priestly act of draining the blood from sacrificial animals and putting it on the appropriate places (Leviticus 1-7). The remainder was poured out at the base of the altar of sacrifice or (2) the proper slaughter of wild animals to be consumed (cf. Lev. 17:13; Deut. 12:16).

• "To cover it with dust" This seems to refer to the blood of their victims (cf. Lev. 17:13).

24:8 As Judah flagrantly sinned for all to see, now YHWH will judge them for all to see (cf. Deut. 29:24-28; Jer. 16:10; 22:8,9).

24:9-10 This is a reflection of vv. 3b-5. The pot of judgment is boiling and Judah is in it!

- Verses 10-11 have a series of commands related to the boiling pot.
- 1. heap, BDB 915, KB 1176, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 5b, 9c
- 2. kindle, BDB 196, KB 223, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 5c
- boil, BDB 1070, KB 1752, *Hiphil* (John J. Owens, *Analytical Keys to the Old Testament*, vol. 4, p. 572, calls it a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, but Beall, Banks, Smith, *Old Testament Parsing Guide*, p. 619, calls it a *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE. Benjamin Davidson, *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 231, gives both options).
- 4. mix, BDB 955, KB 1289, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (Owens) or INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE (Beall, Banks, Smith) or either (Davidson)
- 5. set, BDB 763, KB 840, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 11

24:10 The fully cooked meat will be poured into the fire and completely destroyed.

There is some question	about the phrase.
NASB, NKJV, NRSV	"and mix in the spices"
TEV	"boil away the broth"
LXX	"and the liquor boiled away"
REB	"pour out all the broth"
JPSOA	"and stew it completely"

The MT is reflected in JPSOA (UBS Hebrew OT Text Project gives it a "B" rating), the emendation in TEV, REB, LXX.

24:11 The empty pot (cf. v. 11) is set on the hot coals and the remaining scum (or "rust") will be completely burned up and removed (i.e., ritual cleansing). Verse 12 either (1) describes YHWH's continual attempts to cleanse His people or (2) even with all of this burning (i.e., vv. 10-11), Judah is not yet clean (cf. vv. 12-13).

24:12 "She has wearied *Me* with toil" This refers to YHWH's attempt to bring Judah to repentance. He made a great and continuous effort to bring her back to Himself. This phrase is difficult to understand because (1) the word "toil" is unusual and found only here in the OT; (2) the VERB has no OBJECT; and (3) the LXX omits it; therefore, some scholars see it as an addition.

24:13 "lewdness" This term (BDB 273) describes Judah's idolatry. It is often associated with inappropriate sexual activity (cf. 16:27,43,58; 22:9,11; 23:21,27,29,35,44,48[twice],49; 24:13).

■ "Until I have spent My wrath on you" The VERB (lit. "cease activity," BDB 628, KB 679, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) denotes that at some point YHWH's wrath will be appeased and brought to an end (cf. 5:13; 16:42; 21:17).

24:14 YHWH's word (prophetic predictions of judgment) is sure! He has tried again and again to get His people to repent (cf. vv. 12-13). Notice the number of "I's" in the English translation (6). Therefore, He will not (i.e., Jer. 13:14)

- 1. relent, BDB 828, KB 970, Qal IMPERFECT
- 2. pity, BDB 299, KB 298, *Qal* IMPERFECT

3. be sorry, BDB 636, KB 688, Niphal IMPERFECT

He will judge Judah according to her ways and deeds (cf. 7:3,8,27; 18:30; 36:19). This is metaphorical language for YHWH's refusal to forgive (cf. 8:18)! Only judgment remains! The terms themselves may allude to YHWH's initial love and care in Ezek. 16:5.

24:15 The NASB 1995 Update starts a new paragraph at v. 15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:15-24

¹⁵And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁶"Son of man, behold, I am about to take from you the desire of your eyes with a blow; but you shall not mourn and you shall not weep, and your tears shall not come. ¹⁷Groan silently; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban and put your shoes on your feet, and do not cover *your* mustache and do not eat the bread of men." ¹⁸So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. And in the morning I did as I was commanded. ¹⁹The people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things that you are doing mean for us?" ²⁰Then I said to them, "The word of the LORD came to me saying, ²¹'Speak to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am about to profane My sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes and the delight of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the sword. ²²You will do as I have done; you will not cover *your* mustache and you will not eat the bread of men. ²³Your turbans will be on your heads and your shoes on your feet. You will not mourn and you will not weep, but you will rot away in your iniquities and you will groan to one another. ²⁴Thus Ezekiel will be a sign to you; according to all that he has done you will do; when it comes, then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.'''

24:16-17 "the desire of your eyes" This shows the tenderness of Ezekiel toward his wife. This also is the metaphor used in verses 16-24 to describe the unbelievable pain of the people of Judah when Jerusalem fell.

In Ezekiel's pain he is told to

- 1. not mourn, BDB 704, KB 763, *Qal* IMPERFECT, negated
- 2. not weep, BDB 113, KB 129, Qal IMPERFECT, negated
- 3. no tears shall run down, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT, negated (because this phrase [1] is left out of the LXX; [2] does not fit the parallelism; and [3] is redundant with #2, many scholars think it is an addition)

This is similar to YHWH's message about grieving to Jeremiah (cf. 16:5).

Just a personal note, it is always hard for me, being a modern western person, to not be affected as an interpreter by my culture's overemphasis on the rights and value of the individual. Most societies in the world are tribal or clan-focused. It bothers me when (1) Job's children die or (2) David's child dies or (3) Jeremiah is told not to marry or (4) YHWH takes Ezekiel's wife. My mind screams to me "are not these affected individuals as important to God as the biblical characters? Does not God love and care for them? Do not His promises cover them? Do you hear the twenty-first century American in me?

God has a universal redemptive plan. This world is affected by sin. This life is only the beginning of an eternal relationship! Yes, God loves and cares for individuals, but He has bigger and better plans for all humanity. This is not the world God intended it to be!

Theologically I know that the OT attributes all causality to God as a way of affirming monotheism! He, and only He, is in control. Individuals get hurt, die, both by natural causes and by the hand of evil, manipulative people. Yet God's promises are still sure! He does care for each, but also for all (cf. II Cor. 5:21)! The book by Hannah Whithall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, has really helped me in this area.

24:17 This is a series of Hebrew cultural metaphors describing mourning rites (cf. Jer. 16:5-13). Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn ("be silent," BDB 198, KB 266, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) for the death of his own wife. The things he was expected to do, he was told to do the opposite.

- 1. put on your hat
- 2. put on your shoes
- 3. do not cover your mouth
- 4. do not eat mourner's bread

Ezekiel's grief (i.e., v. 22) over the loss of his wife parallels YHWH's grief over the loss of His wife (i.e., Judah). However, Judah's judgment was appropriate! Grieving over them would imply that the judgment was not deserved, appropriate, and necessary (cf. Lev. 10:1-7 in Nadab and Abihu's death).

24:21 Notice the parallel phrases YHWH uses to describe Judah's feelings toward the temple.

- 1. the pride of your power
- 2. the desire of your eyes
- 3. the delight of your soul

Judah had substituted devotion to a building for their devotion to YHWH (cf. Jeremiah 7). This is always a problem for religiously oriented people! The goal is fellowship with God (cf. Ps. 42:1-2; 63:1; 143:6). It is an orientation of the heart, not a physical place to worship, or human performance.

24:23 "you will rot away in your iniquities" This VERB (BDB 596, KB 628, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used several times by Ezekiel (cf. 4:17; 33:10) and may reflect Lev. 26:39. Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's condemnations of both Israel and Judah reflect the terminology of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29.

24:24 Notice the direct speech of YHWH where Ezekiel is mentioned by name. The prophet himself is a sign (cf. v. 27; 12:11).

YHWH addresses Ezekiel directly in vv. 25-27. We, as later readers of the OT, know more about the man Ezekiel from this chapter than from any other prophet. We sense his love for his wife and his people. We feel his pain over Judean sin and incalcitrance!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:25-27

²⁵"'As for you, son of man, will *it* not be on the day when I take from them their stronghold, the joy of their pride, the desire of their eyes and their heart's delight, their sons and their daughters, ²⁶that on that day he who escapes will come to you with information for *your* ears? ²⁷On that day your mouth will be opened to him who escaped, and you will speak and be mute no longer. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD."

24:27 "On that day your mouth will be opened" Originally, after the vision of Ezekiel in chapter 1, God told the prophet that he would be unable to speak at times (cf. 3:26). Therefore, these opening chapters of Ezekiel deal quite often with symbolic action. However, after the Fall of Jerusalem, the prophet's mouth was opened (cf. 3:27; 33:22) and his message changed from doom/judgment to forgiveness/restoration! Now he could preach hope, restoration, and the renewal of covenant promises.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What is the unifying theme of chapters 20 through 24?
- 2. Describe the worship of the god *Molech*.
- 3. Define divination and list its numerous forms found in the OT (cf. Deuteronomy 18).
- 4. Why is the marriage relationship such a good analogy to the covenant relationship?

EZEKIEL 25

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judgment On Gentile Nations, Ammon	Proclamation Against Ammon	Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)	Prophecy Against Ammon	Against Ammonites
		Oracles Against Ammon		
25:1-7	25:1-7	25:1-7	25:1-5	25:1-3a
				25:3b-5
			25:6-7	25:6-7
Moab	Proclamation Against Moab	Oracles Against Moab	Prophecy Against Moab	Against Moab
25:8-11	25:8-11	25:8-11	25:8-11	25:8-11
Edom	Proclamation Against Edom	Oracles Against Edom	Prophecy Against Edom	Against Edom
25:12-14	25:12-14	25:12-14	25:12-14	25:12-14
Philistia	Proclamation Against Philistia	Oracles Against Philistia	Prophecy Against Philistia	Against Philistines
25:15-17	25:15-17	25:15-17	25:15-17	25:15-17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO CHAPTERS 25-32

A. There is a subject unity (judgment on these nations) to these chapters, but not a genre uniformity. Also note the different dates.

- 1. 9th year, 10 month, 10th day, 24:1 (may cover chapter 25)
- 2. 11th year, 1st month, 1st day, 26:1
- 3. 10 year, 10th month, 12th day, 29:1
- 4. 27th year, 1st month, 1st day, 29:17
- 5. 11th year, 1st month, 7th day, 30:20
- 6. 11th year, 3rd month, 1st day, 31:1
- 7. 12th year, 12th month, 1st day, 32:1
- 8. 12th year, 12th month, 15th day, 32:17

This clearly demonstrates that the literary unit (25-32) was an edited collection. By whom and when is uncertain.

- B. The oracles against the nations (see D.) are characteristic of Hebrew Prophetic Literature.
 - 1. Isaiah 13-21, 23, 24
 - 2. Jeremiah 46-51
 - 3. Ezekiel 25-32, 35, 38-39
 - 4. Amos 1-2
 - 5. Joel 3:1-16
 - 6. Zephaniah 2:1-3:5

C. Nations to Be Judged by YHWH

Isaiah 13-21, 23, 24	Jeremiah 46-51	Ezekiel 25-32, 35, 38-39	Amos 1-2			
Babylon	Egypt	Ammon	Syria			
Philistia	Philistia	Moab	Philistia			
Moab	Moab	Edom	Phoenicia			
Syria	Edom	Philistia	Ammon			
Ethiopia	Syria	Phoenicia	Moab			
Egypt	Hazor	Egypt	Judah			
Edom	Elam	Babylon	Israel			
Arabia	Babylon	Assyria				
Phoenicia		Elam				
the nations		Meshech				
		Tubal				
		(Turkey)				

- D. The nations listed in chapter 25 tried to get Judah to rebel against Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 27), but in the end, they benefitted, even participated in, Judah's fall (cf. II Kgs. 24:1-2).
- E. It is surprising that Babylon is not mentioned in the list of condemned nations. This is because Babylon was YHWH's instrument of judgment on Judah, as Assyria was for Israel (cf. Isa. 10:5). She will surely be judged, but for now she is YHWH's instrument (as Cyrus will be, cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1) to destroy Babylon.
- F. Theological Issues
 - 1. The judgment oracles on surrounding nations and world powers of the Ancient Near East accentuate the power, glory, and uniqueness of Israel's God (i.e., monotheism).
 - 2. They show that YHWH has a larger purpose for a repentant Israel (they are given no chance to repent). Ezekiel's prophesies of a restored, glorified temple was a way of asserting a future hope and purpose for Israel (i.e., the Messiah). The first temple became

corrupt (cf. chapts. 8-10) and YHWH left, but a future temple is promised (chapts. 40-48).

- 3. The messages of doom on the pagan nations were Ezekiel's first message of hope for God's exiled people after the exiles heard of Jerusalem's demise (cf. 24:25-27).
- 4. The book of Jonah is also a condemnation of a foreign oppressor nation (i.e., Assyria). Yet, it functioned theologically as YHWH's willingness to accept the repentance of the pagan nations (i.e., Isa. 19:23,24-25). The reality of Gen. 12:3 is being fulfilled!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-7

¹And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²''Son of man, set your face toward the sons of Ammon and prophesy against them, ³and say to the sons of Ammon, 'Hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Because you said, 'Aha!' against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into exile, ⁴therefore, behold, I am going to give you to the sons of the east for a possession, and they will set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk. ⁵I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and the sons of Ammon a resting place for flocks. Thus you will know that I am the Lord.'' ⁶For thus says the Lord GOD, ''Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the scorn of your soul against the land of Israel, ⁷therefore, behold, I have stretched out My hand against you and I will give you for spoil to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and make you perish from the lands; I will destroy you. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.''

25:1 This is the characteristic literary marker that a new oracle is beginning. It is surprising that a date does not appear here, as it does in 26:1 and 24:1. This causes the interpreter to ask if chapters 24-25 form a literary unit. From content it seems that these chapters form a unit of pronouncements regarding YHWH's coming judgment on the surrounding nations.

25:2 "set your face toward" This IMPERATIVE (BDB 967, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is a standard idiom (cf. 15:7; Lev. 20:5; 26:17; Jer. 21:10; 44:11; Amos 9:4). See note at 6:2; also note 13:17; 20:46; 21:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2.

• "Ammon" All three trans-Jordan nations were relatives of Israel, Edom through Esau (cf. Gen. 36:1) and Ammon and Moab through Lot (cf. Gen. 19:37-38).

Ammon was located south of the Jabbok River and another boundary somewhere north of the Arnon River.

■ "prophesy" This is a second IMPERATIVE (BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 4:7; 6:2; 11:4; 13:2,17; 21:2,7; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 34:2; 35:2; 36:6; 38:2; 39:1). After the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel now proclaims YHWH's judgment on the surrounding nations who supported or maybe were directly involved in Jerusalem's demise (cf. Jer. 49:1-6; Amos 1:13-15; Zeph. 2:8-9).

Herodutus specifically mentions Nebuchadnezzar's devastation of the trans-jordan area in 582 B.C. Josephus mentions that it occurred five years after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

25:3 "Hear" This is the third opening IMPERATIVE (BDB 1633, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in this section. One wonders if any of these nations ever heard these prophecies. They were addressed to them, but obviously they were directed toward the Israeli exiles. They demonstrate that

- 1. YHWH is a universal God
- 2. YHWH is no respecter of persons
- 3. YHWH will punish sin
- 4. YHWH's word does come to pass
- 5. YHWH's ultimate will will be accomplished

■ "Aha" This INTERJECTION expresses joy of the Ammonites (cf. Ps. 35:21,25; 40:15-16; Isa. 44:16; Ezek. 25:3; 26:2; 36:2), which is defined in v. 6. They rejoiced over

- 1. the sanctuary being profaned
- 2. the land of Israel made desolate
- 3. the house of Judah sent into exile

They may have participated in this exile (cf. II Kgs. 24:1-2).

25:4 "I am going to give you" The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, in v. 10 *Qal* PERFECT) is used in 11:15 (*Niphal* PERFECT) of Canaan being given to God's covenant people, but because of their sin, the land will now be given to "the sons of the east." This is similar to Canaan originally being taken away from the ten nations and given to Israel (cf. Gen. 15:12-21).

• "the sons of the east" This phrase occurs several times with several possible meanings.

- 1. warriors, v. 10; Jdgs. 6:3,33
- 2. wisemen, I Kgs. 4:30
- 3. future relatives (i.e., Syria), Gen. 29:1
- 4. nomadic Arabs from northern Arabia

Here it refers to Babylon, which is beyond Syria. Ezekiel has predicted that YHWH will judge His people with an "east wind" (cf. 17:10; 19:12; note Isa. 27:8).

• "they will eat your fruit and drink your milk" This phrase is similar to Deut. 28:33, which describes Israel's fate if she does not keep YHWH's covenant (cf. Isa. 1:7).

These terms are normally a prayer of thanksgiving (i.e., Ps. 120:2; Isa. 3:10), but here it is a curse.

25:5 "Rabbah" This is the capital of Ammon located on the Wadi Amman, which becomes the Jabbok River. This water source was the key to the city's continuity. It is the capital of the nation of Jordan today, Amman.

• "a pasture for camel. . .a resting place for flocks" This is a way of predicting the nation's depopulation, only nomadic herdsmen will be there for short periods (cf. Isa. 27:10).

The term "resting place" (BDB 918) is found only here and in Zeph. 2:5 where it is used of wild beasts. This judged place was so dry that it could only be used for grazing at certain brief times of the year.

25:6 The physical gestures of "clapping hands" and "stomping feet" can be understood as a way of expressing joy or approval (cf. 6:11; Nahum 3:19). In this context Ammon rejoiced at Judah's demise (and may have participated in it, cf. II Kgs. 24:1-2).

25:7 "I have stretched out My hand against you" This is another idiom of judgment (cf. Exod. 7:5; 15:6,12; Isa. 5:25; 9:12,17,21; 10:4; 14:27; 23:11; Jer. 6:12; 15:6; 51:25; Ezek. 6:14; 14:13; 20:33,34; 25:7,13; 35:3; Zeph. 1:4; 2:13).

■ "I shall give you for spoil to the nations" Spoil (BDB 103) refers to the property of conquered nations, including even their own persons (i.e., Num. 31:32-40). This term is found several times in Ezekiel (cf. 25:7; 26:5; 29:19; 36:4; 38:12,13).

The MT has a word that is unknown. This has been emended by changing one consonant.

- 1. "spoil" בא (BDB 103)
- 2. from ג (BDB 93)

Notice the things YHWH says He will do to Ammon.

- 1. stretched out His hand against them
- 2. gave them for spoil to the nations
- 3. cut them off from the peoples
- 4. made them perish from the lands
- 5. destroyed them (cf. v. 10)

Ammon will be no more! This is surprising in light of Jer. 49:6 (and Moab's restoration in Jer. 48:47). This may have an eschatological orientation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:8-11

⁸'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because Moab and Seir say, 'Behold, the house of Judah is like all the nations,' ⁹therefore, behold, I am going to deprive the flank of Moab of *its* cities, of its cities which are on its frontiers, the glory of the land, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon and Kiriathaim, ¹⁰and I will give it for a possession along with the sons of Ammon to the sons of the east, so that the sons of Ammon will not be remembered among the nations. ¹¹Thus I will execute judgments on Moab, and they will know that I am the LORD."

25:8-11 This chapter addresses

- 1. Ammon, vv. 1-7
- 2. Moab, vv. 8-11
- 3. Edom, vv. 12-14
- 4. Philistia, vv. 15-17

■ "Moab" This is another trans-Jordan country from Lot's incestuous children by his own daughters (cf. Genesis 19). There are several prophecies against Moab (cf. Num. 21:27-30; Isaiah 15-16; Jeremiah 48; Amos 2:1-3; Zeph. 2:8-11). Moab's boundaries are from the Arnon River to the Brook Zered.

■ "Seir" This (BDB 973) refers to a mountain range running parallel to the Arabah (see *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 5, pp. 329-330). It was originally the homeland of Horite settlers (cf. Gen. 36:20-30), but they were defeated by Esau (cf. Deut. 2:12,22). Therefore, "Seir," "Mount Seir," became ways of referring to Edomites (cf. II Chr. 20:10; 25:11). Edom is located south of the Brook Zered and extends down the eastern side of the Arabah.

25:8 "the house of Judah is like all the nations" This statement, in one sense, was surely true. Judah had taken up the Canaanite religion. In another sense the phrase depreciates Judah's unique relationship with YHWH (i.e., Gen. 12:1-3; Exod. 19:4-5). These trans-jordan relative nations saw nothing different, unique, or respectable in Judah or her God.

It is also possible that Marduk (i.e., chief god of Babylon) was seen as being stronger than the gods of the nations which were conquered. It was Judah's military defeat that precipitated the accusations and slurs.

25:9 "Beth-jeshimoth" This Moabite city was located on the eastern side of the Jordan in the ancient tribal allocation of Reuben (cf. Josh. 12:3; 13:20). The name means "place of the desert" (BDB 111).

Baal-meon" This Moabite city was also located in the ancient tribal allocation of Reuben (cf. Num. 32:28; Josh. 13:17; also note Jer. 48:23). Note it carries the name of the Canaanite male fertility deity.

Wiriathaim" This is also a Moabite town in the tribal allocation of Reuben (cf. Num. 32:37; Josh. 13:19), located on the tableland. It is also mentioned in God's judgment on Moab in Jer. 48:1.

25:10 "Ammon may not be remembered among the nations" The VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is also used of Ammon in 21:32. Ammon will exist no more as a nation. Israel will return to its land, but Ammon will not (the same is true of Edom).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:12-14

¹²'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt, and avenged themselves upon them," ¹³therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off man and beast from it. And I will lay it waste; from Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword. ¹⁴I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; thus they will know My vengeance," declares the Lord GOD.

25:12 Edom acted against the house of Judah (cf. Ps. 137:7; Lam. 4:21-22; Obad. vv. 10-14) by

- 1. taking vengeance (BDB 667, KB 721, *Qal* infinitive construct) plus the related NOUN, BDB 668). This action caused great guilt (*Qal* IMPERFECT VERB plus INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root, BDB 79, KB 95, which is a grammatical way to show intensity).
- 2. avenging themselves (BDB 667, KB 721, *Niphal* PERFECT).

Also they apparently took the opportunity of the collapse of the Judean state to annex part of her land (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 844).

25:13-14 YHWH will respond in vengeance (BDB 668).

- 1. stretch out His hand against them
- 2. cut off man and beast
- 3. lay it waste
- 4. fall by the sword

This violation of Edom against Judah and her God (cf. v. 8) was taken very personally by YHWH.

- 1. My vengeance, twice
- 2. My people
- 3. My anger
- 4. My wrath

Note how many prophecies are against Edom (cf. Isa. 34:5-17; 63:1-6; Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1-15; Lam. 4:21-22; Amos 1:11-12; Mal. 1:2-4).

25:13 "Teman" This is the Hebrew word for "south," "south wind" (BDB 412). It originally designated a grandson of Esau (cf. Gen. 36:11). It came to refer to the northern part of the nation of Edom (cf. Obad. v. 9; Hab. 3:3) and a city (cf. Jer. 49:7,20; Amos 1:12).

In this context it represents a region because it is contrasted with Dedam to designate the whole nation (similar to "from Dan to Beersheba").

■ "Dedan" This refers to a southern region in northwestern Arabia (cf. Gen. 10:7; 25:3). The Arab inhabitants became identified with Edom (cf. Jer. 49:8). As an area it extended down the eastern side of the Gulf of Aqaba.

The exact locations of Teman and Dedan are uncertain and whether they refer to a city or a region in this context is uncertain.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:15-17

¹⁵'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because the Philistines have acted in revenge and have taken vengeance with scorn of soul to destroy with everlasting enmity," ¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will stretch out My hand against the Philistines, even cut off the Cherethites and destroy the remnant of the seacoast. ¹⁷I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes; and they will know that I am the LORD when I lay My vengeance on them.""

25:15 "Philistines" See Special Topic: Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine at 16:3. The name Palestine comes from the Philistines. They were enemies of the Israelites throughout their history.

• "have acted" This verse describes Philistia's actions against God's people.

- 1. acted in revenge
- 2. took vengeance
- 3. displayed scorn of soul
- 4. destroyed with everlasting enmity (cf. 35:5)

Wow! What strong language!

25:16 "Cherethites" This name is of uncertain origin (BDB 504). Two principles of hermeneutics can help here.

- 1. In context they are parallel to Philistines. They could be a synonymous name or a specific group who were assimilated. The Philistines were Aegean people. The Cherethites were possibly from Crete (because of [1] Amos 9:7; [2] the similarity of the root consonants; and [3] the LXX translation).
- 2. Parallel passages link them to the Philistines (i.e., Pelethites, cf. II Sam. 8:18; 15:18; 20:7,23; I Kgs. 1:38,44; I Chr. 18:17; Zeph. 2:5).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What is the theological significance of the literary unit of chapters 25-32?
- 2. Why does Ezekiel mention the small surrounding nations first?
- 3. Why is Babylon not included in the list of nations to be judged?
- 4. Who are the Cherethites of v. 16?
- 5. What is the significance of the phrase "they will know that I am the LORD," v. 17?

EZEKIEL 26

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)		
		Oracles Against Tyre (26:1-28:19)		
Judgment On Tyre	Proclamation Against Tyre	Tyre To Be Destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar	Prophecy Against Tyre	Against Tyre
26:1-6	26:1-14	26:1-6	26:1-2	26:1
		(2b-6)		26:2-6
			26:3-6	
26:7-14		26:7-14	26:7-14	26:7
		(8-14)		26:8-14
				(8-14)
				Lament Over Tyre
26:15-18	26:15-18	26:15-18	26:15-18	26:15-16
				26:17-18
(17b-18)		(17b-18)	(17b-18)	(17b-18)
26:19-21	26:19-21	26:19-21	26:19-21	26:19-21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-6

¹Now in the eleventh year, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, because Tyre has said concerning Jerusalem, 'Aha, the gateway of the peoples is broken; it has opened to me. I shall be filled, *now that* she is laid waste,' ³therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. ⁴They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; and I will scrape her debris from her and make her a bare rock. ⁵She will be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken,' declares the Lord GOD, 'and she will become spoil for the nations. ⁶Also her daughters who are on the mainland will be slain by the sword, and they will know that I am the LORD.'''

26:1 Ezekiel dates his prophecies (cf. 1:1; 8:1; 20:1; 26:1; 29:1,17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1,17; 33:21). Surprisingly, the month is not named here. His book is not in chronological sequence, which implies an editor. It must be admitted that moderns do not know how or when the OT was written and edited in its current form.

Ezekiel 26:1 through 28:19 forms a literary unit denoting Phoenicia's judgment and total destruction. See note at v. 11! The subdivisions are identified by the literary marker "the word of the LORD came to me saying" (cf. 26:1; 27:1; 28:1,11).

26:2 "I shall be filled" This VERB (BDB 569, KB 583, *Niphal* COHORTATIVE) expresses the joy of the Phoenicians at the demise of Judah ("she is laid waste," BDB 351, KB 349, *Hophal* PERFECT, implying it was permanent).

■ "because Tyre has said" Chapters 26-28 form a literary unit of judgment (a funeral dirge, cf. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; 27:2-9,25-36; 28:12-19; 32:2-8) against the Phoenician maritime nations of Tyre and Sidon (cf. Isa. 24; Jer. 47:4).

■ "Aha, the gateway to the peoples is broken" Jerusalem is located on a major international highway between the powerful nation of Egypt and the powerful nations of Syria, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. Because of her strategic location, Judah charged a tax on all of the caravans who passed this way. Tyre, also a commercial center, was glad that one more middleman was eliminated.

26:3 These nations who gloated over Judah's fall were judged by YHWH (e.g., Micah 4:11).

• "as the sea brings up its waves" This is a play on the fact that Tyre was an island fortress. Most of the city was located on the mainland, but the citadel was located on a rocky island about one-quarter mile off shore. During ancient times it proved to be one of the most impregnable fortresses in the Near East.

26:4 This is another reference to the island fortress (cf. v. 17). The city was finally captured by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.

26:5 This curse is repeated in v. 14. There were two types of fishing nets used.

- 1. casting nets, 12:13; 32:3
- 2. dragnets, 26:5,14; 47:10

26:6 "her daughters who are on the mainland" This refers to the part of the city which surrounded the harbor. Only the walled citadel was on the island. It was the walls of the houses and buildings that Alexander used to build a causeway to the islands (cf. v. 12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:7-14

⁷For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will bring upon Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses, chariots, cavalry and a great army. ⁸He will slay your daughters on the mainland with the sword; and he will make siege walls against you, cast up a ramp against you and raise up a large shield against you. ⁹The blow of his battering rams he will direct against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. ¹⁰Because of the multitude of his horses, the dust *raised by* them will cover you; your walls will shake at the noise of cavalry and wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city that is breached. ¹¹With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will slay your people with the sword; and your strong pillars will come down to the ground. ¹²Also they will make a spoil of your riches and a prey of your merchandise, break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses, and throw your stones and your timbers and your debris into the water. ¹³So I will silence the sound of your songs, and the sound of your harps will be heard no more. ¹⁴I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for I the LORD have spoken," declares the Lord GOD.

26:7 "from the north" This compass direction became a proverb (e.g., Jer. 4:6; 6:1,22; 10:22; 13:20; 15:12; 46:20, 24) for evil because this was the only land route for invasion from the Fertile Crescent (i.e., Assyria in Isa. 14:31; Babylon in Jer. 1:13-15).

• "Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon" The name is spelled differently (BDB 613) here than in most places in the OT (Nebuchadrezzar). There is an "r" instead of an "n" in the closing part of the name. This seems to relate to the Babylonian's spelling of this king's name "Nabu-kudurri-usur," which means "Nabu, protect my boundaries" or "Nabo, protect my lands."

■ "kings of kings" This title reflects the conquests of the Neo-Babylon Empire under Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. Jer. 27:6-7; Dan. 2:37). It was also later used of Artaxerxes, the Persian king in Ezra 7:12. It came to be a title for the Messiah (cf. I Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16). A similar title was used of YHWH in Deut. 10:17 and I Enoch 9:4. It is a phrase that emphasizes sovereignty!

• "a great army" The Babylonian army grew by including the defeated armies into their ranks as mercenaries.

26:8 "siege walls against you, cast up a mound" This may refer to two separate siege tactics or just to one (cf. II Sam. 20:15; II Kgs. 19:32; Isa. 37:33; Jer. 6:6; Ezek. 4:2; 17:17; 21:22; 26:8). These ramps allowed soldiers and siege machines (i.e., battering ram, BDB 867) to approach the stone walls of a city in order to loosen the stones and cause the wall to fall.

■ "raise up a large shield against you" This is a technical term (BDB 857, cf. I Kgs. 10:16) for what was known as "the roof," which was raised as a shield to protect the attacking soldiers from being pelted by stones from the walls of citadels. We know that Nebuchadnezzar began this siege in 587 B.C., and it lasted until 574 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar never defeated the main citadel (cf. Ezek. 29:18), but it apparently surrendered. There is no record of the city's capture in the Babylonian chronicles.

26:9 Nebuchadnezzar's siege machines never reached the island citadel of Tyre, but Alexander's did in 332 B.C.

• "blow of his battering rams" This is a rare term (BDB 562 II). In Num. 34:11 it is translated "border" (KB 568 or "to run along beside"), but that meaning does not fit this text in Ezekiel.

26:11-12 There is a switch from the PRONOUN "he" (v. 11) to "they" (v. 12) in these verses. Some have assumed a theological significance that this refers to subsequent besiegers of Tyre, like Alexander the Great, to whom the city fell in 332 B.C. See Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 276-278.

26:11 Some would read these words and assert that the Bible is in error at this point. We must remember that prophecy is hyperbolic literary genre. One book that has really helped me in my understanding of both prophecy and apocalyptic literature is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic.*

• "your strong pillars" From the historian, Heroditus (II. 44), we understand there were two famous obelisks in the city of Tyre. One was gold and the other was emerald and they were dedicated to the god *Melqart* ("King of the City"), probably the *Ba'al* brought into Israel by Jezebel (cf. I Kgs. 16:21-32).

26:13 This is an idiomatic way of asserting their society will cease (i.e., Isa. 23:16; 24:8,9). Tyre may have been renowned for her musicians (cf. Isa. 23:16).

26:14 "a place for the spreading of nets" The citadel will be so completely destroyed that all it will be good for is drying fishermen's nets (cf. v. 5). This was historically fulfilled in Alexander's conquest.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:15-18

¹⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre, "Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall when the wounded groan, when the slaughter occurs in your midst? ¹⁶Then all the princes of the sea will go down from their thrones, remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground, tremble every moment and be appalled at you. ¹⁷They will take up a lamentation over you and say to you,

'How you have perished, O inhabited one,

From the seas, O renowned city,

Which was mighty on the sea,

She and her inhabitants,

Who imposed her terror

On all her inhabitants!

¹⁸Now the coastlands will tremble

On the day of your fall;

Yes, the coastlands which are by the sea

Will be terrified at your passing.'"

26:15 "groan" This VERB (BDB 60, KB 72) occurs three times in Ezekiel.

- 1. 9:4, those who sigh and groan over Judah's sins
- 2. 24:17, Ezekiel groans quietly over the death of his wife

3. 26:15, the dying of Tyre groan loudly at their approaching death (cf. Job 24:12; Jer. 51:52; Ezek. 30:24). It occurs only one other time in the OT, Jer. 51:52. The NOUN (BDB 60) occurs in Ps. 12:5; 79:11; 102:20; Mal. 2:13.

26:16 "they will sit on the ground" This is a sign of mourning (e.g., Lam. 2:10, esp. for a king, cf. Isa. 47:1).

• "trembling. . .tremble" This term (BDB 353, KB 350) denotes great fear. It is used twice (VERB and NOUN) in this verse. The ones trembling are the colonies which the Phoenicians had started all around the Mediterranean. These outposts of Phoenician culture were dependent on Tyre.

■ "be appalled at you" This VERB (BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes astonishment at YHWH's judgment (cf. Lev. 26:32; Job 17:8; Isa. 52:14; Jer. 50:13; Ezek. 26:16; 27:35; 28:19; 32:10; Dan. 8:27). This fear at the fall of a powerful commercial nation is used in Revelation 18.

26:17-18 This is a lamentation (BDB 884, cf. 2:10; 19:1,14; 27:2,32; 32:2,16) in poetic form.

26:17 NASB, NKJV, PESHITTA "O inhabited one" LXX, NRSV,

NJB "vanished"

The MT reflects option 1 (נושבת). The second option is from the Septuagint and involves an emendation (נשבת). The UBS Hebrew OT Text Project gives option 1 a "B" rating.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:19-21

¹⁹For thus says the Lord GOD, "When I make you a desolate city, like the cities which are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you and the great waters cover you, ²⁰then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I will make you dwell in the lower parts of the earth, like the ancient waste places, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I will set glory in the land of the living. ²¹I will bring terrors on you and you will be no more; though you will be sought, you will never be found again," declares the Lord GOD.

26:19 "the deep over you and the great waters" This refers to the chaotic waters of creation (cf. Gen. 1:2,6-7,9-10), which became known as *Sheol* or the holding place of the dead (i.e., "the pit," v. 20; 31:16; Ps. 28:1; 30:3; 40:2; 88:4; 143:7; Pro. 1:12; Isa. 14:15; 38:18). See Special Topic at 3:18.

"The deep" is the Hebrew term *tehom* (BDB 1062 #3, KB 1690-91). A similar, but different, Hebrew root is personified as *Tiamat* in the Sumerian and Babylonian creation myths as the monster of chaos and the mother of the gods, wife of Apsu. She tried to kill all lesser gods that came forth from her. *Marduk* killed her. Out of her body *Marduk* fashioned heaven and earth in the Babylonian Genesis account called *Enuma Elish*. The Hebrews believed that water was the beginning element of creation (cf. Ps. 24:1; 104:6; II Pet. 3:5). It is never said to have been created. However, the Hebrew term is masculine, not feminine and it is unrelated etymologically to *Tiamat*.

There are passages in the OT which describe YHWH in conflict with personified watery chaos (cf. Ps. 74:13-14; 89:9-10; 104:6-7; Isa. 51:9-10). However, these are always in poetical, metaphorical passages. Water is a crucial aspect of creation (cf. 1:2b,6-7), but its creation is never mentioned.

26:20 "I shall bring you down with those who go down to the pit" This refers to *Sheol*, the holding place of the dead until judgment day. The rabbis speculated that it was divided into two sections—the righteous dead and the wicked dead. See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead at 3:18.

This three-level worldview (earth for the living, below the earth for the dead, and heaven above, e.g., Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2) was based on the burial practice of the Jews. The dead were buried, so they were in the ground (cf. 31:14,16,18; 32:18,24). Smoke from the sacrifices and incense altars rose to God so heaven was up. This is metaphorical, not literal (e.g., Isa. 14:9-10). In reality Scripture reveals very little about the afterlife (heaven or hell), but focuses on choices, actions, and consequences of current reality!

NASB, NKJV	"I shall set glory in the land of the living"
NRSV	"or have a place in the land of the living"
TEV	"and take your place in the land of the living"
NJB	"or be restored to the land of the land of the living"
LXX	"nor rise (or stand) upon a land of life"
Peshitta	"and I will not cause your resurrection in the land of the living"
REB	"or take your place in the land of the living"

The MT has "and I will give beauty (BDB 840) in the land of the living," which does not make sense in this context, unless it is a statement of pride, like 28:2,12. So, most modern English translations follow the Septuagint. The Syrian (Aramaic) text relates the phrase to Judah's restoration.

EZEKIEL 27

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracle Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)		
Lament Over Tyre	Lamentation For Tyre	Lamentation Over Tyre	A Funeral Song for Tyre	Second Lament Over the Fall of Tyre
27:1-9	27:1-9	27:1-11	27:1-9	27:1-9a
(3c-9)	(3c-9)	(3c-11)	(3c-9)	(3c-9a)
				27:9b-36
27:10-11	27:10-11		27:10-11	
	(10-11)			
27:12-25	27:12-26	27:12-36	27:12-34	
(25b)	(25-26)	(25b-36)	(25b-34)	(25-27)
27:26-36				
(26-36)				
	27:27-36			
	(27-28)			
				(28-32a)
	(29-36)			
				(32b-36)
			27:35-36	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDA	ATED) TEXT: 27:1-9	
¹ Moreov	er, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ² "And you, son of man, take up a	
	over Tyre; ³ and say to Tyre, who dwells at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the	
peoples to ma	any coastlands, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,	
"O Tyre	, you have said, 'I am perfect in beauty.'	
⁴ Your bo	rders are in the heart of the seas;	
Your bu	ilders have perfected your beauty.	
⁵ They hav	ve made all <i>your</i> planks of fir trees from Senir;	
They hav	ve taken a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you.	
⁶ Of oaks from Bashan they have made your oars;		
With ivo	ry they have inlaid your deck of boxwood from the coastlands of Cyprus.	
⁷ Your sail	was of fine embroidered linen from Egypt	
So that i	t became your distinguishing mark;	
Your aw	ning was blue and purple from the coastlands of Elishah.	
⁸ The inha	abitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers;	
Your wis	se men, O Tyre, were aboard; they were your pilots.	
⁹ The elders of Gebal and her wise men were with you repairing your seams;		
All the s	hips of the sea and their sailors were with you in order to deal in your merchandise.	

27:1 This is a literary marker for a new subject or development of a larger unit (i.e., 26:1-28:26). Notice that it occurs in 26:1; 27:1; 28:1,11,20.

27:2 "take up" This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 669, KB 724, cf. v. 12; 19:1; 26:17).

• "lamentations" See note at 26:17.

27:3 This chapter is an allegorical personification of Tyre as the beautiful and well-equipped merchant ship. A good title would be "The Flagship Tyre of the Materialistic Fleet."

• "I am perfect in beauty" This was the problem, the arrogance of the king of Tyre (cf. vv. 4,11; 28:2-5,15,17 and possibly 26:20).

27:5 Notice the poetic parallelism.

- 1. fir (juniper) from Senir, v. 5
- 2. cedar from Lebanon, v. 5
- 3. oaks from Bashan, v. 6
- 4. boxwood from Cyprus, v. 6
- 5. sails from Egypt, v. 7
- 6. awnings from Elishah (BDB 47), v. 7
- 7. rowers from Sidon and Arvad (BDB 71), v. 8
- 8. wise men from Tyre as pilots, v. 8
- 9. maintenance workers from Gebal (BDB 148), v. 9

This ship was made of the best and most beautiful material and manned by the best possible crew.

Senir" This (BDB 972) is the Amorite term for Mount Hermon (cf. Deut. 3:9; I Chr. 5:23; Song of Songs 4:8).

27:6 "of boxwood" The MT reads "daughters of Ashurim," but by making the CONSTRUCT (BDB 123 and 81) into one word, "made with boxwood" (see UBS, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, p. 99). This tree is mentioned in Isa. 41:19; 60:13. A type of tree fits the context better than a place name.

27:7

NASB "distinguishing mark"NRSV "ensign"TEV "easily recognized from afar"NJB "your flag"

This term (BDB 651) normally stands for a military banner or sign. Here it refers to a characteristic type of sail that denotes "the flagship of Tyre"!

• "**purple**" It was a very expensive dye made from the mollusk shell of Murex, which are found in abundance along this portion of the Mediterranean coast.

Elishnah" From Gen. 10:4 we learn this was a tribe of Javan (Greece, cf. I Chr. 1:7). It seems to refer to inhabitants of the Aegean Islands, possibly Cyprus. The NIV Study Bible (p. 1263) identifies it as a city on the east side of Cyprus, but this is speculation.

27:8 "Arvad" This (BDB 71) is another off-shore island about 100 miles north of Tyre. It was a Phoenician settlement.

27:9 "Gebal" This (BDB 148) is the modern city Byblos, which is located on the coast between Sidon and Arvad.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:10-11

¹⁰"Persia and Lud and Put were in your army, your men of war. They hung shield and helmet in you; they set forth your splendor. ¹¹The sons of Arvad and your army were on your walls, *all* around, and the Gammadim were in your towers. They hung their shields on your walls *all* around; they perfected your beauty."

27:10-25 This section lists many nations. It is similar to Genesis 10. Some nations are listed as part of Tyre's military and some as her trading partners. It is somewhat hyperbolic to demonstrate Tyre's influence, power, and commercial reach.

- A. military
 - 1. Persia
 - 2. Lud
 - 3. Put
 - 4. Arvad
 - 5. Gammad
- B. trading partners
 - 1. Tarshish
 - a. silver
 - b. iron
 - c. tin
 - d. lead

- 2. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech
 - a. slaves
 - b. bronze vessels
- 3. Beth-togarmah
 - a. horses
 - b. mules
- 4. Dedan and coastlands
 - a. ivory
 - b. ebony
- 5. Syria (Aram)
 - a. emeralds
 - b. purple dye
 - c. embroidered cloth
 - d. fine linen
 - e. coral
 - f. rubies
- 6. Judah and Israel
 - a. wheat
 - b. pannag (BDB 815, only here, some kind of food)
 - c. honey
 - d. olive oil
 - e. balm/balsam resin
- 7. Damascus
 - a. wine
 - b. white or reddish gray (BDB 856 construct 850) wool
- 8. Vedan and Javan (spelled different from v. 13)
 - a. iron

9.

- b. cassia spice
- c. calamus, aromatic reed ("sweet cane")
- Arabia and Kedar
 - a. lambs
 - b. rams
 - c. goats
- 10. Sheba and Raamah
 - a. spices
 - b. jewels
 - c. gold
- 11. Haran, Canneh, Eden, Sheba, Asshur, Chilmad
 - a. blue cloths
 - b. embroidered cloth
 - c. carpets in many colors
 - d. ropes

27:10 "Persia and Lud and Put" These same countries had mercenaries in many armies (cf. 30:5; 38:5; Jer. 46:9). Lud, in some translations, refers to North Africa and in others, to Asia Minor. Put, in the Septuagint, refers to the Libyans (i.e., North Africa), but from Gen. 10:6 it seems to be on the coast of Africa by the Red Sea. Some of these geographical sites can be identified with people from Genesis 10 who later become tribes, localities, and countries.

■ "They hung shield and helmet in you" This was a type of standard decoration for military installations. Tyre used mercenaries who displayed their national military insignias (e.g., I Kgs. 10:16-17).

27:11 "Arvad" The place name "Arvad" (BDB 71) is mentioned in Gen. 10:18 (from Canaanite line, cf. I Chr. 1:16). It is a city located (as Tyre is) just off the coast on a small island in the northern area of Phoenician territory.

NASB	"Gammadim"
NKJV, JPSOA	"Gammad"
NRSV, TEV	"Gamad"
NJB	"Gammadians"
Peshitta	"your army"
Targum of Jonathan	"Cappodocia"

This term (BDB 167, KB 196) is found only here. BDB assumes it means "valorous men," but the LXX and Peshitta assume "guardians" or "wall soldiers." It may be a place name referring to another coastal city near Arvad (NIV Study Bible, p. 1263). The thrust of the phrase is that although Tyre had numerous mercenaries, she trusted the defense of her protective walls to her own soldiers.

• "they perfected your beauty" This is a repeated phrase. See note at v. 4. It is significant because of its use in chapter 28.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:12-25

¹²"Tarshish was your customer because of the abundance of all *kinds* of wealth; with silver, iron, tin and lead they paid for your wares. ¹³Javan, Tubal and Meshech, they were your traders; with the lives of men and vessels of bronze they paid for your merchandise. ¹⁴Those from Beth-togarmah gave horses and war horses and mules for your wares. ¹⁵The sons of Dedan were your traders. Many coastlands were your market: ivory tusks and ebony they brought as your payment. ¹⁶Aram was your customer because of the abundance of your goods; they paid for your wares with emeralds, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies. ¹⁷Judah and the land of Israel, they were your traders; with the wheat of Minnith, cakes, honey, oil and balm they paid for your merchandise. ¹⁸Damascus was your customer because of the abundance of your goods, because of the abundance of all kinds of wealth, because of the wine of Helbon and white wool. ¹⁹Vedan and Javan paid for your wares from Uzal; wrought iron, cassia and sweet cane were among your merchandise. ²⁰Dedan traded with you in saddlecloths for riding. ²¹Arabia and all the princes of Kedar, they were your customers for lambs, rams and goats; for these they were your customers. ²²The traders of Sheba and Raamah, they traded with you; they paid for your wares with the best of all kinds of spices, and with all kinds of precious stones and gold. ²³Haran, Canneh, Eden, the traders of Sheba, Asshur and Chilmad traded with you. ²⁴They traded with you in choice garments, in clothes of blue and embroidered work, and in carpets of many colors and tightly wound cords, which were among your merchandise. ²⁵The ships of Tarshish were the carriers for your merchandise.

And you were filled and were very glorious

In the heart of the seas.

27:12 "Tarshish" It is surprising that this term (BDB 1077) appears to be a place name because it is also a person in Gen. 10:4. Several other persons from Genesis 10 are mentioned in this context (i.e., Elishah, Arvad). The term is used in several senses in Scripture.

- A. Persons
 - 1. grandson of Javan (Greece) and brother to Elishah in Gen. 10:4; I Chr. 1:7
 - 2. grandson of Benjamin in I Chr. 7:20
 - 3. one of the powerful seven princes of Persia in Esther 1:14
- B. Places
 - 1. Phoenician mining city in southern Spain on the Guadalquiver River
 - 2. Phoenician colony in north Africa, Carthage (LXX translation of 27:12)
 - 3. Phoenician colony in Indian Ceylon
 - 4. Phoenician colony on Sardina (city of Nora)
 - 5. an idiom for the end of the earth
- C. Things
 - 1. precious stones (cf. Exod. 28:20; 39:13; Ezek. 10:9; 28:13; Dan. 10:6; Rev. 21:20)
 - 2. special ships (cf. I Kgs. 10:22; 22:48; II Chr. 9:21; Ps. 48:7; Isa. 2:16; 23:1; 60:9)

27:13 "Javan" Because of the spelling "ionia" (BDB 402), most commentators refer this to Greece. It is spelled differently from the same word used in v. 19 (BDB 402).

"Tubal and Meshech" In Gen. 10:2 and I Chr. 1:5 these are listed as sons or descendants of Japheth, one of Noah's three sons.

- 1. Gomer (his son Togarmah, cf. v. 14; Gen. 10:3)
- 2. Magog
- 3. Madai
- 4. Javan
- 5. Tubal
- 6. Meshech
- 7. Tiras

The significance is that several of these are mentioned as tribes or peoples in Ezekiel 38-39 (i.e., #1,2,5,6). They were inhabitants of eastern Turkey (Anatolia). They are mentioned by

- 1. Herodotus (3:94; 7:28)
- 2. Josephus (Antiq. 1.124)

• "the lives of men" This refers to the slave trade (cf. Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9, 10; Rev. 18:12).

27:14 "Beth-togarmah" This is identified with Armenia (cf. Gen. 10:3).

27:15 "Dedan" This is a descendant of Ham (cf. Gen. 10:7; I Chr. 1:9) and a brother of Sheba (cf. Ezek. 38:13,14). The same group is mentioned in v. 20 as an Arabian tribe (possibly related to a specific desert oasis close to Tema). The LXX changed it to Rhodes. Because it is identified in context with "coast lands" (BDB 912). It is possible that it relates to a region north of Tyre known as "Danuna" in the Amarna letters (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 713).

27:16 "Syria" Some Hebrew manuscripts and the Peshita relate this to Edom, which involves an emendation of the Hebrew text (see NAB, NEB, REB).

"Edom" is spelled אדמ, while "Aram" is spelled ארל. As you can see the letters d and r are formed in similar ways and easily confused in copying. The MT has "Aram" (BDB 74). Why

Damascus is listed separately in v. 18 is uncertain. Aram was a coalition of independent tribes/clans north of Palestine and west of Assyria. Damascus may have had special autonomy.

 NASB, NKJV, TEV "emeralds"
 NRSV, JPSOA, NIV "turquoise"
 NJB, REB "garnets"
 JB, Josephus "carbuncle"

This term (BDB 656) refers to some kind of precious stone (cf. 28:13). It was one of the jewels in the High Priest's breastplate (cf. Exod. 28:13; 39:11).

"rubies" This rare term (BDB 461) occurs only here and in Isa. 54:12. It may be related to the Aramaic root "to sparkle" or "a red-hot rod." Rubies were not common in this area of the world until a later date.

27:17 Notice it says "Judah and the land of Israel." Judah was still (or until very recently) an existing nation, but Israel had been exiled by Assyria in 722 B.C. and was no longer a nation.

• "Minnith" This is a location in Ammon (cf. Jdgs. 11:33) which produced especially fine wheat.

NASB	"cakes"
NKJV, NRSV	"millet"
NJB, JPSOA	"pannag"
JB	"wax"
REB	"meal"

This term (BDB 815) appears only here in the OT. In context it refers to some type of merchandise, probably food. In Akkadian the root means "pastry."

27:18 "Helbon" This (KB 316 II, i.e., "forest place") refers to a grape-growing area several miles north of Damascus.

■ NASB, NKJV, NRSV, JPSOA "white wool" TEV "Sahar" NJB "Zahar" REB "Suhar" BDB "reddish-grey"

The KB 1019 denotes the BDB meaning comes from Arabic. It also notes that it can refer to a territory northwest of Damascus, called "es-Sahra."

27:19 NASB, NRSV, JPSOA "Vedan" NKJV, NJB, Peshitta "Dan"

NIV "Danites"

Both lexicons, BDB (255) and KB (259), assert the meaning as "uncertain." Some scholars think it is a place name near Medina, Arabia. Most assert a textual corruption. However, since it is linked to Javan (Greece) it may be another name for them (i.e., Homer and the History Channel video, "Decoding the Exodus"). The Septuagint has "and wine from" instead of a name.

Uzal" This may be (1) the capital of Yemen (BDB 23); (2) a word for "yarn" (BDB 23); or (3) a city (Izalla) in Cilicia (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 713).

27:20-22 "Dedan, Arabia, Kedar, and Raamah" These all refer to Arabian tribes.

27:23 All of these locations are in Mesopotamia and most are associated with Assyria. The Jewish Study Bible asserts that the first three of these are all Syrian cities (p. 1094, cf. Gen. 12:4; 10:10; II Kgs. 19:12; Isa. 10:9; 37:12; Amos 1:5).

• **Asshur''** Asshur (BDB 78) is a son of Shem (cf. Gen. 10:22; I Chr. 1:17). It becomes a region synonymous with Assyria. One of the national gods of Assyria is named Asshur. Asshur became the name of one of the capitals of Assyria.

Chilmad'' This place (BDB 484) is unknown. The Targums revocalize the consonants and come up with "all Media" (cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 908).

27:24 "clothes" Another rare term is "clothes" (BDB 166). The NOUN is found only here and the VERB (i.e., "to wrap") only in II Kgs. 2:8. It refers to a large garment wrapped around the body (i.e., same meaning in Aramaic, Syrian, Arabic, and Persian, NIDOTTE, vol. 1., p. 865).

• "carpets of many colors" This phrase has two rare words.

- 1. "Carpets" (BDB 170) possibly means chests (cf. NKJV). It is found only here and in Esther 3:9 and 4:7, where it is translated "treasury."
- 2. The phrase "many colors" (BDB 140) occurs only here. In Arabic it denotes a rope made of two colors. The trilateral root means "to twist."

27:25	
NASB, NKJV,	
TEV, NIV	"the carriers for your merchandise"
NRSV, NASB (margin)	"travelers for your trade"
NJB	"soiled in your business"
JPSOA	"in the service of your trade"
REB	"caravans of your imports"

The root (BDB 1003-1004, KB 1449-1452) has several meanings.

- 1. to travel, to journey
- 2. to behold, to regard
- 3. (unknown, Ps. 92:12)
- 4. head of cattle, bullock
- 5. wall

Context determines meaning. In this context #1 fits best. There are no guarantees on exact meaning for roots that

- 1. are rare
- 2. are used in poetic texts

3. are uncertain as to which root it derives Even ancient cognate languages are unable to precisely define all Hebrew terms.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:26-36
²⁶ "Your rowers have brought you
Into great waters;
The east wind has broken you
In the heart of the seas.
27Your wealth, your wares, your merchandise,
Your sailors and your pilots,
Your repairers of seams, your dealers in merchandise
And all your men of war who are in you,
With all your company that is in your midst,
Will fall into the heart of the seas
On the day of your overthrow.
²⁸ At the sound of the cry of your pilots
The pasture lands will shake.
²⁹ All who handle the oar,
The sailors and all the pilots of the sea
Will come down from their ships;
They will stand on the land,
³⁰ And they will make their voice heard over you
And will cry bitterly.
They will cast dust on their heads,
They will wallow in ashes.
³¹ Also they will make themselves bald for you
And gird themselves with sackcloth;
And they will weep for you in bitterness of soul
With bitter mourning.
³² Moreover, in their wailing they will take up a lamentation for you
And lament over you:
'Who is like Tyre,
Like her who is silent in the midst of the sea?
³³ When your wares went out from the seas,
You satisfied many peoples;
With the abundance of your wealth and your merchandise
You enriched the kings of earth.
³⁴ Now that you are broken by the seas
In the depths of the waters,
Your merchandise and all your company
Have fallen in the midst of you.
³⁵ All the inhabitants of the coastlands
Are appalled at you,

And their kings are horribly afraid; They are troubled in countenance. ³⁶The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever.'''

27:26-36 This starts the second poetic lament of chapter 27 (cf. vv. 3b-9). This lament first lists all of the people/groups mentioned in the first poem (those who built, manned the ships of Tyre and those who guarded the city). They will all be shipwrecked with the "great ship of Tyre." Then in vv. 30-32, these same groups mourn for Tyre's destruction (i.e., and their own).

27:26 "the east wind" See note at 17:10.

• "into great waters" Again this may refer to the chaotic waters of creation. Notice v. 34 "broken by the seas in the depth of the waters." See note at 26:3,19-21.

27:30-32 This is a series of mourning rites.

- 1. cry bitterly, vv. 30,31,32
- 2. put dust on their heads
- 3. wallow in ashes
- 4. pull out their hair
- 5. put on sackcloth

27:32

NASB, TEV,

JPSOA "like her who is silent in the midst of the sea" NKJV, NRSV,

NAB "destroyed in the midst of the sea"

NJB "far out to sea"

Peshitta "built in the midst of the sea"

The Hebrew root דמה has several meanings (KB 225-226). BDB 199 has "one silenced, brought to silence (destroyed)." Either option fits the context. JB speculates "with haughty Tyre" (cf. vv. 3c-9).

27:34 Tyre is lost in the depth (BDB 771) of the chaotic waters sent by YHWH. The ship, the contents, and all on board are lost!

27:35 Trembling takes hold of fearful people (cf. 32:10; Job 18:20; also notice Exod. 15:14,15; Isa. 21:3; 33:13; Jer. 13:21). Note the parallel in 26:16.

27:36 "The merchants among the people" Ezekiel's knowledge of the trading centers and their known exports is absolutely amazing. This chapter forms one of the most detailed commercial chapters anywhere in ancient literature.

■ "hiss at you" This (BDB 1056) is an audible gesture of astonishment (cf. Jer. 19:8; 49:17; 50:13). It also can be used of derision (cf. II Chr. 29:8; Jer. 25:9,18; 29:18; 51:37; Lam. 2:15; Micah 6:16). In context it is hard to make a distinction between astonishment and a sense of the appropriateness of what has happened.

EZEKIEL 28

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)		
		Oracles Against Tyre (26:1-28:19)		
Tyre's King Overthrown	Proclamation Against the King of Tyre	Oracle Against Tyre	Prophecy Against the King of Tyre	Against the King of Tyre
28:1-10	28:1-10	28:1-10	28:1-5	28:1-10
(2b-5)	(2b-5)	(2b-10)		(2b-5)
(6b-10)	(6b-10		28:6-10	(6b-10)
	Lamentation for the King of Tyre	Lamentation Over the King of Tyre	The Fall of the King of Tyre	The Fall of the King of Tyre
28:11-19	28:11-19	28:11-19	28:11-19	28:11-19
(12c-19)	(12c-13)	(12c-19)		(12c-19)
	(14-15)			
	(16)			
	(17-19)			
Judgment on Sidon	Proclamation Against Sidon	Oracle Against Sidon	Prophecy Against Sidon	Against Sidon
28:20-24	28:20-23	28:20-23	28:20-23	28:20-23
(22b-23)	(22b-23)	(22b-23)		(22b-23)
		Restoration of Israel	Israel Will Be Blessed	Israel Delivered From the Nations
	28:24	28:24	28:24	28:24
Israel Regathered	Israel's Future Blessing			
28:25-26	28:25-26	28:25-26	28:25-26	28:25-26

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 28 is part of a larger literary unit (i.e., chapters 26-28), which denotes the fall of Phoenicia.
- B. Phoenicia, once a friend of Israel (i.e., supplied materials for the temple), became a pagan empire exporting *Ba'al* worship (i.e., Jezebel, queen of Ahab, cf. I Kgs. 16:29-34; 18-19).
- C. Phoenicia (like Edom) was a godless nation. Her pride and slave trade made her an example of human society functioning apart from God.
- D. For many years I saw this chapter and Isaiah 14 as referring to Satan, but in context this cannot be. It is true that human leaders and Satan share the problem of pride, arrogance, and rebellion. Because the descriptions from the Garden of Eden are also used of the person of chapter 28, it is obvious to me this was the only passage in the Bible that described the fall of Satan.

But wait, this chapter is about the king of Tyre, as Isaiah 14 is about the king of Babylon. Yet, what about the Garden of Eden descriptions? The king of Tyre was not in the Garden of Eden; he was not a covering cherub!

The answer to this quandary came home to me when I realized that Pharaoh is also described in Garden of Eden metaphors in Ezekiel 31. Ezekiel uses Edenic metaphors. Because I am a conservative Christian who honors and respects Scripture, without even thinking about it, I assumed that for it to be true it must be "literal." I have come to realize it is "literary." Here are the two books that have helped me deal with my American, twentieth century, conservative biases.

- 1. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart
- 2. Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic by D. Brent Sandy

Authorial intent, literary and historical context, and genre are the keys in interpreting the Bible!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-10

¹The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, ²"Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Because your heart is lifted up

And you have said, 'I am a god,

I sit in the seat of gods In the heart of the seas';

Yet you are a man and not God,

	Although you make your heart like the heart of God —
	³ Behold, you are wiser than Daniel;
	There is no secret that is a match for you.
	⁴ By your wisdom and understanding
	You have acquired riches for yourself
	And have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries.
	⁵ By your great wisdom, by your trade
	You have increased your riches
	And your heart is lifted up because of your riches —
	⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,
	'Because you have made your heart
	Like the heart of God,
	⁷ Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you,
	The most ruthless of the nations.
	And they will draw their swords
	Against the beauty of your wisdom
	And defile your splendor.
	⁸ They will bring you down to the pit,
	And you will die the death of those who are slain
	In the heart of the seas.
	⁹ Will you still say, ''I am a god,''
	In the presence of your slayer,
	Though you are a man and not God,
	In the hands of those who wound you?
	¹⁰ You will die the death of the uncircumcised
	By the hand of strangers,
	For I have spoken!' declares the Lord GOD!''''
_	

28:1 "say to the leader of Tyre" At this time the leader of Tyre was Ittobaal, who had been the High Priest of *Astarte* and who assassinated the heir of Hiram I. Hiram's daughter was Jezebel, who was married to Ahab, king of Israel. Sennacherib appointed a later descendant, Ittobaal II (also known as Ethbaal II and Ithobalus II), king of Tyre (590-543 B.C.).

Tyre was the capital of the Phoenician empire. Tyrians were extremely arrogant because of their commercial prowess and their kings claimed to be descendants of the gods. This was also the claim of the Pharaohs of Egypt.

This section has caused great consternation to commentators. It seems to refer to a human king, but is described in supernatural terms (cf. Isa. 14:12-20). It is possible that Isaiah 14 refers to a military power that has gone beyond the bounds of pride and Ezekiel 28 refers to a commercial power that has gone beyond the bounds of pride (cf. vv. 2,9,16).

• "Because your heart is lifted up" See Special Topic at 11:19.

" "is lifted up" This VERB (BDB 146, KB 170, *Qal* PERFECT) can have two senses.

- 1. positive
 - a. God, Isa. 5:16

- b. Messiah, Isa. 52:13
- c. God's ways, Isa. 55:9
- d. God's true followers, II Chr. 17:6
- 2. negative
 - a. II Chr. 26:16; 32:25
 - b. Ps. 131:1 (the psalmist asserts he is not)
 - c. Pro. 18:12
 - d. Isa. 3:16
 - e. Jer. 13:15
 - f. Ezek. 16:50; 28:2,5,17
 - g. Zeph. 3:11
- 3. the NOUN is also used of haughty people
 - a. II Chr. 32:26
 - b. Ps. 10:4
 - c. Pro. 16:18
 - d. Jer. 48:29
 - as is the ADJECTIVE
 - a. I Sam. 2:3

4.

- b. Ps. 101:5; 138:6
- c. Pro. 16:5
- d. Eccl. 7:8
- e. Isa. 5:15

The major problem of mankind (and some angels) is pride (cf. 16:49; 24:21; 27:3; 28:2-6,9,17; Gen. 3:5; Isa. 10:12; 14:13,14; 23:8-12; 25:11-12; Jer. 48:29-30; Daniel 2-4, esp. 4:29-30; Zeph. 2:8-11; 3:11; I Tim. 3:6). Notice the Proverbs that deal with this sin: 11:2; 13:10; 16:18; 29:23.

I think pride, arrogance, and self-centeredness are the epitome of the attitude of independence and self-achievement, which characterizes the fall of Genesis 3. Salvation is a restoration of the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27) from the original creation. Intimate fellowship with God, for which humans were created, is possible again, even now in a fallen world. The evidence that salvation/conversion has occurred is that the new creation is selfless, not self-centered. Selflessness is analogous to Christlikeness, which is God's irreducible will for every Christian!

■ "I am a god" Also see vv. 6 and 9. This possibly reflects the kings of Tyre's (esp. Ittbaal II) claims that they were part god, like Hercules. Tyre's chief deity, Melqart (i.e., "king of the city") was called the Tyrian Hercules.

• "I sit in the seats of the gods" This phrase is parallel with the next one. It is possibly a reference to Poseidon or Neptune.

I "In the heart of the seas" Tyre's unique physical location was a source of security and pride.

• Yet you are a man and not God" Because of this phrase, repeated three times for emphasis in vv. 4, 8, and 9, it is obvious that this refers to the political leader of Tyre as representative of the whole nation. This would not fit Satan at all! But it might fit the political leader of I Thess. 2:4 (i.e., the Man of Lawlessness or the Antichrist).

28:3 "you are wiser than Daniel" To whom does this refer? Daniel, who was a contemporary of Ezekiel in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, or to the famous Ugarit Danel of the Ugaritic Rash Shamra

texts. See note at 14:14. When all is said and done, I still must go with Daniel of the Bible, but it is not an easy choice.

There is an obvious purposeful literary allusion to Genesis 1-3 in this chapter. The wisdom of the tree of knowledge (cf. Gen. 2:9,17; 3:3,11) here denotes commercial skills (cf. vv. 3-5). It was a wisdom that destroyed!

Notice all the different terms used in vv. 3-10.

- 1. wiser than Daniel, ADJECTIVE, BDB 314
- 2. no secret hidden (cf. Dan. 8:26; 12:4,9)
- 3. wisdom, BDB 315
- 4. understanding, BDB 108
- 5. great wisdom, BDB 913, 315
- 6. the beauty of your wisdom, BDB 421, 315
- 7. possibly "splendor" (BDB 422) is parallel to wisdom in v. 7

Number 2 is obviously sarcasm (cf. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech in the Bible*, p. 810) or all are a series of self-descriptions.

28:4 "wisdom. . .acquired riches" There seem to be three sources of the arrogance of the Tyrian people: (1) wisdom; (2) power and wealth; and (3) beauty (cf. vv. 5,17; 27:3,4,10-11,25).

28:7 "strangers" The term (BDB 266, KB 267, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) refers to foreign invaders (cf. Isa. 1:7; 25:2,5; 29:5; 61:5; Jer. 5:19; 30:8; 51:2,51; Lam. 5:2; Ezek. 7:21; 11:9; 16:32; 28:7,10; 30:12; 31:12) who worship foreign (i.e., "strange") gods (cf. Deut. 32:16; Isa. 17:10; Jer. 2:25; 3:13; 5:19).

■ "most ruthless of nations" Here this (BDB 792, lit. "terror-striking") refers to the Babylonians (cf. 30:11; 31:12; 32:12; Isa. 13:11). Nebuchadnezzar besieged the island fortress for over a decade and destroyed the city on the mainland (cf. 26:3-14; Hab. 1:6-8). Apparently the island fortress finally surrendered.

28:8 "the pit" See Special Topic at 3:18.

• "you will die the death of" This verse is referring to drowning (cf. 27:27,34). Remember Tyre is depicted as a beautiful, expensive cargo ship in chapter 27, which is destroyed by God's east wind and sinks with all cargo and all hands.

28:9 "Will you still say" The shocking claim to deity is emphasized in the Hebrew by a repetition of the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, "say" (BDB 55, KB 65).

28:10 "the death of the uncircumcised" Since all peoples of Canaan practiced circumcision, mostly at puberty, this must refer to something else (cf. 31:18; 32:19,21).

- 1. uncircumcised people were thought to be residents of the lowest part of the underworld
- 2. a special category of the dead, like the unburied, possibly referring to children who died before puberty

The term "death" is PLURAL, which denotes an awful death.

• "For I have spoken!' declares the Lord GOD'' God's word is sure (cf. 5:17; 6:10; 12:25,28; 17:24; 21:32; 22:14; 24:14; 26:5,14; 30:12; 34:24; 36:36; 37:14; 39:5,8)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:11-19

¹¹Again the word of the LORD came to me saving, ¹²"Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. ¹⁴You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁵You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. ¹⁶By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. ¹⁷Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. ¹⁸By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. ¹⁹All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you;

You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever.''''

28:11 This is a new oracle, marked by the repeated literary marker "the word of the LORD came to me saying."

28:12 "lamentation" This is a funeral dirge, noted by a unique poetic beat. It is common in Ezekiel (cf. 2:10; 19:1,14; 26:17; 27:2,32; 28:12; 32:2,16). See note at 2:10.

• "the king of Tyre" This (BDB 572) is parallel to v. 2, "leader" (lit. "prince," BDB 617 only here in Ezekiel; only once in Isa. 55:4 and Jer. 20:1).

28:13-15 There seems to be a series of statements that go beyond the possibility of a mere human king.

- 1. the seal of perfection, v. 12
- 2. full of wisdom and beauty, v. 12
- 3. in the Garden of Eden, v. 13
- 4. clothed with colored/gems, v. 13
- 5. an anointed cherub who covers, vv. 14,16
- 6. in God's presence on God's mountain, v. 14
- 7. blameless, v. 15

Could this be the first true mention of Satan and his origin (see Origen, Tertullian, and Jerome)? All believers want more information about the origin and purpose of evil. However, this would be a strange context (i.e., God's judgment on surrounding nations) to be the only revelation on this subject. Pride and arrogance are characteristics of this fallen reality. YHWH judges pride! Ezekiel uses hyperbolic language from the Garden of Eden, not only here related to the king of Tyre, but also in chapter 31, related to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. See Contextual Insights, D.

28:13 "Every precious stone was your covering" This seems to be an allusion to the ephod (i.e., breastplate) of the High Priest (cf. Exod. 28:17,20; 39:10-14). Although the Masoretic Text lists only nine jewels, the Septuagint lists all twelve (sometimes the LXX reflects the more ancient text). The king of Trye is symbolized as

- 1. priestly
- 2. kingly
- 3. wealthy

• "settings and sockets" The MT has "tambourines" (BDB 1074, KB 1772, both say this is a textual corruption).

Sockets (BDB 666, refers to a jeweler's work of boring a hole, see KJ, NKJV, ASB, JB. The NOUN is used only two times. The VERB means "piercing" or "boring").

• "On the day that you were created" It is assumed that the angelic realm is created (cf. v. 15; Ps. 104:4). Biblical faith is not an eternal dualism like Zoroastrianism, but the Bible is silent on when, how, and why. The Bible focuses on humans on this planet.

The two phrases "on the day that you were created" (cf. v. 15) and "I placed you *there*" (cf. v. 14) denote the authority and sovereignty of YHWH. Satan has no independent existence. He acts at YHWH's permission (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-28; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS AND THE DEMONIC

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed personality to forces of nature, animals, natural objects, and traits of human personality. Life is explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) who impacted individual human lives.
 - 1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
 - 2. Egypt, order and function
 - 3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright's *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92
- C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.
 - 1. Se'im (satyrs or hair demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
 - 2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
 - 3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15, 18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
 - 4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
 - 5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)
 - 6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26)

(These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523). However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT. Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zech. 3), not an enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

- D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.). It was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons. Judaism's theology of personified evil is explained and documented well in Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 749-863) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.
 - 1. Satan or Sammael
 - 2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
 - 3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in Judaism Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God). They oppose God's will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings, also called (1) unclean spirits (cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18) or (2) evil spirits (cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2). Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him

and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them. Exorcisms are a sign of the defeat of Satan's kingdom.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift nor is a methodology or procedure for its use given for future generations of ministers or believers.

- F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor purpose is revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged and will be removed from creation.
- G. God's people must resist evil (cf. James 4:7). They cannot be controlled by it (cf. I John 5:18), but they can be tempted and their witness and influence damaged (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). Evil is a revealed part of the Christian's worldview. Modern Christians have no right to redefine evil (the demythologizing of Rudolf Bultmann); depersonalize evil (the social structures of Paul Tillich), nor attempt to explain it completely in psychological terms (Sigmund Freud). Its influence is pervasive, but defeated. Believers need to walk in the victory of Christ!

28:14 "the anointed cherub" The term "anointed" (BDB 603, KB 596) is found only here in the OT. Its meaning is uncertain. Here are some theories.

- 1. cherub of expansion (BDB)
- 2. cherub that covereth
- 3. cherub with far-reaching wings
- 4. cherub of sparkling (i.e., "to illuminate," KB)

The LXX has "with the Cherubim," not one of them.

Cherubim are involved in several aspects of OT history.

- 1. they guard the Garden of Eden after mankind's fall, Gen. 3:24
- they face inward on the Mercy Seat, the place of propitiation, Exod. 25:8; Ps. 80:1; 99; Isa. 37:16
- 3. they form YHWH's throne chariot, II Sam. 22:13; Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 1, 10

The descriptions in Ezek. 1:5-28 and 10:15-20 are similar to Rev. 4:6-9. However, Revelation does seem to blend the Cherubim with the Seraphim of Isaiah 6. See Special Topic: Cherubim at 1:5.

■ "You were on the holy mountain of God" This is a different metaphor from the Garden of Eden (v. 13). This refers either to Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20; Ezek. 20:40) or to the mountain in the north where God dwells (cf. v. 16; Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13-14, similar to Ugaritic *Ba'al* poetry). Note that Psalm 50:2 uses similar descriptions of Mt. Zion (i.e., "perfect in beauty," cf. 28:12).

It was common in Ancient Near Eastern religious thought to view the gods as living on mountain tops (cf. Gilgamesh Epic). This is especially true for the Ugaritic *Ba'al* myth poems from Ras Shamra. The gods met and lived on a northern mountain called Saphon or Zaphon. *Ba'al* had a throne there built by Anath. The male god of Phoenician fertility worship was called *Baal Saphon*. This name has been found in Phoenician colonies around the Mediterranean. This northern mountain tradition, totally unrelated to Israel's holy Mt. Moriah (cf. 20:40), seems to be the source of the imagery of both Isa. 14:13-15 and Ezek. 28:14,16. See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 279-281.

■ "the stones of fire" This (BDB 6 construct BDB 77) can be translated "glittering gems." Some commentators try to link these with the jewels of v. 13, but that is a different metaphorical setting. This fire may be associated with God's personal presence (cf. Exod. 3:2; 13:21,22; 14:24; 19:18; 24:17; Deut. 1:33; 4:11,12,15,24,33,36; 9:3).

28:15 "blameless" This is a sacrificial term (BDB 1071) for "unblemished" (e.g., 43:22). Here the term denotes an original innocence. Humans were not created sinful, but "good" (cf. Gen. 1:31). Evil was an invader of original creation (cf. Genesis 3). This phrase relates to vv. 12-13. We learn from

1. verse 17 that pride corrupted original innocence and wisdom (see note at v. 3)

2. verse 18 that unfair and violent trade practices (cf. v. 16) brought God's judgment

Hyperbole and history are mixed together for powerful poetry.

28:16 "by the abundance of your trade" Obviously this is a reference to the historical king of Tyre (cf. v. 18).

"Therefore I cast you as profane

From the mountain of God" Notice YHWH's sovereign judgment. The term "profane" (BDB 320, KB 319) means "polluted" and "defeated." This is a priestly word that Ezekiel uses often (32 times).

Note that this is <u>not</u> the same metaphor (i.e., Garden of Eden) as v. 13. This refers to a northern holy mountain.

NASB, NKJV,	
REB	"covering cherub"
NRSV, NIV	"the guardian cherub"
TEV	"the angel who guarded"
NJB	"guardian winged creature"
JPSOA	"shielding cherub"
LXX	"the cherub brought thee out"

The FEMININE NOUN is found only here. The MASCULINE form means "covering" or "screen" (i.e., used of the screens of the tabernacle, cf. Exod. 22:16; 35:17; 38:18; 30:40; 40:8,33; Num. 3:26), so it could denote one close to "the forgiving" God (i.e., the Ark).

The term (BDB 697 I) also denotes YHWH covering with His wings as a metaphor for protection. The cherub protected the Garden of Eden in Gen. 3:24 or more probably the angel protects the tree of life from Adam and Eve, lest they eat from it in the spiritual condition in which they find themselves (i.e., estrangement from God). So in this sense the cherub protects mankind from itself!

I must admit I am attracted to the Septuagint's understanding that the referent in this poetry is to Adam, who was escorted out of the Garden by a cherub (cf. James Moffatt translation and Edgar J. Goodspeed's translation of v. 14, "I placed you with the guardian Cherubim on the holy hill of God").

28:17 "I cast you to the ground;

I put you before kings" This again stresses the sovereignty of God (cf. v. 18). The mention of kings may

1. be an allusion to 26:16 (Tyre's trading partners, cf. v. 19)

2. be an allusion to the multi-national mercenary army of Babylon

Number 1 fits the context best.

Also note that the first phrase could be translated "I cast you to the earth," implying a fall from heaven (i.e., God's mountain), but probably it is a metaphor of rejection.

28:18 "You profaned your sanctuaries" The TEV has "You did such evil in buying and selling that your places of worship were corrupted." This is the only Bible text that uses "profane" in connection with a pagan sanctuary. One cannot separate life and worship!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:20-24

²⁰And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²¹"Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, prophesy against her ²²and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I am against you, O Sidon,

And I will be glorified in your midst.

Then they will know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her,

And I will manifest My holiness in her.

²³For I will send pestilence to her

And blood to her streets,

And the wounded will fall in her midst

By the sword upon her on every side;

Then they will know that I am the LORD.

²⁴And there will be no more for the house of Israel a prickling brier or a painful thorn from any round about them who scorned them; then they will know that I am the Lord GOD."

28:20-24 This is the judgment against Sidon, another Phoenician city linked with Tyre.

28:21 As v. 2 starts out with a command "say" (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), so too, this judgment starts with two commands.

- 1. Set your face against, BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 6:2; 13:7; 15:7; 20:46; 21:2; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2
- 2. Prophesy, BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 4:7; 11:4; 13:17; 25:2; 29:2; 34:2; 35:2; 36:6; 38:2; 39:1

28:22

NASB, NKJV, LXX, Peshitta "I shall be glorified" NRSV, JPSOA, NIV "I will gain glory" NJB, REB "I will show My glory"

Ezekiel is all about the glory of YHWH! The glory is for the purpose of revelation. YHWH wants the people of Phoenicia to know Him. Judgment is an instrument of revelation (i.e., "I shall manifest My holiness in her," cf. v. 25). He is always acting for the redemption of those created in His image and likeness!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:25-26

²⁵'Thus says the Lord GOD, "When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and will manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob. ²⁶They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will know that I am the Lord their GOD.""

28:25,26 The prophet again speaks of the hope of the restored people, the restored temple, and the restored covenant (cf. 11:17-20; 20:40-44). After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, Ezekiel's message changed to one of restoration. He even illustrates the New Covenant concept in 36:22-38. A new day is dawning!

28:26 "They will live in it securely. . .live securely" This term "securely" (BDB 105) is repeated for emphasis. It reflects YHWH's earlier promises (cf. Lev. 25:18,19; 26:5; Ps. 4:8; Jer. 23:5-6; 32:37; Ezek. 34:25-28; 38:8,11,14; 39:26; Zech. 14:11).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. Why was God so angry at Tyre?
- 2. Did Tyre ever fall to Nebuchadnezzar II?
- 3. What is a cherub?
- 4. Does the chapter describe the fall of Satan? Why or why noy?

EZEKIEL 29

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)		
Judgment of Egypt	Proclamation Against Egypt	Against Egypt	Prophecy Against Egypt	Against Egypt
29:1-7	29:1-7	29:1-7	29:1-6a	29:1-7
(3b-7)	(3b-5)	(3b-7)		(3b-7)
	(6-7)		29:6b-9a	
29:8-9b	29:8-16	29:8-9b		29:8-16
			29:9b-12	
29:9c-12		29:9c-12		
29:13-16		29:13-16	29:13-16	
	Babylonia Will Plunder Egypt		King Nebuchadnezzar Will Conquer Egypt	
29:17-20	29:17-20	29:17-20	29:17-20	29:17
				29:18-20
29:21	29:21	29:21	29:21	29:21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The prophecies against Egypt run from 29:1 through 32:32. Egypt was an active political influence during this period of Judean history. She tried to offer political security against Babylon. Egypt promised aid to Judah and Tyre; she promised more than she could perform (cf. Isa. 30:1-3; 31:1-3; Jer. 2:18,36; Lam. 4:17).
- B. The characteristic literary marker, "the word of the LORD came to me saying," occurs seven times in this literary unit.
 - 1. 29:1 (587 в.С.)
 - 2. 29:17 (571 в.с.)
 - 3. 30:1
 - 4. 30:20
 - 5. 31:1
 - 6. 32:1
 - 7. 32:17

All are dated except number 3, why is unknown.

C. The first date (i.e., 29:1) is about a year after Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem began. Apparently Egypt fielded her army against Nebuchadnezzar's forces (cf. Jer. 37:7), but quickly retreated.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:1-7

¹In the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, on the twelfth of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt.

³Speak and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt,

The great monster that lies in the midst of his rivers,

That has said, 'My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it.'

⁴I will put hooks in your jaws

And make the fish of your rivers cling to your scales.

And I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers,

And all the fish of your rivers will cling to your scales.

⁵I will abandon you to the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers;

You will fall on the open field; you will not be brought together or gathered.

I have given you for food to the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the sky.

⁶Then all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am the LORD,

Because they have been *only* a staff *made* of reed to the house of Israel.

⁷When they took hold of you with the hand,

You broke and tore all their hands;

And when they leaned on you,

You broke and made all their loins quake."

29:1 There is a series of dates mentioned in connection with this literary unit related to God's judgment on Egypt (i.e., 29:1-32:32). See note at Contextual Insights, B.

29:2 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "set your face against" See note at 28:21.

• "set. . .prophesy. . .speak" These are all commands.

- 1. "set," BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. "prophesy," BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "speak," v. 3, BDB 180, KB 210, Piel IMPERATIVE

These are not Ezekiel's words nor his message!

29:3-7 This is a poetic lamentation.

29:3 "the Lord GOD" This is the recurrent title for deity (i.e., *Adonai* YHWH), used so often in the book of Ezekiel. See Special Topic at 2:4.

Pharaoh" This (BDB 829, KB 971) is the characteristic title for Egyptian kings starting with the Eighteenth Dynasty. It means "the great house" (i.e., royal family).

• **That has said, 'My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it'''** As the king of Tyre claimed deity (cf. 28:2,9), so too, the Pharaohs of Egypt (cf. v. 9b). The name of the Pharaoh at that time was Hophra (589-570 B.C.). Herodotus mentions his claim to divine power in 2.169. The Nile and the sun were the chief deities of Egypt (i.e., depending on the city and the particular Pharaoh).

• "the great monster" This term (BDB 1072) means

- 1. serpent, Exod. 7:9,1012; Deut. 32:33; Ps. 91:13
- 2. dragon, Neh. 2:13; Jer. 51:34
- 3. sea/river monster, Gen. 1:21; Job 7:12; Ps. 74:13; 148:7. It is parallel to Leviathan (cf. Psalm 74:13-14). It is used as a metaphor for Egypt in Isa. 27:1; 51:9,10; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2.

The two great river systems of the Ancient Near East were the cradles of civilization (i.e., the Nile and the Tigris/Euphrates).

Tanin (BDB 1072) is parallel with

- 1. Leviathan, Ps. 74:13-14; Isa. 27:1
- 2. Rahab, Isa. 51:9
- 3. Bashan, Ps. 68:22; Amos 9:3 (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 87)

The context shows us that "serpent, dragon, sea-monster" (BDB 1072) is a better word choice than "jackal" (BDB 1072), though both are philologically possible.

29:4-8 These verses describe what YHWH will do to the arrogant leaders of Egypt.

- 1. I shall put hooks in your jaws, v. 4
- 2. I shall make the fish cling to your scales, v. 4(twice)
- 3. I shall bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, v. 4
- 4. I shall abandon you and all your fish to the wilderness, v. 5
 - a. fall in open field
 - b. be gathered for food
 - (1) beasts
 - (2) birds

- 5. I shall bring a sword upon you, vv. 6,11
 - a. man
 - b. beasts

Notice all the FIRST PERSON SINGULAR NOUNS. YHWH is God. He alone can act in judgment. The mighty river beast is brought onto the land where he is helpless and will die. He will be eaten by the creatures of the wilderness.

29:4 "hook" This (BDB 296) can mean

- 1. thorn or thistle, cf. II Kgs. 14:9; Pro. 26:9; Isa. 34:13; Hos. 9:6
- here, metaphorically of meat or fish hooks These were used (first by the Assyrians) to control and humiliate people being taken into exile/slavery (cf. Isa. 37:29; Ezek. 19:4,9; 29:4; 38:4).

• "the fish of your rivers cling to your scales" This refers to politically allied, but weaker, nations.

29:5	
NASB, NKJV	"gathered"
NRSV, NJB,	
Peshsitta	"buried"
TEV, JPSPOA	"unburied"
NIV	"picked up"
REB	"none to give you burial"

The MT has "gathered" (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Niphal* IMPERFECT). "Buried" is found in some Hebrew manuscripts and the Aramaic Targums.

Proper burial (i.e., mummification and preservation) was a major requirement for happiness in the afterlife in Egyptian theology. Egyptian leaders were enamored with this issue (i.e., *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*). The great pyramids served this function as secure burial places for the elite.

The prophetic theme of animals and birds eating the fallen is common in Jeremiah (cf. 7:33; 9:22; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20) and Ezekiel (cf. 29:5; 32:4; 33:27; 39:4,17-18). This seems to be a fulfillment of Deut. 28:26.

29:6 "Then all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am the LORD" This was the purpose of the ten plagues (each against an Egyptian deity, the same is true of the creation account [i.e., Genesis 1] condemnation of Babylonian astral deities). All humans are made in God's image and likeness! All were created for fellowship with God! Tragically in the OT, often it is judgment (cf. vv. 9-10) that reveals YHWH!

• "they have been *only* a staff *made* of reed" This is a metaphor of weakness and inability (cf. Isa. 30:1-3; 31:1-3; Jer. 37:7).

29:7	
NASB, NKJV	"you broke and made all their loins quake"
NRSV	"made all their legs unsteady"
Peshitta, JPSOA	"you would break, and make all their loins unsteady"
NJB, REB	"you broke, making all their limbs give way"
LXX	"thou wast utterly broken, and didst crush the loins of them all"

The MT has "you broke and you made to stand them all their loins." Most modern translations follow the Peshitta or Septuagint. The question is whether this phrase is sarcastic (God made them stand) or literal (God caused them to fall). The context is related to God's judgment on Egypt.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:8-9a

⁸'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will bring upon you a sword and I will cut off from you man and beast. ⁹The land of Egypt will become a desolation and waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

29:8 YHWH will bring death and destruction to all Egypt, human and animal. Animals were common Egyptian gods. Their devastation would symbolize YHWH's power, as did the plagues of the Exodus.

29:9 "Then they will know that I am the LORD" This is a recurrent phrase (cf. 6:14; 7:27; 12:20; 15:8; 29:9; 32:15; 33:29; 35:3,9,14). YHWH wanted to be revealed through Israel's abundance, moral standards, and theology, but because of her unfaithfulness, He is revealed through judgment, judgment on her and other idolatrous nations (i.e., Egypt).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:9b-12

^{9b}Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I have made *it*,' ¹⁰therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol *to* Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia. ¹¹A man's foot will not pass through it, and the foot of a beast will not pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years. ¹²So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands.''

29:10 "from Migdol *to* **Syene"** The term "Migdol" (BDB 154) means "tower" or "fortress." In context this reference is to a location in the northeast delta region where Jews were living (cf. Jer. 44:1; 46:14).

Syene (BDB 692) refers to a southern city on the border of Cush/Ethiopia, known today as Aswan. This same phrase is repeated in 30:6 and functions for Egypt as "from Dan to Bethel" did for Palestine. It denotes the far reaches of the land and the mentioning of them together became an idiom for the whole land.

29:12 "forty years" See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 1:5. It denotes a long period of time, often a full generation.

• "scatter. . .dispense" These (BDB 806, KB 918, *Hiphil* PERFECT; BDB 279, KB 280, *Piel* PERFECT) are parallel and both refer to Judah's exile. When national armies were defeated their populace were regularly sold into slavery (cf. Jer. 49:32,36; 51:2). Egypt will be scattered (cf. 29:12,13; 30:23,26).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:13-16

¹³'For thus says the Lord GOD, "At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered. ¹⁴I will turn the fortunes of Egypt and make them return to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom. ¹⁵It will be the lowest of the kingdoms, and it will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will not rule over the nations. ¹⁶And it will never again be the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing to mind the iniquity of their having turned to Egypt. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.""

29:13-16 YHWH will restore Egypt to their land (cf. Deut. 32:8), but they will not be a powerful nation.

29:14 "Pathros" This (BDB 837) refers to upper (i.e., southern region) Egypt, from Cairo to Aswan (cf. Gen. 10:14; Jer. 44:1,15).

29:16 Israel will never again trust in Egypt for security (cf. Isa. 30:1-3; 31:1-3; 36:6 [note v. 6]).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:17-20

¹⁷Now in the twenty-seventh year, in the first *month*, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁸"Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre; every head was made bald and every shoulder was rubbed bare. But he and his army had no wages from Tyre for the labor that he had performed against it." ¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And he will carry off her wealth and capture her spoil and seize her plunder; and it will be wages for his army. ²⁰I have given him the land of Egypt *for* his labor which he performed, because they acted for Me," declares the Lord GOD.

29:17-20 YHWH allowed Nebuchadnezzar II to capture Egypt (cf. 30:10; Jer. 43:10,11; 46:13,26) and take its spoils as payment for his army, since they received nothing for their hard work (cf. v. 18) at Tyre (i.e., thirteen-year siege, cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 10.228). It is possible that Pharaoh Hophra allied with Tyre and took away Tyre's treasures before Tyre surrendered to the army of Nebuchadnezzar's (cf. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 892-3).

29:18 This verse states that Nebuchadnezzar did not take the island fortress, but did capture and destroy the mainland city (cf. 26:7-12). The problem is that 26:14 implies that he did. Many commentators note that the PLURAL is used in 26:7-17, but the SINGULAR in 26:13-14, which

- 1. implies that YHWH Himself will do it (note 29:3-6)
- 2. refers to Alexander the Great's destruction of the island fortress in 323 B.C.

• "every head was made bald" This was not a mourning rite, but a metaphor for heavy work (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar's siege and destruction of mainland Tyre). It is parallel to "every shoulder was rubbed bare."

20:20 As YHWH used Assyria to judge Israel (cf. Isa. 10:5), so now He uses Babylon to judge, not only Judah, but all the nations in the area. The metaphorical language used here sees it as a wage paid.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:21

²¹"On that day I will make a horn sprout for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth in their midst. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

29:21 "I shall make a horn sprout for the house of Israel" Animal horns were a symbol of power and strength. This refers to a national and Messianic restoration (cf. I Sam. 2:10; Ps. 132:17; Luke 1:69).

"I shall open your mouth" YHWH is in control of national and Messianic restoration as He is His prophet. Ezekiel's message was controlled by YHWH (cf. 3:27; 24:27; 33:22).

EZEKIEL 30

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF WODERN TRANSLATIONS						
NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB		
		Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)				
Lament Over Egypt	Egypt and Her Allies Will Fall	The Doom of Egypt	The Lord Will Punish Egypt	Against Egypt: The Day of Yahweh		
30:1-5	30:1-5	30:1-4	30:1-4	30:1-3		
(2c-4)	(2c-4)	(2c-4)	(2c-4)			
				30:4-5		
		30:5	30:5			
30:6-9	30:6-9	30:6-8	30:6-8	30:6		
(6-8)	(6)	(6-8)				
	(7-9)			30:7-8		
		30:9	30:9	30:9-12		
30:10-12	30:10-12	30:10-12	30:10-12			
(10-12)	(10-12)	(10-12)				
30:13-19	30:13-19	30:13-19	30:13-19	30:13-19		
(13-19)	(13-19)	(13-19)				
Victory For Babylon	Proclamation Against Pharaoh		The Broken Power of the King of Egypt			
30:20-26	30:20-26	30:20-26	30:20-26	30:20-26		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:1-5

¹The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ²"Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

''Wail, 'Alas for the day!'
³For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations.
⁴A sword will come upon Egypt, And anguish will be in Ethiopia; When the slain fall in Egypt, They take away her wealth, And her foundations are torn down.
⁵Ethiopia, Put, Lud all Arabia, Libya and the people of the land that is in league will fall with them by the sword.''

30:1 See note at 29:1.

30:2 "prophesy" This VERB (BDB 612, KB 659) is a *Niphal* IMPERATIVE. It is used thirty-seven times in Ezekiel. The book is a series of messages from YHWH to Judah through Ezekiel.

■ "Thus says the Lord GOD" YHWH is the source of the message, not Ezekiel (cf. 25:3; Amos 1:3; 2:1). For the name *Adonai* YHWH see Special Topic at 2:4.

"Wail" This VERB (BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is common in

- 1. Isaiah, 13:6; 14:31; 15:2,3; 16:7(twice); 23:1,6,14; 52:5; 65:14
- 2. Jeremiah, 4:8; 25:34; 47:2; 48:20,31,39; 49:3; 51:8
- 3. Ezekiel (only twice), 21:12; 30:2
- 4. Joel, 1:5,11,13

It denotes those who cry out like wounded animals at the judgment of God which has come upon them (i.e., "Wail, also for the day!" vv. 2-3).

30:3 "the day of the LORD" See note at 7:19. This reference is to the immediate invasion of Babylon, not an eschatological one.

■ "It will be a day of clouds" The phrase is an idiom of gloom (i.e., sirocco east winds from the desert, cf. 30:18; 32:7; 34:12), but it denotes more. The clouds are often the transportation of deity (e.g., Jer. 4:13; Dan. 7:13; Nah. 1:3). See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COMING IN THE CLOUDS

This phrase is an obvious reference to the Second Coming of Christ. This coming on the clouds was a very significant eschatological sign. It was used in three distinct ways in the OT:

1. to show God's physical presence, the Shekinah cloud of Glory (cf. Exod. 13:21; 16:10; Num. 11:25)

- 2. to cover His Holiness so that man would not see Him and die (cf. Exod. 33:20; Isa. 6:5)
- 3. to transport deity (cf. Isa. 19:1)

In Daniel 7:13 clouds were used of the transportation of a divine human Messiah. This prophecy in Daniel is alluded to over 30 times in the NT. This same connection of the Messiah with the clouds of heaven can be seen in Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; 14:62; Acts 1:9,11 and I Thess. 4:17.

30:4 "anguish" This term (BDB 298) comes from "birth pains" (BDB 296). It describes the terrible pain, emotionally and physically, of God's judgment

- 1. against Philistia, Exod. 15:14
- 2. against unspecified foreign kings, Ps. 48:6
- 3. against Babylon, Isa. 13:8; 21:3; Jer. 50:43
- 4. against Israel, Jer. 6:24; 22:23
- 5. against Lebanon, Jer. 22:23
- 6. against Moab, Jer. 48:41
- 7. against Edom, Jer. 49:22
- 8. against Egypt, Ezek. 30:4,9
- 9. against Assyria, Nahum 2:10

■ "Ethiopia" This is literally "Cush" (BDB 468). Cush controlled Egypt during the twenty-fifth dynasty (716-663 B.C.), but had since been overthrown. However, in vv. 4 and 9 "Cush" seems to be a designation for Egypt (cf. Isa. 20:4).

• "They take away her wealth" The term translated "wealth" (BDB 242) has several meanings.

- 1. sound, murmur, roar of a crowd, Isa. 13:4; 17:12
- 2. tumult, confusion, Isa. 33:3
- 3. crowd, multitude, Ezek. 7:12,13; 23:42; 30:4; 39:11
- 4. abundance, Isa. 60:5

Context must determine which fits best. Because of 29:19 some choose #4, but 30:4 itself supports #3. Notice the same ambiguity in v. 10.

30:5 This refers to (1) mercenary soldiers (cf. v. 8; 27:10) or (2) allies (i.e., "in league," v. 5; and vv. 6,8).

- 1. Ethiopia/Cush (BDB 468), cf. 27:10; 38:5; Gen. 10:13
- 2. Put/Libia (BDB 806), cf. Gen. 10:6; Jer. 46:9
- 3. Lud/Lydia (BDB 530 [1] it is possible to link them with the northern Mediterranean, cf. Isa. 66:19 or [2] it is grammatically possible that all three denote Egypt)
- 4. Arabia (Peshitta, BDB 787) or "mixed people" (LXX. NKJV, BDB 786), both have the same consonants
- 5. Libya/Lub (BDB 464, cf. Gen. 10:13, another descendant of Ham living in northeast Africa)
- 6. "the people of the land," this phrase refers to another people group, but which one is uncertain. Some commentators speculate that because the term "covenant"/berith is used it refers to Jews living in north Africa.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:6-9a

⁶'Thus says the LORD,

"Indeed, those who support Egypt will fall

And the pride of her power will come down;

From Migdol *to* Syene They will fall within her by the sword,'' Declares the Lord GOD. ⁷'' They will be desolate In the midst of the desolated lands; And her cities will be In the midst of the devastated cities. ⁸And they will know that I am the LORD, When I set a fire in Egypt And all her helpers are broken. ⁹On that day messengers will go forth from Me in ships to frighten secure Ethiopia; and anguish will be on them as on the day of Egypt; for behold, it comes!''

30:6 "the pride of her power will come down" This is the common thread between Tyre and Egypt (cf. 28:2; 29:9b).

From Migdol *to* **Syene**" See note at 29:10.

• "by the sword" YHWH sends the sword (cf. 7:15). In this context, the sword is Nebuchadnezzar's army (cf. vv. 10-11).

30:8 Fire is often the metaphor used to describe God's judgment (cf. vv. 14,16; 5:4; 10:2,6-7; 15:4-7; 16:41; 19:12,14; 20:45-49; 21:31-32; 23:25,47; 24:10,12; 39:6). See Special Topic: Fire at 1:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:10-12 ¹⁰'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''I will also make the hordes of Egypt cease By the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ¹¹He and his people with him, The most ruthless of the nations, Will be brought in to destroy the land; And they will draw their swords against Egypt And fill the land with the slain. ¹²Moreover, I will make the Nile canals dry And sell the land into the hands of evil men. And I will make the land desolate And all that is in it, By the hand of strangers; I the LORD have spoken.''

30:11 "The most ruthless of the nations" This phrase describes the mercenary army of Nebuchadnezzar II, King of Babylon (cf. 28:7; 31:12; 32:12; Hab. 1:6-8).

30:12 Notice the number of FIRST PERSON SINGULAR VERBS referring to YHWH's sovereignty.

- 1. I will make, BDB 678, KB 733, Qal PERFECT
- 2. I will sell, BDB 569, KB 581, Qal PERFECT

3. I will make (lit. "I will bring desolation"), BDB 1030, KB 1563, Hiphil PERFECT

4. I, the Lord, have spoken, BDB 180, KB 210, Piel PERFECT

Number 2 is especially interesting because it uses a term normally reserved for YHWH's actions toward unfaithful Israel (cf. Deut. 32:30; Jdgs. 2:14; 3:8; 4:2,9; 10:7; I Sam. 12:9). The usage here implies YHWH's ownership of all lands and all peoples (cf. Deut. 32:8).

"Sell" is a metaphor for giving a people group into the hand of another group. A nation loses its autonomy.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:13-19		
¹³ ··· Thus says the Lord GOD ,		
"I will also destroy the idols		
And make the images cease from Memphis.		
And there will no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt;		
And I will put fear in the land of Egypt.		
¹⁴ I will make Pathros desolate,		
Set a fire in Zoan		
And execute judgments on Thebes.		
¹⁵ I will pour out My wrath on Sin,		
The stronghold of Egypt;		
I will also cut off the hordes of Thebes.		
¹⁶ I will set a fire in Egypt;		
Sin will writhe in anguish,		
Thebes will be breached		
And Memphis will have distresses daily.		
¹⁷ The young men of On and of Pi-beseth		
Will fall by the sword,		
And the women will go into captivity.		
¹⁸ In Tehaphnehes the day will be dark		
When I break there the yoke bars of Egypt.		
Then the pride of her power will cease in her;		
A cloud will cover her,		
And her daughters will go into captivity.		
¹⁹ Thus I will execute judgments on Egypt,		
And they will know that I am the LORD."""		

30:13-19 Notice the list of Egyptian allies.

- 1. Memphis, vv. 13,16, first known capital of Egypt named Menes after the first powerful king. Its chief deity was *Ptah*, the creator-god. The later name, Memphis, came from its association with the pyramid of Pepi I.
- 2. Pathros, v. 14, see note at 29:14
- 3. Zoan, v. 14, also called Tanis and probably the Hyksos Avaris, later called Ramesses, the delta capital of Egypt in 21st and 22nd dynasties
- 4. Thebes, vv. 14,16, is the location of the valleys of the kings and temples of Amun. Today it is called Luxor, about 400 miles south of Cairo.

- 5. Sin, vv. 15,16, a city is located in the delta. In Greek it is called Pelusiom (i.e., city of mud). It guarded the highway to the north.
- 6. On, v. 17, this city is close to Cairo in the delta region. In Greek it is called Heliopolis (i.e., city of the sun). It was one of the cities built by Hebrew slaves (cf. Exod. 1:11).
- 7. Pi-beseth, v. 17, later the capital of Egypt (22nd dynasty). It was named after the goddess Bastet (woman with cat head). It was made famous by Pharaoh Shishak.
- 8. Tehaphnehes, v. 18, in Jer. 43:7 it is spelled Tahpanhes. It is located on the highway going to Arabia in the eastern delta region.

30:13 "the idols" There were several categories of idols (BDB 156) in Egypt.

- 1. royal rulers (Pharaohs)
- 2. animals
- 3. half human, half animals
- 4. fertility gods

Each city had their own chief god and/or goddess.

■ "images" This (BDB 47) is parallel to "idols." Its basic meaning is uncertain, but the same root in Syriac means "weak," "feeble," "poor." It has the connotation of that which is insufficient or worthless. It is translated "idols" in Leviticus 19:4; 26:1; Psalm 96:5; 97:7; Isa. 2:8,18,20(twice); 10:10; 19:1,3; 31:7(twice); Hab. 2:18.

• "there will no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt" Apparently Babylon's conquest and exile completely removed all the royal family to Babylon. Pharoah Hophra was assassinated and a new dynasty started.

30:14 "Zoan" This is a Hebrew form of the name of a famous ancient city (cf. Num. 13:22) in the delta region that is known by several names.

- 1. Avaris (Hyksos name)
- 2. Pi-Ramesses (moved to a new location to the north which became Zoan, ABD, vol. 6, p. 1106)
- 3. Tanis (later Greek name)

It was the northern capital of several Egyptian dynasties (i.e., Hyksos and Ramses II). It became the site of a revival temple to Amon (original temple was at Thebes).

It is mentioned in the OT in Num. 13:22; Isa. 19:11,13; 30:4; Ezek. 30:14, as well as Ps. 78:12,43.

30:16 "writhe in anguish" This phrase could be an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 296). If so, it denotes intensity.

• "will be breached" This VERB (BDB 131, KB 149) is a *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT. The TEV and NJB follow the Septuagint, which sees the breach as referring to the city's (i.e., Thebes) walls breaking and letting the Nile flood the city. The Septuagint (LXX) does not mention Memphis in the closing line of v. 16.

30:17-18 The NASB translates "they" (A FEMININE PLURAL) of v. 17b as "the women," while NKJV translates "they" as "these *cities*," as do NRSV and NJB. The TEV identified "they" as other people.

The NASB probably bases its understanding on the parallelism of v. 18e.

30:18 "the day will be dark" Most English translations change the MT's "shall be withheld" (BDB 362, חשׁך) to "will be darkened" (BDB 364, חשׁך).

• "the pride of her power will cease" Pride is a major spiritual problem for humans, angels, and nations. It is the essence of the self-centeredness of Genesis 3. It is always followed by divine judgment (e.g., 28:2; 29:3; 32:12; 33:28; Isa. 14:13-14; 16:6; 25:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:20-26

²⁰In the eleventh year, in the first *month*, on the seventh of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²¹''Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, behold, it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, that it may be strong to hold the sword. ²²Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong and the broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand. ²³I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands. ²⁴For I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand; and I will break the arms of Pharaoh, so that he will groan before him with the groanings of a wounded man. ²⁵Thus I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I put My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt. ²⁶When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the nations and disperse them among the nations and before him with the Egyptians among the nations and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt. ²⁶When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands, then they will know that I am the LORD.'''

30:20-26 This is a new revelation about YHWH's judgment on Egypt, which uses the idiom of "arm" in several ways. Arm is a metaphor for ability.

- 1. I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, vv. 21,22. Pharaoh Hophra gave himself the title of "The Strong-Armed One." This is, therefore, powerful irony.
- 2. It has not been bound up for healing, v. 21
- 3. Or wrapped with a bandage that it may be strong to hold the sword, v. 21
- 4. "I will make the sword fall from his hands," v. 22
- 5. I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, vv. 24,25
- 6. I will put My sword in his hand, vv. 24,25
- 7. I will break the arms of Pharaoh
- 8. The arms of Pharaoh will fall

EZEKIEL 31

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)		
Pharaoh Warned of Assyria's Fate	Egypt Cut Down Like A Great Tree	Allegory of the Cedar	Egypt Is Compared to A Cedar Tree	The Cedar Tree
31:1-9	31:1-9	31:1-9	31:1-9	31:1-9
(2b-9)	(2b-4)	(2b-9)	(2b-9)	(2b-9)
	(5-6)			
	(7-9)			
31:10-14	31:10-14	31:10-14	31:10-14	31:10-13
	(13)	(13)		
				31:14
	(14d)	(14d)		
31:15-17	31:15-18	31:15-17	31:15-17	31:15-17
31:18		31:18	31:18	31:18

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

¹ In the eleventh year, in the third <i>month</i> , on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ² ''Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes,
Whom one you like in your meeting?
'Whom are you like in your greatness?
³ Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon
With beautiful branches and forest shade,
And very high, And its top was among the clouds.
⁴ The waters made it grow, the deep made it high.
With its rivers it continually extended all around its planting place,
And sent out its channels to all the trees of the field.
⁵ Therefore its height was loftier than all the trees of the field
And its boughs became many and its branches long
Because of many waters as it spread them out.
⁶ All the birds of the heavens nested in its boughs,
And under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth,
And all great nations lived under its shade.
⁷ So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches;
For its roots extended to many waters.
⁸ The cedars in God's garden could not match it;
The cypresses could not compare with its boughs,
And the plane trees could not match its branches.
No tree in God's garden could compare with it in its beauty.
⁹ I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches,
And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.'"

31:1 See note at 29:1. The date is 587 B.C.

31:2-3 "say to Pharaoh" The literary unit dealing with God's judgment in Egypt began in chapter 29 and continues through chapter 32. Therefore, it is surprising to have Assyria addressed in v. 3. Assyria is mentioned in 32:22-33. There are two options.

- 1. Pharaoh is to view God's judgment on Assyria as an example of what will befall him and his nation (*Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1101).
- 2. The Hebrew text, אשור (BDB 1677), is corrupt and must be emended to
 - a. "I will liken you" (RSV), שור (BDB 1003, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
 - b. a variant spelling of "cypress" (or a type of cedar, KB 1677) and, therefore, parallel to "cedar" (cf. 27:6)
- 3. "I regard," תאשור (BDB 1003)
- **31:3-9** The nation is described as
 - 1. beautiful branches for shade
 - 2. very tall (i.e., MT, NKJV, "among thick boughs' LXX, "among the clouds")
 - 3. deep roots into good water
 - 4. watered other trees
 - 5. protection for many animals (i.e., nations)

- 6. greater than the trees of Eden
- 7. many branches

In essence this is the "global/cosmic tree" metaphor (cf. Psalm 80; Daniel 4). Trees were places of special reverence and respect. They often served as holy sites (e.g., Gen. 35:4,8; Josh. 24:26; palm tree, Jdgs. 4:5; oaks of Ophrah, cf. Jdgs. 6:11,19; I Kgs. 13:14; I Chr. 10:12) and also sites of fertility worship (e.g., I Kgs. 14:23-24; Hos. 4:13). However, this one tree symbolized a universal motif. It, of course, is a hyperbole in this context describing Egypt. YHWH allows nations to rise and He causes nations to fall. In YHWH's garden His trees continue to grow and bear fruit (cf. 47:12; Rev. 22:2). Heaven is symbolized as a beautiful, fruitful garden (cf. Genesis 2 and Revelation 22).

31:8

NASB, NJB,	
JPSOA	"cypresses"
NKJV, NRSV,	
TEV	"fir trees"
REB	"juniper"
LXX, NEB	"pines"

The UBS, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 162-163, identifies this (BDB 141) as an Aleppo pine, which is the largest conifer in the Mediterranean area. They can reach over 50' in height. Its wood is hard enough to use as building material (cf. I Kgs. 5:8,10;6:15,34; II Chr. 2:8; Isa. 14:8; Ezek. 27:5; 31:8). It is used to characterize a nation in Hosea 14:8; Zech. 11:1-3.

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB *"the plane trees"*

NKJV "the chestnut trees"

The UBS, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 166-167, calls this a "plane tree." The Hebrew (BDB 790) root means "stripped" of bark (cf. Gen. 30:37). It is native to Palestine and grows near a water source. They are large and long-lived.

31:9 "Eden" Eden is a geographical location (i.e., in Ugaritic, "a plain") in Genesis 2-3 which contained a special garden planted and prepared by God for His highest creation (i.e., in image and likeness, cf. Gen. 1:26-27), mankind (cf. Gen. 2:8).

The special garden is alluded to in Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 28:13; 31:9,16,18(twice); 36:35; and Joel 2:3.

Apparently the word means "abundance" from an Aramaic root. In Hebrew (BDB 727 III, 792 II) the root means "delight" or "pleasure" (lit). After Genesis the term is a metaphor for a well watered, fruitful place.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:10-14

¹⁰'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Because it is high in stature and has set its top among the clouds, and its heart is haughty in its loftiness, ¹¹therefore I will give it into the hand of a despot of the nations; he will thoroughly deal with it. According to its wickedness I have driven it away. ¹²Alien tyrants of the nations have cut it down and left it; on the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land. And all the peoples of the earth have gone down from its shade and left it. ¹³On its ruin all the birds of the heavens will dwell, and all the beasts of the field will be on its *fallen* branches ¹⁴so that all the trees by the waters may not be exalted in their stature, nor set their top among the clouds, nor their well-watered mighty ones stand *erect* in their height. For they have all been given over to death, to the earth beneath, among the sons of men, with those who go down to the pit." **31:10** Again, like Tyre (i.e., 28:2,17), Assyria (cf. Isa. 10:12), and Babylon (cf. Isa. 14:11-14; Dan. 4:30; 5:20-23), the sin which caused YHWH to act was pride, arrogance, hubris! It is the essence of self-centeredness. It is the fruit of Eden. Maybe this is why Ezekiel uses the Garden of Eden metaphors to characterize

- 1. Tyre, chapter 28
- 2. Egypt, chapter 31

The word "greatness" or "magnify" (BDB 152) is most often used of YHWH (e.g., Deut. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3; Ezek. 38:23), but here it is used of human pride.

- 1. Israel, Isa. 9:9
- 2. Assyria, Isa. 10:12
- 3. Egypt, Ezek. 31:2,7,8,18
- 4. Edom, Ezek. 35:13
- 5. Moab, Jer. 48:26,42
- 6. the king, Dan. 11:36-37

31:11

NASB	"despot of the nations"
NKJV	"the most terrible of the nations"
LXX, NRSV,	
NJB, REB	"the presence of the nations"
TEV	"a foreign ruler"
JPSOA	"the mightiest of the nations"
Peshitta	"the mighty one of the nations"

The MT has a construct of BDB 18 and 156 ("a mighty one of the nations"). The key term (BDB 18, KB 40) means "leader," "chief," originally "ram." The same term is used of the tree in v. 14 (cf. Isa. 1:27-31).

• "he will thoroughly deal with it" This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 793, KB 889), which denotes intensity or completeness.

• "I have driven it away" This same VERB (BDB 176, KB 204, *Piel* PERFECT) was used of Adam and Eve being driven from Eden (cf. Gen. 3:24) and of Cain (cf. Gen. 4:14). It denotes Egypt exiled from her homeland by YHWH.

31:12 "alien tyrants of the nations" This is the same phrase that is used in 28:7; 30:11; 32:12 to refer to the army of Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon.

• "all the peoples of the earth have gone down from its shade" This is typical prophetic hyperbole. Egypt did have many allies and many mercenaries in her army (cf. vv. 12-13).

31:14 The destruction of Assyria, Tyre, Egypt, and later Babylon itself should be a graphic warning to other prideful, power-hungry nations (cf. vv. 15-18).

Death finally sends all fallen humans to their grave (i.e., "to the earth beneath. . .those who go down to the pit"). See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 3:18.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:15-17

¹⁵'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day when it went down to Sheol I caused lamentations; I closed the deep over it and held back its rivers. And *its* many waters were stopped up, and I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away on account of it. ¹⁶I made the

nations quake at the sound of its fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the earth beneath. ¹⁷They also went down with it to Sheol to those who were slain by the sword; and those who were its strength lived under its shade among the nations."

31:15-18 This paragraph mixes metaphors.

- 1. Sheol (i.e., "the deep"), vv. 15-18 (cf. Isa. 14:8-11)
- 2. Egypt as a river nation (i.e., "held back its rivers"), v. 15

and

- 1. Lebanon darkened, v. 15
- 2. all the trees of the field wilt away, vv. 15,16b

The trees of Eden and Lebanon are parallel and represent nations. There is a recurrent play on water in this paragraph.

- 1. the deep, v. 15
- 2. rivers, v. 15
- 3. many waters
- 4. drinkers of water (i.e., trees of Eden), v. 16

31:16 "go down to the pit" This idiom is found in 26:20; 32:18,24,29. It denotes *Sheol*, which refers to the holding place of the dead until judgment day (see Special Topic at 3:18).

- The question is, "Are there levels of Sheol?"
- 1. 26:20, "the lower parts of the earth"
- 2. 31:18, "in the midst of the uncircumcised"

The first is simply a parallel, but the second may denote a worse place (cf. 28:10; 32:24,29,30).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:18

¹⁸"To which among the trees of Eden are you thus equal in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword. So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!"" declares the Lord GOD."

31:18 "the uncircumcised" See note at 28:10.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. Why did Ezekiel use metaphors from the Garden of Eden?
- 2. What is the symbol of a cosmic tree?
- 3. How do the metaphors of chapter 31 affect one's interpretation of chapter 28?

EZEKIEL 32

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles Against the Nations (25:1-32:32)		
Lament Over Pharaoh and Egypt	Lamentation for Pharaoh and Egypt	Lament Over Pharaoh	The King of Egypt Is Compared to a Crocodile	The Crocodile
32:1-10	32:1-10	32:1-16	32:1-8	32:1-8
(2b-8)	(2b)	(2b-16)		(2b)
	(3-5)			(3-8)
	(6-8)			
			32:9-10	32:9-14
32:11-16	32:11-16		32:11-16	
(12c-15)	(12c-15)			
				32:15
	(16)			32:16
	Egypt and Others Consigned to the Pit	Egypt in the Underworld	The World of the Dead	Pharaoh Goes Down to Sheol
32:17-21	32:17-21	32:17-21	32:17-19	32:17-21
	(18-19)	(18-19)		
(19)			(19)	
	(20-21)		32:20-21	
32:22-23	32:22-23	32:22-23	32:22-23	32:22-23
32:24-25	32:24-25	32:24-25	32:24-25	32:24-25
	(24-25)			
32:26-28	32:26-28	32:26-28	32:26-27	32:26-28
	(26-28)			
			32:28	
32:29	32:29-30	32:29	32:29	32:29
	(29-30)			
32:30		32:30	32:30	32:30
32:31-32	32:31-32	32:31-32	32:31	32:31-32
	(31-32)			
			32:32	

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:1-2

¹In the twelfth year, in the twelfth *month*, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him,

'You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, Yet you are like the monster in the seas; And you burst forth in your rivers And muddied the waters with your feet And fouled their rivers.'''

32:1 See note at 29:1. This date would be about one year after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

32:2 The four-chapter litany of judgment against Egypt continues (i.e., chapters 29-32).

• "take up a lamentation" This was a well known form of poetic beat (3-2, BDB 884, cf. 2:10; 19:1,14[twice]; 26:17; 27:2,32; 28:12; 32:16; Jer. 9:10,20). This chapter, like 19:1; 27:2; 28:12, starts with a command for a funeral dirge ("take up," BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Jer. 7:29). Isaiah 14:4 has the same VERB in *Qal* PERFECT, but with "taunt" or "proverb" (BDB 605).

• "You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations" Again this is a reference to Pharaoh's pride and arrogance (cf. 29:3; 30:6; 31:2-9,10; 32:12). He was not a lion, but a water creature.

• "Yet you are like the monster in the sea" See note at 29:3. This may be an allusion to Canaanite mythology where *Ba'al* defeats *Yam*, or Babylonian mythology where *Marduk* defeats *Tiamat*. The OT alluded to these myths without acknowledging their reality (e.g., Isa. 27:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:3-10 ³Thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will spread My net over you With a company of many peoples, And they shall lift you up in My net. ⁴I will leave you on the land; I will cast you on the open field. And I will cause all the birds of the heavens to dwell on you, And I will satisfy the beasts of the whole earth with you. ⁵I will lay your flesh on the mountains And fill the valleys with your refuse. ⁶I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood As far as the mountains, And the ravines will be full of you. ⁷And when *I* extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars: I will cover the sun with a cloud And the moon will not give its light. ⁸All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land," **Declares the Lord GOD.** ⁹"I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring your destruction among the

²¹I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring your destruction among the nations, into lands which you have not known. ¹⁰I will make many peoples appalled at you, and their kings will be horribly afraid of you when I brandish My sword before them; and they will tremble every moment, every man for his own life, on the day of your fall.''

32:3 In 29:4 YHWH uses a hook, here a net (cf. 12:13; 17:20). This is also described in mythological terms in Ps. 74:13-14.

32:4 This same ignominious fate (i.e., unburied and eaten by animals) is described in 29:5.

32:5 NASB "refuse" NKJV "carcass" Peshitta "dust" TEV, JPSOA "rotting corpse" NJB "corruption" REB "worms that fed on it"

The REB assumes the MT's מרומ (BDB 928) should be רממ (BDB 942, "be wormy," cf. Exod. 16:20). Some see a parallel to Isa. 14:11 to "maggots".

32:6	
NASB	"flowing blood"
LXX	"dung"
NEB	"discharge"
JPSOA	"oozing blood"

This NOUN (BDB 847) is found only here in the OT. It is somehow linked to "blood" (BDB 196). NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 833, calls it "a sort of discharge. . . of sloughing tissue."

32:7-8 As the Genesis creation account (Genesis 1) depreciates the astral deities of Babylon, these verses depreciate the astral deities of Egypt. The darkness shows YHWH's power.

- 1. BDB 871, KB 1072 (*Hiphil* found only in Ezekiel, 3 times, cf. 31:15)
 - a. *HIphil* PERFECT, v. 7
 - b. *HIphil* IMPERFECT, v. 8
- 2. BDB 365 (cf. Gen. 1:2; Exod. 10:22; Amos 5:18,20)

32:9-10 This is a common theme in these chapters (cf. vv. 16,19; 27:29-36; 28:19). YHWH's judgment on prideful Tyre and Egypt was meant to send a message to the nations (i.e., they will know that I am the Lord, e.g., v. 15; 29:9; 33:29; 35:3,4,9,14).

32:10 "shall be horribly afraid" This is the NOUN and VERB of the same root (BDB 972, KB 1343, cf. 27:35; Jer. 2:12), which denotes the hair standing up in fear.

"*"they shall tremble"* This term (BDB 353, KB 350) denotes fear in YHWH"s coming and present judgment (cf. 26:16,18; 30:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:11-16

¹¹For thus says the Lord GOD, "The sword of the king of Babylon will come upon you. ¹²By the swords of the mighty ones I will cause your hordes to fall; all of them are tyrants of the nations,

And they will devastate the pride of Egypt,

And all its hordes will be destroyed.

¹³I will also destroy all its cattle from beside many waters;

And the foot of man will not muddy them anymore

And the hoofs of beasts will not muddy them.

¹⁴Then I will make their waters settle

And will cause their rivers to run like oil,"

Declares the Lord GOD.

¹⁵"When I make the land of Egypt a desolation,

And the land is destitute of that which filled it,

When I smite all those who live in it,

Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

¹⁶This is a lamentation and they shall chant it. The daughters of the nations shall chant it. Over Egypt and over all her hordes they shall chant it,'' declares the Lord GOD.

32:11 Nebuchadnezzar II was YHWH's instrument of judgment (cf. 21:19), as Assyria had been (cf. Isa. 10:5).

32:13 This could be another way of depreciating the gods of Egypt, as were the ten plagues in the Exodus.

32:14 The waters of Egypt will be undisturbed (clear and settled) by any animal or human. No one will be left alive. This metaphor for total destruction is found only here.

32:16 The professional wailers and mourners would be from all the nations.

- 1. those who were helped and protected by Egypt (v. 18)
- 2. those who were cruelly treated by Egypt

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:17-21

¹⁷In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁸"Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and bring it down, her and the daughters of the powerful nations, to the nether world, with those who go down to the pit;

¹⁹ 'Whom do you surpass in beauty?

Go down and make your bed with the uncircumcised.'

²⁰They shall fall in the midst of those who are slain by the sword. She is given over to the sword; they have drawn her and all her hordes away. ²¹The strong among the mighty ones shall speak of him *and* his helpers from the midst of Sheol, 'They have gone down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.'''

32:18-19 These verses contain four commands, two to Ezekiel, two to Egypt.

- 1. wail, BDB 624, KB 675, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 18
- 2. bring it down, BDB 432, KB 434, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, v. 18
- 3. go down, BDB 432, KB 434, Qal IMPERATIVE, v. 19
- 4. make your bed, BDB 1011, KB 1486, *Hophal* IMPERATIVE, v. 19

32:19 "with the uncircumcised" See note at 28:10. This is a recurrent curse (cf. 28:10; 31:18; 32:19, 21,24,29,30; Jer. 9:25-26).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:22-23

²²"Assyria is there and all her company; her graves are round about her. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword, ²³whose graves are set in the remotest parts of the pit and her company is round about her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

32:23 "whose graves are set in the remotest parts of the pit" This is an idiom for the worst (cf. Isa. 14:15) or lowest places in the netherworld. They were slain in this world and humiliated in the next (cf. vv. 27, 32)!

Note the list of humiliated nations.

- 1. Egypt, vv. 17-21,31
- 2. Assyria, vv. 22-23
- 3. Elam, vv. 24-25
- 4. Meshech, Tubal (Anatolia), vv. 26-28
- 5. Edom, v. 29
- 6. Princes of the north (i.e., Syrians or Armenians) and Sidon, v. 30

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:24-25

²⁴"Elam is there and all her hordes around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised to the lower parts of the earth, who instilled their terror in the land of the living and bore their disgrace with those who went down to the pit. ²⁵They have made a bed for her among the slain with all her hordes. Her graves are around it, they are all uncircumcised, slain by the sword (although their terror was instilled in the land of the living), and they bore their disgrace with those who go down to the pit; they were put in the midst of the slain."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:26-28

²⁶"Meshech, Tubal and all their hordes are there; their graves surround them. All of them were slain by the sword uncircumcised, though they instilled their terror in the land of the living. ²⁷Nor do they lie beside the fallen heroes of the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war and whose swords were laid under their heads; but the punishment for their iniquity rested on their bones, though the terror of *these* heroes *was* once in the land of the living. ²⁸But in the midst of the uncircumcised you will be broken and lie with those slain by the sword."

32:27

NASB, NKJV "uncircumcised" (מערלימ)

LXX, NRSV,

TEV, NJB "long ago" (מעולמ)

The phrases are spelled similarly in Hebrew. The second fits the context best because these people were part of the uncircumcised and the term is repeated in v. 28.

NASB, NKJV,	
LXX	"their iniquity rested on their bones"
NRSV, TEV	"whose shields are upon their bones"
NJB	"their shields put under their bones"
REB	"their shields over their bones"
These mon	f Mashach. Tubal are honored even in death, but not so for the Egyptic

These men of Meshech, Tubal are honored even in death, but not so for the Egyptians!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:29

²⁹"There also is Edom, its kings and all its princes, who for *all* their might are laid with those slain by the sword; they will lie with the uncircumcised and with those who go down to the pit.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:30

³⁰"There also are the chiefs of the north, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who in spite of the terror resulting from their might, in shame went down with the slain. So they lay down uncircumcised with those slain by the sword and bore their disgrace with those who go down to the pit.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:31-32

³¹"These Pharaoh will see, and he will be comforted for all his hordes slain by the sword, even Pharaoh and all his army," declares the Lord GOD. ³²"Though I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living, yet he will be made to lie down among the uncircumcised along with those slain by the sword, *even* Pharaoh and all his hordes," declares the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 33

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracle of Restoration (33:1-39:29)		
The Watchman's Day	The Watchman and His Message	Responsibility	God Appoints Ezekiel as a Lookout	The Prophet as Watchman
33:1-6	33:1-6	33:1-6	33:1-6	33:1-5
				33:6
33:7-9	33:7-9	33:7-9	33:7-9	33:7-9
			Individual Responsibility	Conversion and Perversity
33:10-16	33:10-11	33:10-16	33:10-11	33:10-11
	The Fairness of God's Judgment			
	33:12-16		33:12-16	33:12-16
33:17-20	33:17-20	33:17-20	33:17-20	33:17-20
Word of Jerusalem's Capture	The Fall of Jerusalem	Miscellanea	News of Jerusalem's Fall	The Taking of the City
33:21-22	33:21-22	33:21-22	33:21-22	33:21-22
	The Cause of Judah's Ruin		The Sins of the People	The Ravaging of the Country
33:23-29	33:23-29	33:23-29	33:23-24	33:23-24
			33:25-26	33:25-29
			33:27-29	
	Hearing and Not Doing		The Results of the Prophet's Message	The Results of the Preaching
33:30-33	33:30-33	33:30-33	33:30-33	33:30-33

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

Chapters 12-24 explain God's reason for His judgment on Judah.

- A. Chapters 25-32 are the judgments on the surrounding nations.
- B. Chapters 33-39 are the message to the exiles of God's promised restoration.
- C. Chapter 33 is very similar to chapter 18 in its emphasis on individual responsibility (cf. Jer. 31:29-30). In this chapter the people admit their sin (cf. v. 10). This theme of individual responsibility is a major truth of the book of Ezekiel and it begins in 3:16-21.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:1-6

¹And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ²''Son of man, speak to the sons of your people and say to them, 'If I bring a sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one man from among them and make him their watchman, ³and he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows on the trumpet and warns the people, ⁴then he who hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, and a sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his *own* head. ⁵He heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning; his blood will be on himself. But had he taken warning, he would have delivered his life. ⁶But if the watchman sees the sword comes and takes a person from them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require from the watchman's hand.'''

33:1 This is the literary marker for a new prophecy.

33:2 "speak" As so many of Ezekiel's prophecies this one starts out with the command "speak" or "say" (BDB 180; KB 210, *Piel* IMPERATIVE).

• "to the sons of your people" This is found only in Ezekiel (cf. 3:11; 33:2,12,17,30; 37:18) and mostly in this chapter.

• "If I bring a sword upon a land" This theme is amplified in chapter 21. The sword was one of several items of judgment (sword, famine, plague, wild beasts, e.g., 5:17).

watchman" The world translated "watchman" is really a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of the VERB "to look out," "look about" or "spy out" (BDB 859, KB 1044, cf. vv. 2,6[twice],7). This is the man who stood on the wall (or in a watchtower) to give an early warning of danger (cf. 3:16-21; Isa. 56:10; Jer. 6:17; Hosea 9:8).

33:3 "he sees the sword coming" The sword is used as a metaphorical way of referring to an invading army. In this case it refers to the army of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon.

• "the trumpet" This refers to the sophar (BDB 1051) or ram's horn. It was used both for religious purposes and for war (cf. Josh. 6:4; II Sam. 2:28; 18: 24,25; Ps. 81:3; Joel 2:15; Amos 3:6; Hab. 2:1). See Special Topic: Horns Used By Israel at 7:14.

• "warns" This VERB (BDB 264, KB 265, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means "to warn" or possibly from an Aramaic root, "to teach" (cf. Exod. 18:20). It is found in the VERB form only and predominately in Ezekiel in two forms.

- 1. *Hiphil*, to warn or caution (cf. 3:17,18[twice],19,20,21[twice]; 33:3,7,8,9)
- 2. *Niphal*, to be warned (cf. 3:21; 33:4,5[twice],6)

33:4,6 "his blood will be on his *own* **head...but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand"** Ezekiel felt the pressure of speaking God's word to a non-responsive people (as did Isaiah and Jeremiah). In a sense he is defending his message of judgment on Judah. If he had not spoken, the inhabitants could have blamed him or God for the destruction and death of the nation. But he did speak and they still did not respond.

The word "blood" stands for a person's life (cf. 18:13; Lev. 17:11,14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:7-9

⁷"Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth and give them warning from Me. ⁸When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. ⁹But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your life.

33:8 "you will surely die" This is a Hebrew grammatical construction (i.e., INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB from the same root, here BDB 559, KB 562), which denotes emphasis or intensity.

- 1. This one is repeated in v. 14.
- 2. Another related one (i.e., BDB 310, KB 309, "he will surely live") is found in vv. 13,15,16.

• "that wicked man shall die in his iniquity" This is the message of chapter 18. If one repents, YHWH will forgive. If one sins and refuses to repent, that one will bear his judgment.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:10-16

¹⁰"Now as for you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus you have spoken, saying, "Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we are rotting away in them; how then can we survive?"¹¹Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?' ¹²And you, son of man, say to your fellow citizens, 'The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness; whereas a righteous man will not be able to live by his righteousness on the day when he commits sin.' ¹³When I say to the righteous he will surely live, and he *so* trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die. ¹⁴But when I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness, ¹⁵*if a* wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live.''

33:10 "say" It is characteristic for an IMPERATIVE (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) to designate the beginning of YHWH's new message through Ezekiel (i.e., vv. 10,11,12).

• "Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we are rotting away in them" In chapter 18 the people were blaming their forefathers for God's judgments, but here in chapter 33 they acknowledge their personal and corporate rebellion.

The phrase "rotting away" is from the curses of Lev. 26:39-42. This phrase is found three times in Ezekiel (cf. 4:17; 24:23; 33:10).

■ "then can we survive" This is literally "live" (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* IMPERFECT). We must see the devastating mental and physical anguish that the destruction of Jerusalem caused to the covenant people. Ezekiel, in chapters 33-39 after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, begins to reassure the covenant people that YHWH is still their Covenant God (cf. Isa. 49:14-15) and that He will forgive and restore them, physically and spiritually (cf. 37:11-14).

33:11 "'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD' This is an oath related to the name of the Covenant God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB "to be" (see Special Topic at 2:4). It is the ever-living, only-living God who swears by His own life (cf. 5:11).

■ "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked" This is a repetition of 18:23,32. The heart of God is love, not judgment (cf. John 3:16; Matt. 11:28-30). God wants all men to turn and respond to Him (cf. John 3:16; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14) by repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21).

■ "turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why will you die, Oh house of Israel" The VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is repeated for emphasis (cf. 3:19,20; 14:6[thrice]; 18:21,23,24,26,27,28,30[twice],32; 33:9,11[twice],12,14,19). Repentance is a crucial spiritual requirement.

Repentance primarily is a turning from self and a turning toward God. See Special Topic at 14:6. The Hebrew word (BDB 996) speaks of a change of action, while the Greek speaks of a change of mind. Both are involved (cf. Ezek. 18:31; Jer. 31:33).

• "house of Israel" Israel in this context refers specifically to Judah. See Special Topic: Israel at 11:17. Ezekiel uses this designation to foreshadow the coming unity of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

33:12 "The righteousness of the righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression" This does not refer to cumulative guilt or acquired merit (cf. chapter 18), but lifestyle relational faith! What a terrible warning! What a wonderful invitation (cf. v. 10)!

33:13 "and he will surely live" This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 310, KB 309, cf. vv. 15,16), which expresses intensity or emphasis (see note at v. 8).

■ "and he so trusts in his righteousness" This is always a danger of religious humanity. The believer must trust in God, not in oneself or one's performance. His/her trust must issue from an initial faith and repentance to an ongoing faith and repentance. Biblical faith is a daily relationship! Obedience does make a difference (cf. vv. 16,31-32; Deut. 4:1; Hab. 2:4) and is the natural result of a dynamic faith.

33:14 "practices justice and righteousness" Notice that there is no distinction in this context between secular and sacred because all belongs to God. This is a truth that moderns need to hear. All life and all relationships are sacred because of Gen. 1:26-27.

33:15 "restores a pledge" This term, "a pledge," (BDB 286, KB 285) basically means "to bind." When one borrows he is obligated to repay. To secure this repayment (without interest to a fellow Israelite) the creditor could take something of value and hold it.

- 1. grinding stone, 24:6
- 2. garments, 24:17; Exod. 22:25-27; Job 24:7,10
- 3. ancestral land and houses, Neh. 5:3 (possibly Job 24:2)
- 4. an essential animal, Job 24:3
- 5. essential help, the children, Exod. 21:7; Lev. 25:39-43; II Kgs. 4:1; Job 24:9

Each of these items was a necessary part of daily agricultural existence. To remove any one of these jeopardized the family, even life itself. YHWH's compassion and care for Israel was to be emulated by those Israelites who had resources. God would bless them for their compassion. They would be given more so that they could share more (cf. v. 13; II Cor. 9:6-10).

• "pays back what he has taken by robbery" Robbery is discussed in Exod. 22:1-4; Lev. 6:4,5. The stolen items must be returned with a penalty.

• "walks by the statutes" The VERB (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT) is an idiom of lifestyle faith. Faith is personal and communal. The first can be seen and evaluated by how we treat others!

Notice that the statutes (see Special Topic at 5:7) of God are meant to bestow life (another INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, BDB 310, KB 309). God's laws were to protect humanity during this period of fallenness (i.e., Deut. 30:16).

33:16 "None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him" What a tremendous promise of the forgiveness of God (cf. 18:22; Ps. 103:12; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:18, 19)! When God forgives, God forgets!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:17-20

¹⁷"Yet your fellow citizens say, 'The way of the Lord is not right,' when it is their own way that is not right. ¹⁸When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it. ¹⁹But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them. ²⁰Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.''

33:17-20 This supposed dialogue between God's spokesperson and the wicked is similar to the diatribe format found in Malachi, Paul's writings, and I John.

A statement of truth is made, then a supposed contemporary objector restates or challenges the first statement. In a concluding statement from the first speaker, God gives His answer to contemporary false views.

33:17 "The way of the Lord" This speaks of lifestyle faith (i.e., Deut. 3:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16). The early church's title was "The Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 18:25,26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22).

■ "**right**" This refers to a measuring standard (BDB 1067). It is used often in Ezekiel (cf. 18:25 [twice], 29 [twice]; 33:17 [twice], 20). They were claiming that God's justice was unfair (weighted falsely, cf. I Sam. 2:3; Pro. 16:2; 24:12), but the problem was human, willful rebellion (cf. 18:25, 29).

33:20 "I will judge each of you according to his ways" Notice the individual emphasis continues. This is a recurrent biblical truth. We reap what we sow!

Note Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:21-22

²¹Now in the twelfth year of our exile, on the fifth of the tenth month, the refugees from Jerusalem came to me, saying, "The city has been taken." ²²Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me in the evening, before the refugees came. And He opened my mouth at the time *they* came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened and I was no longer speechless.

33:21 "in the twelfth year of our exile" The Syriac translation has "eleventh."

• "The city has been taken" Ezekiel had predicted this earlier, but this was the first eyewitness confirmation. This is a crucial point in Ezekiel's ministry. Once the predicted judgment of God has struck (i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem), Ezekiel then begins to proclaim YHWH's messages of hope and restoration.

33:22 "the hand of the LORD had been upon me" This is an idiomatic way of referring to God's initiation of a revelatory message (cf. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1). The phrase usually marks crucial transition points, but here and in chapter 3 it denotes an incoming message.

"He opened my mouth" Previously, Ezekiel had been forced to do dramatic actions because he could not speak, but now he was permitted to speak (cf. 3:26, 27; 24:27).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:23-29

²³Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²⁴"Son of man, they who live in these waste places in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was *only* one, yet he possessed the land; so to us who are many the land has been given as a possession.' ²⁵Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You eat *meat* with the blood *in it*, lift up your eyes to your idols as you shed blood. Should you then possess the land? ²⁶You rely on your sword, you commit abominations and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife. Should you then possess the land?''' ²⁷Thus you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "As I live, surely those who are in the waste places will fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves will die of pestilence. ²⁸I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and the pride of her power will cease; and the mountains of Israel will be desolate so that no one will pass through. ²⁹Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I make the land a desolation and a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations which they have committed.'''

33:24 "they who live in these waste places in the land of Israel are saying" Those who escaped the captivity and exile to Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 24), were asserting that God had blessed them and had cursed the exiles, but this was simply not the case (cf. v. 27; 11:1-27).

33:25 "You eat *meat* **with blood** *in it*" This refers to the improper preparations of meat (cf. Lev. 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10,12,14; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23; 15:23). In this context it probably refers to cultic meals at pagan altars.

"" "lift up your eyes" This is a metaphor for prayer. They were idolaters.

• "you shed blood" This refers to (1) the killing of righteous people; (2) the killing of the poor; or (3) the offering of their children to the Phoenician fertility god, *Molech*.

• **Should you then possess the land**" This question is very similar to Jeremiah's temple sermon of chapter 7, in particular vv. 9 and 10.

33:26 "You rely on your sword" They were trusting in their military power and walled cities (cf. v. 28, "the pride of her power will cease").

• "you commit abominations and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife" This refers to the sexual fertility rites of the Canaanite gods, *Ba'al* and *Ashterah*. See Special Topic: Fertility Worship of the Ancient Near East at 8:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:30-33

³⁰"But as for you, son of man, your fellow citizens who talk about you by the walls and in the doorways of the houses, speak to one another, each to his brother, saying, 'Come now and hear what the message is which comes forth from the Lord.' ³¹They come to you as people come, and sit before you *as* My people and hear your words, but they do not do them, for they do the lustful desires *expressed* by their mouth, *and* their heart goes after their gain. ³²Behold, you are to them like a sensual song by one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; for they hear your words but they do not practice them. ³³So when it comes to pass — as surely it will — then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst.''

33:30 Ezekiel's fellow exiles were talking about (his prophecies) what happened to Jerusalem and what would happen to the few who remained. In this context the prophet is commanded to address their concerns.

- 1. come BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE PLURAL
- 2. hear BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE PLURAL

God still wants to speak to His people. The ones in exile are the people He will begin again with.

33:31 "They come to you as people come, and they sit before you *as* **My people but they do the lustful desires** *expressed* **by their mouth**, *and* **their heart goes after their gain**" There was outward, religious show, but no true piety. To them Ezekiel was the best show in town (cf. v. 32), but they had no real desire to turn to God (cf. Isa. 6:9-13; 29:13).

33:32 "for they hear your words but they do not practice them" They hear, but they do not do (i.e., the opposite of *shema*). This is the condemnation of "religious people" (cf. Matt. 7:24-27; James 1:23-25).

The exiles loved to come hear or observe Ezekiel's messages, but they did not really believe them. He was the only show in town. This would all change with the news brought by an exiled survivor of Jerusalem that indeed all that Ezekiel had predicted had occurred (cf. v. 33).

33:33 The mark of a true prophet is that what they predict (unless repentance occurs, i.e., Jonah) comes to pass (cf. v. 29; 13:6; Deut. 18:22; Jer. 28:9). Ezekiel had been right about Judah and Jerusalem and he would be right about the destruction of the nations! He would also be right about the forgiveness and restoration to come!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. What is the significance of chapters 18 and 33?
- 2. What is the difference between the attitude of the people in chapters 18 and 33?
- 3. Explain the spiritual relationship described in 33:12, 13.
- 4. What is repentance?

EZEKIEL 34

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles of Restoration (33:1-39:29)		
Prophecy Against the Shepherds of Israel	Irresponsible Shepherds	The Shepherds of Israel	The Shepherds of Israel	The Shepherds of Israel
34:1-6	34:1-6	34:1-6	34:1-6	34:1-6
34:7-10	34:7-10	34:7-10	34:7-10	34:7-10
The Restoration of Israel	God, the True Shepherd		The Good Shepherd	
34:11-16	34:11-16	34:11-16	34:11-15	34:11-16
			34:16	
34:17-19	34:17-19	34:17-19	34:17-19	34:17-22
34:20-22	34:20-24	34:20-22	34:20-25	
34:23-24		34:23-24		34:23-31
34:25-31	34:25-31	34:25-31		
			34:26-30	
			34:31	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:1-6

¹Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ³You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. ⁴Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you have dominated them. ⁵They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered. ⁶My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill; My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth, and there was no one to search or seek *for them*.''''

34:1 This is literally a marker for a new revelation.

34:2 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "**prophesy**" This term (BDB 612, KB 659) is first used in 4:7 (*Niphal* PERFECT, cf. 37:7), but it appears often as a *Niphal* IMPERATIVE (cf. 6:2; 11:4[twice]; 13:2,17; 20:46; 21:2,9,14,28; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 30:2; 34:2[twice]; 35:2; 36:1,3,6; 37:9[twice],12; 38:2,14; 39:1). See Special Topic at 13:2.

■ "the shepherds of Israel" "Shepherd" (BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. vv. 2[6 times], 3, 5,7,8[3 times],9,10,12,23[twice]) refers to the leaders, both political (i.e., II Sam. 7:7) and religious (i.e., priests, cf. Isa. 56:11; prophets, cf. Jer. 23:1-4; both Jer. 23:9-10; Zech. 11:17; and king, cf. Ezekiel 22). This VERB also occurs in

- 1. *Qal* IMPERFECT, vv. 2,3,8,10,14(twice),15,16,18,19,23(twice)
- 2. *Qal* PERFECT, vv. 8,12,13,23
- 3. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 10

The origin of this concept comes (1) from the pastoral traditions of the Patriarchs (cf. Genesis 49:24); (2) Moses was a shepherd (cf. Exod. 3:1); or (3) from David's early life as a family herdsman (i.e., I Samuel 16:11; Psalm 78:70-71). Sheep are animals that need constant care and protection. Shepherding became a powerful metaphor for this.

Zechariah also uses the concept of true and evil shepherds in an eschatological, apocalyptic setting (cf. Zechariah 11-13).

34:3-4 These false shepherds think more of their own well-being than they do of the people of God (cf. Jer. 50:6).

- 1. feed (lit. pasturing) themselves, vv. 2,8,10
- 2. eat the fat of the sheep, vv. 3,10 (usually the fat is not eaten, cf. 39:19)
- 3. take the wool, v. 3
- 4. do not feed the flock, v. 3
- 5. do not help the sick, v. 4
- 6. do not bind the broken, v. 4
- 7. do not seek the scattered, v. 4
- 8. treat the flock violently, v. 4

34:4 "but with force and with severity you have dominated them" Note the three terms which denote the cruel treatment.

- 1. with force, BDB 306, cf. Jdgs. 4:3; 8:1; II Sam. 2:16
- 2. with severity, BDB 827, cf. Exod. 1:13,14; Lev. 25:43,46,53
- 3. dominated, BDB 921, KB 1109, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Lev. 25:53; 26:17 (this is the same root used in Gen. 1:26,28)

34:5-6 As a result of the action, or lack of action, of leaders, the people of God

- 1. are scattered (cf. Jer. 23:1-2)
- 2. are preyed on (cf. vv. 8,23; 14:15,21)
- 3. wandered away and no one searched for them

Sheep usually stay together. For them to be scattered demonstrates a stressful, dangerous situation.

34:5 "they are scattered for lack of a shepherd" Also refer to Numbers 27:17; I Kings 22:17; and Matthew 9:36.

34:6 "there was no one to search or seek *for them*" The term "search" (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is used several times in this chapter.

- 1. Judah's leaders did not seek, v. 6
- 2. the shepherds did not seek (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT), v. 8
- 3. YHWH will require (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT) His sheep, v. 10
- 4. YHWH, Himself will search (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT) for His sheep

The word "search" is parallel in this verse with "seek" (BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, cf. Jdgs. 6:29; I Chr. 16:11; II Chr. 20:3-4; Job 10:6; Ps. 24:6; 38:12; 105:4; Jer. 29:13)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:7-10

⁷Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ⁸"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely because My flock has become a prey, My flock has even become food for all the beasts of the field for lack of a shepherd, and My shepherds did not search for My flock, but *rather* the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock; ⁹therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰"Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.""

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:11-16

¹¹For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment." **34:11-31** Notice the number of FIRST PERSON MASCULINE SINGULAR statements! YHWH, Himself will act on behalf of His people. This is exactly the opposite of vv. 2-6.

- 1. I Myself will search for My sheep, v. 11
- 2. I Myself will seek them out, v. 11
- 3. I will care for My sheep, v. 12
- 4. I will deliver them, vv. 12,22
- 5. I will bring them out from the peoples, v. 13 (cf. 11:17; 20:41)
- 6. I will gather them, v. 13 (cf. 11:17; 20:34.41; 28:25; 36:24; 37:21; 38:8; 39:27)
- 7. I will feed them, vv. 13,14,15,18
- 8. I will lead them to rest (lit. "cause to lie down"), v. 15 (cf. Ps. 23:1,2)
- 9. I will seek the lost, v. 16
- 10. I will bring back the scattered, v. 16
- 11. I will bind up the broken, v. 16 (cf. Isa. 30:26)
- 12. I will strengthen the sick, v. 16 (cf. Ps. 147:3)
- 13. I will feed them judgment, v. 16
- 14. I will judge between one sheep and another, vv. 17,22
- 15. I will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep, v. 20 (cf. v. 16)
- 16. I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David
- 17. I will be their God, v. 24
- 18. I will make a covenant of peace with them, v. 25
- 19. I will eliminate harmful beasts, v. 25
- 20. I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing, v. 26
- 21. I will cause showers to come down in their season, v. 26
- 22. I have broken the bars of their yoke, v. 27
- 23. I have delivered them, v. 27
- 24. I will establish for them a renowned planting place, v. 29

Here God acts because of His faithless leaders, but in Ezek. 36:27-38 He acts because of His people's inability to be faithful and obedient to His Mosaic covenant. This default on the part of His people precipitates a new covenant based on God's actions and faithfulness (cf. Jer. 31:31-34)! Jesus is the Good Shepherd (cf. John 10; Heb. 13:20; I Pet. 2:25).

34:12 "when he is among the scattered sheep" As a shepherd was present with his flock, so God will be personally present (i.e., for blessing and protection) with His people.

• "on a cloudy and gloomy day" This is an idiom for judgment (cf. 30:3; Ps. 97:2; Joel 2:2; Jer. 13:16; Zeph. 1:15), in this case Israel and Judah's exile.

34:16 NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA, NAB "but the fat and strong I will destroy" NJB "I shall watch over the fat and healthy" LXX "I will guard the strong" Peshitta "I will protect the fat and strong"

The MT has "I will destroy," BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT FIRST PERSON SINGULAR (שמד), but the ancient versions (LXX, Peshitta, and Vulgate) have "I will preserve," BDB 1036, KB 1581 (שמר). The context supports both.

- 1. "preserve" fits the immediate verse
- 2. "destroy" fits the larger context (cf. vv. 17-22) of the chapter better

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:17-19

¹⁷"As for you, My flock, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats. ¹⁸Is it too slight a thing for you that you should feed in the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pastures? Or that you should drink of the clear waters, that you must foul the rest with your feet? ¹⁹As for My flock, they must eat what you tread down with your feet and drink what you foul with your feet!'''

34:17 "As for you, My flock" Ezekiel is making a comparison between the future condition of

- 1. the current leadership
- 2. the people

■ "I will judge between one sheep and another, between the rams and the male goats" This refers to a judgment between the strong and the weak, between the greedy shepherds and the true shepherds (cf. v. 22).

34:18 "Is it too slight a thing for you" This is an idiom of inappropriate actions (cf. 16:20; Num. 16:9,13; Josh. 22:17; II Sam. 7:19; Isa. 7:13).

■ Sheep do not like to feed in trampled pastures nor drink from muddied waters (cf. Psalm 23). The wealthy not only exploited the weak, poor, and socially ostracized, they made it such that they could not prosper and become free of their situation. This violates many passages in Leviticus and Deuteronomy about how the covenant people should treat each other.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:20-22

²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them, "Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you push with side and with shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns until you have scattered them abroad, ²²therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another.

34:21 The leaders are described as aggressive male rams and goats that push and shove the people away.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:23-24

²³"Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

34:23 "one shepherd" This probably refers to a united Israel (i.e., the children of Jacob, seed of Abraham). There will no longer be a divided monarchy as occurred in 922 B.C. (i.e., Israel and Judah).

• "My servant" This is an honorific title used first of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cf. Deut. 9:27). It is used of Moses in Num. 12:7; Deut. 34:5; and Josh. 1:1,2,13,15; 8:31,33; 11:12,15; 12:6; 13:8; 14:7; 18:7; 22:2,4,5. It is also used of Joshua after his death (i.e., Josh. 24:29). In Isaiah it becomes a way of referring to Israel collectively, but also to the special coming son of David (cf. Isaiah 40-56). You can clearly see this interplay between the corporate and individual in Isaiah 42. Note that v. 1 is quoted in the NT as referring to the Messiah (cf. Matt. 12:18-21), but v. 19 obviously refers to the people of God (cf. 41:8-10; 44:21). This interplay occurs in several of the "Servant Songs" (cf. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12), which are unique to Isaiah.

■ "David" David became the ideal king (cf. v. 24; 37:24; II Samuel 7; Ps. 18:50; 89; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5; 16:5; 55:3-5; Jer. 23:5-6; 30:9; 33:15,17; Hosea 3:5; Micah 5:2-5). David was sinful (like all humans), but he had a heart for God. He became a way of referring to the special coming king of righteousness (see E. W. Hengstenber, *Christology of the Old Testament*, pp. 687-690).

34:24 "I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be a prince among them" These verses are (i.e., 23-24) parallels of 37:24-25. It is obviously Messianic. Note the typical covenant language! This is reunification of the covenant people under a Davidic monarch, as well as the fulfillment of God's covenant blessings (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28). Also note the concluding phrase, which assures the fulfillment of this divine promise (cf. Amos 9:11-15).

- The questions related to these verses are
- 1. when does it occur?
- 2. who does it refer to?

Some try to relate this to the return under Zerubbabel (a prince of Judah, cf. Ezra 1:8; the exact relationship between Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel is disputed). Others note the continuing problems of the post-exilic period (see Haggai and Malachi) and assert that these ideal conditions must refer to the future.

It seems best to me because of

- 1. the nature of prophecy (see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*)
- 2. the expansion of the NT into a universal gospel (i.e., Eph. 2:11-3:13)
- 3. the symbolic nature of chapters 34-39, 40-41, which relates this to God's plans for a restored Israel in the Persian period. All prophecy is conditional, even this one. God wanted to restore Israel and would have if only Israel wanted to and would have been obedient.

Does the "everlasting covenant" of 16:60 and 37:26 (cf. Isa. 55:3; 61:8) refer to a realized OT community or the NT human family? My presuppositional theology pushes me to option #2. For me as a historical-grammatical interpreter, the OT must stand on its own as the word of God. I must interpret it in light of the original inspired author's intent. However, progressive revelation (i.e., Jesus' life, actions, and teaching, plus NT authors) refocuses the message from a Jewish setting in Palestine to a universal gospel for all peoples (cf. Acts), thus fulfilling the concept of monotheism and the universal promise of Gen. 3:15. These prophecies must be analyzed through two lenses (i.e., the OT and the NT). Christianity is only true if the NT is the fulfillment of the OT and Jesus is the promised Messiah. The hope is wider than Israel. Genesis 3:15 is a promise to all the sons and daughters of Adam, not just Jews. There were no Jews in Genesis 3.

• "I will be their God" The king of Israel was to be God's representative (cf. I Samuel 8). This represents the ideal picture of a society where God is the true King and the righteous leader is His visible representative!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:25-31

²⁵"I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. ²⁷Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. ²⁸They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make *them* afraid. ²⁹I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. ³⁰Then they will know that I, the LORD their God,

am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares the Lord GOD. ³¹As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

34:25 "I will make a covenant of peace" This term "peace" is the Hebrew *Shalom* (BDB 1022, cf. 37:24-28; 39:25-29; Lev. 26:6). It must be remembered that all covenants have obligations (see Special Topic: Covenant at 16:8). Free creatures have options!

Is this "covenant of peace" the same as "the new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34? Ezekiel 36:22-38 (like these texts) describes a new way that YHWH will relate to His covenant people, a way characterized by (1) a new heart and a new mind and (2) YHWH's personal action on their behalf. A new covenant initially focuses on God's graciousness in redemption, still desires a righteous people to draw "the nations" to Himself!

■ "eliminate harmful beasts from the land" As is so often the case, Ezekiel is influenced by Leviticus 26 (i.e., v. 22) and Deuteronomy (i.e., 32:24). The curses of disobedience are reversed into the blessing of covenant fidelity. The blessing was always YHWH's intent. He wanted to attract the nations to Himself by blessing Israel (see Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 12:16).

The prophecy of the new age is Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25, which includes animals and shows the original intent of Eden (i.e., a place of fellowship between God and humanity, and humanity and the animal kingdom). The Bible starts with an Edenic setting and also ends the same way (cf. Revelation 21-22). Heaven is depicted as a recreated Garden of Eden. Animals are part of this depiction!

• "so that they may live securely" This was part of the promises of Deuteronomy, which Ezekiel restates (cf. 28:26; 34:27,28; 38:8,11,14; 39:26; Jer. 33:16). Their security is because of the presence of God!

34:26 "My hill" This is a reference to Jerusalem and specifically the temple mount (cf. 20:40-49). God's hill is a contrast to the worship of the fertility gods of Canaan on the natural and manmade hills.

The prophecy, which is typical of the prophets, refers to a restored Jerusalem. Must this be taken literally? This is a central issue in dispensational theology. I have come to a different conclusion. Here are the introductory notes from my commentary on Revelation.

CRUCIAL INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE "Why Do Christians Have So Many Dogmatic Interpretations of Revelation"

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

- 1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
- 2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
- 3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . .then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models

- 4. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
- 5. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first
- 6. Let us discuss these tensions one at a time

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

- 1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
- 2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
- 3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
- 4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
- 5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thessalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
- 6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation)

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

- 1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
- 2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
- 3. The promise of a land which is <u>so</u> integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
- 4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are:
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if. . .then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, <u>believing</u> Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book Biblical Interpretations said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . .First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ's first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

- 1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
- 2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
- 3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Revelation 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE

It must be said that the different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret well some texts. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true, but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

■ "I will cause showers" Moisture at the appropriate time and in expected amounts was part of the covenant blessings of Lev. 26:4 and Deut. 28:12. These were agricultural people living in an arid climate. Society was based on the regular and expected cycles of the seasons! God controls the cycle and the seasons (i.e., Lev. 25:21).

The phrase "showers of blessings" reflects the agricultural nature of God's promised blessings (cf. Deuteronomy 28).

34:27 "a tree of the field will yield its fruit" This refers to the covenant abundance (cf. Deuteronomy 27; Hosea 2:22; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13, 14; Zech. 8:12).

• "I have broken the bars of their yoke" This is an idiom of oppression first used in Lev. 26:13. So much of Ezekiel's vocabulary and theology comes from Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29.

34:28-29 The nations will no longer dominate God's people. This is the result of the original covenant coming into reality!

34:29NASB"a renowned planting"NKJV"a garden of renown"NRSV, NJB"a splendid vegetation"TEV"fertile fields"JPSOA"a planting of renown"

NIV"a land of renown"REB"their crops renowned"Peshitta"a plantation of peace"LXX"a plant of peace"

The word "planting" (BDB 642) can mean the plant itself or where it is planted. So the text is referring to (1) God's people's crops and herds being very productive (i.e., evidence covenant restored, which is the fruitfulness and safety described in vv. 25-27) or (2) God's people going back to Palestine (evidence covenant restored). The LXX and Peshitta reverse two consonants in the PREPOSITION plus the NOUN "renown/name" (BDB 1027) and change it to "peace" (BDB 1023) to link up with v. 25 (i.e., "I will make a covenant of peace").

This imagery goes back to 17:22-24 and the opposite of 19:10-14 (cf. Isa. 60:21; 61:3). One of the titles for the Messiah is "Branch" (cf. Isa. 4:2). There is a mixing of metaphors here.

- 1. the cosmic tree (i.e., Ezekiel 31)
- 2. Israel as a plant (or planting place, which is parallel to v. 26a)
- 3. the Messiah as a shoot or branch from a stump (cf. Isa. 11:2,10; 53:2; Rom. 15:12)

34:30 "I the LORD their God am with them" These are Covenant terms which show that the Covenant has been restored in the midst of the destruction of the temple! There is no more significant statement than "I am with them" (i.e., Emmanuel).

34:31 This covenant language about God as Shepherd (cf. John 10) and His people as sheep is also found in Psalm 23; 78:52; 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10). This is such a wonderful metaphor of personal presence, care, protection, and provision!

■ "you are men, and I am your God" This is not meant to be an emphasis on transcendence, but on the special creation of humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7-8). The LXX omits "you are men" and it is followed by RSV, REB, NAB. Because "men" are mentioned in parallel texts in this literary unit of Ezekiel (i.e., 36:37,38), it seems best to stay with the MT.

EZEKIEL 35

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles of Restoration (33:1-39:29)		
Prophecy Against Mount Seir	Judgment on Mount Seir	The Oracle Against Edom	God's Punishment on Edom	Against the Mountains of Edom
35:1-9	35:1-9	35:1-9	35:1-4	35:1-9
(3b-4)	(3b-4)	(3b-4)	(3b-4)	
			35:5-9	
35:10-15	35:10-15	35:10-15	35:10-13	35:10-15
			35:13-15	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:1-9

¹Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²"Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it

³and say to it, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir,

And I will stretch out My hand against you

And make you a desolation and a waste.

⁴I will lay waste your cities

And you will become a desolation.

Then you will know that I am the LORD.

⁵Because you have had everlasting enmity and have delivered the sons of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of the punishment of the end, ⁶therefore as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will give you over to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you; since you have not hated bloodshed, therefore bloodshed will pursue you. ⁷I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation and I will cut off from it the one who passes through and returns. ⁸I will fill its mountains with its slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain by the sword will fall. ⁹I will make you an everlasting desolation and your cities will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

35:2 "set your face against" See note at 1:3.

■ "Mount Seir" This refers to the nation of Edom (cf. 25:12-14; 32:29; 36:5). I am surprised that another judgment against Edom is included (cf. 25:12-14). Edom must have a symbolic connotation. She (1) mocks and attacks God's people, vv. 5,11, cf. Ps. 137:7; Isa. 63:1-6; Obad. vv. 8-19; (2) is prideful (cf. vv. 10-11) here; and (3) had arrogant thoughts against YHWH and His people, vv. 12,13 (Edom had "everlasting enmity," v. 5). Moderns must admit that we do not know the reasons and procedures for the editing and compilation of OT books. It is possible that Edom stands for all anti-God human societies (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 957).

The concept of "mountain" may be the key to this text. The high plateau of Edom, of which they were so proud, will not save them. As judgment came to the mountains of Israel (i.e., chapter 6), so too, now to the mountains of Edom (cf. vv. 8,15). As judgment comes to arrogant Edom, blessing will return to the repentant covenant people (i.e., the mountains of Israel, cf. v. 12).

35:3 "Lord GOD" This is literally "Adon YHWH." See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 2:4.

"I will stretch out My hand against you" This is an anthropomorphic idiom of God's ability to act effectively (cf. 25:7,13; Jer. 51:25). See Special Topic at 1:3.

■ "a desolation and a waste" These two parallel terms (cf. v. 7) sound alike (i.e., BDB 1031 and BDB 1031) and have the same consonants as "Shammah," a grandson of Edom (BDB 1031, cf. Gen. 36:13,17; I Chr. 1:37). Possible meanings are

- 1. desolation, שממה, cf. vv. 4,7,9,14,15
- 2. waste, משמה, cf. v. 7; 6:14; 33:28,29
- 3. a grandson of Edom, שמה

35:5 "at the time of their calamity, at the time of the punishment of the end" Notice that these two phrases are parallel. The first obviously refers to the invasion of Judah by Babylon. The second must refer to the same time, which shows "the end" (BDB 893) and must be interpreted in context. Interpreters must be careful of not assigning one meaning to a word or phrase and then using it in every place the word appears. Context determines meaning, not one is systematic eschatology!

35:6 "as I live" This is an oath based on the name of YHWH, the ever-living, only-living, I Am (cf. Exod. 3:14). This is a recurrent idiom in Ezekiel (cf. 5:11; 14:16,18,20; 16:48; 17:16,19; 18:3; 20:3,31; 33:11; 34:8; 35:6,11). See Special Topic at 2:4.

• "blood" The term (BDB 196) can refer to one's "life force" and if it is spilt, to one's death. It is used four times in this verse.

- 1. I will give you over to bloodshed
- 2. bloodshed will pursue you
- 3. you have not hated bloodshed (i.e., murder)
- 4. therefore bloodshed will pursue you (repeated)

We reap what we sow (cf. vv. 11,15).

Just a textual note, the LXX changes #3 to "you are guilty of blood," which is followed by RSV, NEB, REB, NJB, but this demands a change of several consonants. The MT makes sense.

35:7 Mount Seir is an idiom for all the inhabitants of Edom.

35:9 Edom's destruction will be permanent (cf. Mal. 1:2-4, esp. v. 4; Jer. 49:13). Edom's permanent destruction was because of her "everlasting enmity" (v. 5; and Obadiah)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:10-15

¹⁰"Because you have said, 'These two nations and these two lands will be mine, and we will possess them,' although the LORD was there, ¹¹therefore as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will deal *with you* according to your anger and according to your envy which you showed because of your hatred against them; so I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. ¹²Then you will know that I, the LORD, have heard all your revilings which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel saying, 'They are laid desolate; they are given to us for food.' ¹³And you have spoken arrogantly against Me and have multiplied your words against Me; I have heard it.'' ¹⁴'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''As all the earth rejoices, I will make you a desolation. ¹⁵As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you. You will be a desolation, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'''

35:10 Edom rejected its required brotherly love for Judah (and Israel, i.e., "two nations") and desired her lands for herself (cf. vv. 5, 10). The problem is that Judah's land belonged to YHWH (i.e., "the Lord was there"). It was only Judah's by a conditional covenant.

YHWH left Judah in chapter 10, but in 48:35 the book of Ezekiel ends with "The YHWH is there" (cf. Ps. 132:13,14).

35:12NASB"revilings"NKJV, NJB"blasphemies"NRSV"abusive speech"TEV"with contempt"

The noun (BDB 611) is found only here and Neh. 9:18. The revilings are against "the mountains of Israel," but clearly, in context, it is against Israel's God (cf. vv. 5,10-11,13). This is why Edom is often seen as a type of all anti-God nations!

35:14 "as all the earth rejoices" This is a hyperbolic metaphor. The earth, as YHWH's creation, rejoices when His will is done. The earth is affected by humanity's sin (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 8:19-22).

EZEKIEL 36

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles of Restoration (33:1-:39:29)		
The Mountains of Israel To Be Blessed	Blessing On Israel	Prophecy To the Mountains of Israel	God's Blessing on Israel	Prophecy About the Mountains of Israel
36:1-12	36:1-7	36:1-7	36:1-4	36:1-5
			36:5	
			36:6-12	36:6-7
	36:8-15	36:8-12		36:8-12
36:13-15		36:13-15	36:13-15	36:13-15
	The Renewal of Israel		Israel's New Life	
36:16-21	36:16-21	36:16-21	36:16-21	36:16-32
Israel To Be Renewed for His Name's Sake				
36:22-32	36:22-32	36:22-32	36:22-32	
36:33-36	36:33-36	33:33-36	36:33-36	36:33-36
36:37-38	36:37-38	36:37-38	36:37-38	36:37-38

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- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

It must be remembered that these chapters fall into the major literary unit of chapters 33-39, which are an emphasis on God restoring His people and their land.

- A. Chapter 36 is a personification of the land with its renewed blessings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28).
- B. Chapter 37 is a metaphor of the national restoration amidst the death of exile.
- C. Both of these chapters are historical precursors of future events.
 - 1. post-exilic restoration under Zerubbbel
 - 2. Pentecost, where believing Jews received the Spirit (Heb. 8:6-13)
 - 3. eschatological setting (Romans 9-11)
- D. A quote from Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, has a good word about this chapter.

"Arising, then, out of this sure, unswerving love of God, we get the doctrine of the Remnant, and with it the belief that God Himself will accomplish in Israel that repentance and turning to Him without which there can never be any hope of better days, or indeed any Remnant. God will indeed find in Israel that righteousness which He demands, but it will not be of Israel's doing, even supposing that it is of Israel's desiring. It will be because God's sure love will find a way. Herein are the beginnings of those doctrines of the Christian Faith which we sons of the Reformation know assuredly to be at the root of the Gospel, in chief, Salvation by Faith alone, and through Grace, for even the first stirrings towards repentance in the human heart are the work of God Himself" (p. 122).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:1-12

¹"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. ²Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because the enemy has spoken against you, 'Aha!' and, 'The everlasting heights have become our possession,' ³therefore prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "For good reason they have made you desolate and crushed you from every side, that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations and you have been taken up in the talk and the whispering of the people.""⁴Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD. Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the forsaken cities which have become a prey and a derision to the rest of the nations which are round about, ⁵therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul, to drive it out for a prey." ⁶Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and in My wrath because you have endured the insults of the nations.' ⁷Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'I have sworn that surely the nations which are around you will themselves endure their insults. ⁸But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come.

⁹For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown. ¹⁰I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places will be rebuilt. ¹¹I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD. ¹²Yes, I will cause men—My people Israel—to walk on you and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.'''

36:1 As usual Ezekiel starts a new vision with YHWH addressing him directly (i.e., "son of man"). This literary marker is usually accompanied by IMPERATIVES. In this chapter

- 1. prophesy, BDB 612, KB 655, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 3,6 (*Niphal* PERFECT in 4:7)
- 2. say, BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT (often *Qal* IMPERATIVE in 12:10,11,23,28; 17:9,12)
- 3. hear, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 13:2 where all three are used. This command is repeated in v. 4.

• **O mountains of Israel**" Earlier in Ezekiel's prophecies (chapter 6) this same idiom (unique in Ezekiel) is negative (i.e., judgment).

36:2 The arrogance of the surrounding nations over the demise of YHWH's people and their annexing her lands causes Him to act!

■ "Aha" This INTERJECTION (BDB 210) expresses joy at another's demise (cf. Ps. 35:21,25; Ezek. 25:3; 26:2; 36:2).

• "the everlasting heights" Often the mountains are used as one of God's two permanent witnesses, but here they are used as a personification of Israel and the blessings to come. It is ironical that the same word "heights," *bamoth* (BDB 119), was used of the high places of Canaanite fertility worship (cf. 20:29). This phrase may imply that the surrounding nations see Palestine as an especially blessed place (i.e., fruitful, cf. Deut. 11:11).

36:3 "therefore" Notice that vv. 3,4,5,6, and 7 all start with the ADVERB "so" or "thus" (BDB 485), when used with a PREPOSITION means "that being so" or "therefore" (e.g., Num. 16:11; Ezek. 11:4; 37:12; 38:14).

• "for good cause they have made you desolate" This is a confession and recognition of the sins of God's people that resulted in the exile.

Judah's condition is described in three INFINITIVES.

- 1. desolate, BDB 1030, KB 1563, Qal INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT used in two senses
 - a. be desolate, 6:4; 20:26; 25:3; 29:12; 30:7,12,14; 32:15; 33:28; 36:4
 - b. be appalled, 3:15; 4:17; 26:16; 27:35; 28:19; 32:10
- 2. crushed or trampled upon, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, cf. Ps. 56:2; 57:4; 94:5; Isa. 3:15; Amos 2:7; 8:4
- 3. become the possession ("possession," BDB 440, cf. Exod. 6:8; Ezek. 11:15; 25:10; 33:24; 36:2,5), BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

■ "the talk and whisperings of the people" This refers to amazement of the reproach of those who live near or pass by (cf. v. 15; 34:29; Deut. 28:57; Ps. 44:9-16; Jer. 18:16). The people speak of defeated Judah as they did of her God (cf. 34:12-13).

36:4 God addresses His devastated land (i.e., its covenant people). God's people had become exactly the opposite (i.e., a prey [BDB 103] and a derision [BDB 541]) of what He intended for them to be to the nations.

36:5 This is a summary verse expressing God's sorrow in judging His own covenant people (i.e., jealousy is a love word). But now He will judge those who

- 1. took His people's land
- 2. rejoiced over their downfall
- 3. disrespected ("scorn of soul") them
- 4. drove them out of the Promised Land

These surrounding nations are the very ones Ezekiel addresses (except Babylon) in chapters 25-32.

"My land" YHWH owns all lands by creation (cf. Exod. 19:5), but He uniquely claims a special ownership of Canaan (cf. 38:16; Lev. 25:23; Isa. 14:25; Jer. 2:7; Joel 1:6; 3:2).

36:7 "I have sworn" This is literally "lift up my hands," which was an idiomatic way of referring to an oath (cf. 20:5,6,15,23,28,42; 44:12; 47:14). Often YHWH's oath is stated as "as I live, declares the Lord."

36:8 "Oh mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear fruit for My people" This is the opposite of what the mountains of Edom will do (cf. 35:3, 7, 15). This is a fulfillment of 17:23 and 34:26-29 (cf. Isaiah 4; 27:6).

39:9 "I am for you" The covenant will be restored. YHWH will be with and for His people again. The promises of Deuteronomy 28 will be actualized.

"I will turn to you" As is so often the case, Ezekiel uses phrases from Leviticus 26 or Deuteronomy 27-29. This phrase is in Lev. 26:9.

36:10-15 This reflects the promises of Deuteronomy. It implies that the covenant is renewed and is being obeyed! These blessings are for a repentant and obedient Israel!

- 1. multiply men on you
- 2. cities reinhabited
- 3. waste places rebuilt
- 4. multiply man and beast
- 5. treat you better than at the first
- 6. possess Canaan as an inheritance
- 7. no loss of children
- 8. no more insults from the surrounding nations
- 9. no more stumbling on Israel's part

36:10 "all the house of Israel, all of it" This speaks of the reuniting of the thirteen tribes of Israel (cf. 37:21,22; Jer. 3:18; 50:4).

36:12 "you" This is a personification of the Promised Land (i.e., "the mountains of Israel" or "the everlasting heights"). YHWH has been addressing them in v. 1 through v. 15.

• "never again bereave them of children" This phrase may link back to the spies' report found in Num. 13:32 or YHWH's judgment from Jer. 15:7. If so, it refers to famine, plague, sword, and wild beasts.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:13-15

¹³"Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because they say to you, "You are a devourer of men and have bereaved your nation of children," ¹⁴therefore you will no longer devour men and no longer bereave your nation of children,' declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁵I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore, nor will you bear disgrace from the peoples any longer, nor will you cause your nation to stumble any longer," declares the Lord GOD."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:16-21

¹⁶Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ¹⁷"Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. ¹⁸Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. ¹⁹Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.' ²¹But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.''

36:16-21 YHWH reminds His people of their sins.

- 1. they defiled YHWH's land
- 2. they shed blood (murder or child sacrifice to *Molech*)
- 3. they were idolatrous

therefore, YHWH (recurrent themes in Ezekiel)

- 1. poured out His wrath on them
- 2. scattered them among the nations
- 3. judged them according to their ways and deeds

Instead of revealing YHWH to the nations, they profaned His name (in the land and in exile). YHWH wanted to use a people to reveal Himself to all people (cf. vv. 32,36). Israel failed to be a clear reflection of YHWH, as a matter of fact, they distorted His image. He has a universal redemptive plan that will not be thwarted! So, He will act Himself to reveal Himself. The new action is "the new covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34 (i.e., the New Testament). This new covenant, based on YHWH's actions, is described in vv. 22-38.

36:17 "like the uncleanness of a women in her impurity" To the Jews all bodily excretions made one ceremonially unclean. See Lev. 15:19-30.

36:18 "the blood which they shed" This refers either to (1) the murder of righteous people; (2) the murder of poor people; or (3) child sacrifice to *Molech*.

• "idols" See note at 18:15.

36:19 "I scattered them among the nations" This is the covenant curse of Lev. 26:33 coming to fruition (cf. Ezek. 20:23). This judgment on Judah's covenant disobedience became an opportunity for YHWH to reveal Himself to the nations (cf. 36:20-21,22-23).

• "and according to their ways and their deeds I have judged them" See note at 33:20.

36:20 "they have profaned my holy name" Remember that YHWH was linked to the nation and the nation went into captivity. YHWH was willing for His own name to be impugned that His people might turn back to Him. Israel and Judah profaned YHWH's name (i.e., reputation) in several ways.

- 1. covenant disobedience
- 2. Canaanite worship
- 3. national defeat

YHWH is jealous for His holiness (cf. 39:7, see Special Topic at 20:12).

36:21 "But I had concern for My holy name" YHWH is concerned (lit. "took pity," BDB 328, KB 328, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see the negative in 5:11; 7:4,9; 8:18; 9:5,10) about His reputation (cf. 20:39) because He is in the business of winning all humans made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) to faith and repentance in Himself (cf. v. 14). His name stands for His person!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:22-32

²²"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. ²³I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. ²⁴For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ²⁵Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean: I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. ²⁸You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. ³⁰I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. ³²I am not doing *this* for your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"

36:22-32 Verse 22 captures the essence of the new covenant (cf. Luke 22:20; I Cor. 11:25; Galatians 3, 4; Heb. 8:6-13; 10:15-18)! Notice the things He will do to reestablish His reputation (cf. v. 23).

- 1. I will take you from the nations and bring you back to Canaan, v. 24
- 2. I will sprinkle clean water on you and cleanse you from filthiness and idolatry, v. 25
- 3. I will give you a new heart and a new spirit, v. 26
- 4. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to obey My covenant, v. 27
- 5. I will be your God in the Promised Land, v. 28

- 6. I will forgive and restore covenant fruitfulness, vv. 29-30
- 7. YHWH will do this to reveal Himself (v. 32). His people will be grieved over their sin (vv. 31-32).

36:25 "sprinkle clean water on you" Remember that Ezekiel was a trained priest who would be familiar with water as a symbol of spiritual cleansing (e.g., Exod. 29:4; 30:18-21; Lev. 1:9,13; 6:28; 8:6,21; 14:5,6,8,9,51,52; 15:5,6,7,8,10,11,21,22,27; 16:4,24,26,28; 17:15; 22:6; Num. 5:17-27; 8:7; 19:7,8,9, 13,17,18,19,20,21). Some commentators think this text, which links "water" and "Spirit," is the key OT background to John 3:5 (see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 67-68).

36:26 "I will give you a new heart" The balance is seen in Ezek. 18:31 (see full note there), where the Israelites are commanded to make themselves a new heart (cf. Ezek. 11:19; Jer. 31:31-34). God always comes in grace, but humans, empowered by YHWH's grace, must respond. The "heart" (see Special Topic at 11:19) was the center of the intellect as the spirit was the source of life. When both are used together, it refers to the entire person.

36:27 "I will put My Spirit within you" This is setting the stage for the "Spirit" in chapter 37. He is the sign of the new age (cf. Ezek. 37:14; 39:29; Isa. 42:1; 44:3; 59:21; Joel 2:28, 29). This is rare text where the Spirit is personalized and internalized (cf. 37:14; 39:29; Isa. 11:2; 32:15; 44:3; 59:21; Jer. 32:36-41; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2). This is New Covenant terminology! This is a precursor to the concept of a Trinity (see Special Topic at 2:2), which is so difficult to contemplate in connection with monotheism.

For good articles on the Spirit in the OT see

- 1. Hard Sayings of the Bible, pp. 273-274
- 2. Christian Theology, 2nd ed., by Millard J. Erickson, pp. 881-885

36:28 "my people, and I will be your God" These are covenant terms (cf. 11:20; 14:11; 37:23,27), which show that YHWH has reestablished the covenants of the Patriarchs and Moses.

36:30 "I will multiply the fruit of the tree" This refers to the covenant blessings (cf. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28).

36:31 "You will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves" This refers to the repentance of the covenant people (cf. Ezek. 6:9; 16:61,63; 20:43; Jer. 22:22; 31:19). Repentance, faith, obedience (cf. Deut. 30:1-3), and perseverance are covenant requirements of the OT and NT. Justification must not be separated from sanctification! Both are gifts from God in which believers must participate (cf. v. 20).

36:32 YHWH wants His people to acknowledge their sin. This verse has three commands.

- 1. "let it be known," BDB 393, KB 390, Niphal IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 2. "be ashamed," BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. "be confounded," BDB 483, KB 480, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE

Verse 32 is a crucial theological message.

- 1. YHWH is going to act for His name's sake, not for Israel's glory.
- 2. Israel must repent. The new covenant is also conditional on repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance (cf. 6:9; 16:63; 20:43; Jer. 31:18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:33-36

³³'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. ³⁴The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. ³⁵They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified *and* inhabited.' ³⁶Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it."

36:33-36 This is a repeat of vv. 10-15.

36:36 "the nations that are left round about you" What nations are these? Does it refer to the surrounding nations addressed in chapters 25-32? If so, then the call to "take prophecy literally" must be questioned here. If it refers to future unnamed nations, what is the purpose of their "knowing that I am the LORD"? Are these Gentile nations just to recognize His blessing on Israel or come to know her God also?

All of us who believe, honor, respect, and cherish God's Word struggle with the relationship between the Old and New Covenants. If the NT is the fulfillment of the OT and the specific fulfillment of Gen. 3:15, then the scope of God's love must be expanded to all nations because of Gen. 1:26-27; 3:15; and 12:3 (see Special Topic at 12:16)! This does not minimize Israel, but recognizes that the biblical focus is on YHWH, not Israel. The focus of the gospel is not Israel, but the redemption and restoration of all mankind. Jesus, not Israel, is the key thrust of the NT. If He is Messiah and if the NT writers are inspired (esp. Paul and the author of Hebrews), then a new day has come, a universal offer has been made, a once-for-all sacrifice has been given! The original purpose of creation has been fulfilled, not in Israel, but in fellowship between God and His highest creation, mankind. Salvation is the restoration of the image of God in humanity damaged in the fall of Genesis 3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:37-38

³⁷'Thus says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. ³⁸Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD.""

36:37-38 This is a reemphasis on vv. 10, 11.

36:37 "I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them" YHWH reverses His unwillingness to hear Israel's prayers (cf. 14:3; 20:3,31; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 11:11).

EZEKIEL 37

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles of Restoration (33:1-39:29)		
Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones	The Dry Bones Live	Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones	The Valley of Dry Bones	The Dry Bones
37:1-6	37:1-10	37:1-6	37:1-3a	37:1-10
			37:3b	
			37:4-6	
37:7-10		37:7-10	37:7-8	
			37:9	
The Vision Expanded			37:10	
37:11-14	37:11-14	37:11-14	37:11-14	37:11-14
Reunion of Judah and Israel	One Kingdom, One King	Oracle of the Two Sticks	Judah and Israel in One Kingdom	Judah and Israel in One Kingdom
37:15-23	37:15-17	37:15-23	37:15-19	37:15-16
				37:17-19
	37:18-23			
The Davidic Kingdom			37:20-28	37:20-28
37:24-28	37:24-28	37:24-28		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This section of Ezekiel (i.e., chapters 33-39) is confusing to me because
 - 1. it is surprising that Edom is condemned again in chapter 35 (cf. 25:12-14)
 - 2. it is surprising that after Israel's marvelous restoration she is attacked again by surrounding nations (i.e., chapters 38-39)

This section sets the theological stage for John's vision in Revelation 19-20. As surprising as it is, the truth is clear. Spiritual restoration will be followed by conflict! Things are not getting "better and better" (i.e., post-millennialism)! However, a time of spiritual victory will be followed by a time of ultimate victory over evil. It is surely possible that Edom, as well as Gog, Magog, Meshech, and Tubal, is representative of the pervasive evil which attacks God's people.

- B. The final literary unit (chapters 40-48) is a way of showing that the spiritual apostasy of chapters 8-10 is over and God's throne is restored to its special place. The last vision is one of ultimate, complete victory (i.e., a new temple).
- C. However, if it is true that one must interpret the OT through the eyes of the NT, then the book of Hebrews tells believers that Ezekiel was a partial, temporary divine revelation (cf. Heb. 1:1). Progressive revelation negates a new temple! Even II Thess. 2:4 must be seen as a Greek temple (i.e., "take his seat," there is no seat in a Jewish Temple). A current popular theology (i.e., dispensationalism) focuses on Israel and Jerusalem, thereby reading the NT through the eyes of the OT. The NT must have priority! The focus of the gospel is Jesus and His death for all humans, not Israel! Please look at my "crucial introduction" to Revelation (Special Topic at 34:26). Who are the "covenant people" now? Ths is <u>the question!</u>!
- D. There are several key terms repeated in this chapter.
 - 1. (BDB 924, KB 1194-1201, also used extensively in chapters 1,3,11,42)
 - a. Spirit, vv. 1,14
 - b. breath, vv. 5,6,8,9(twice),10
 - c. wind, v. 9
 - 2. חיה (BDB 310, KB 309, also used extensively in chapters 18, 33)
 - a. live, vv. 3,9,14
 - b. come to life, vv. 5,6,10
 - 3. vTv, know, vv. 3,6,13,14,28 (BDB 393, KB 309, used extensively in Ezekiel)
 - 4. כתב, write (BDB 507), vv. 16(twice),20 (cf. 2:10; 13:9; 24:2; 43:11)
 - 5. גבא, prophesy, vv. 4,7(twice),9(twice),10,12 (BDB 612, KB 659, see Special Topic at 13:2)
- E. There may be a shift in metaphors from a battlefield, full of the unburied, sun-bleached bones in vv. 1-11 (esp. v. 10), to a graveyard in v. 12. We must remember this is highly symbolic Hebrew poetic prophecy. Ezekiel is a precursor to the interbiblical apocalyptic literature. However, this chapter is not apocalyptic!
- F. Especially in a prophetic book like Ezekiel we must familiarize ourselves with the genre of prophecy. Three small paperback books have helped me navigate these turbulent waters!
 - 1. *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart (pp. 181-204)
 - 2. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks* by D. Brent Sandy

- 3. Cracking Old Testament Codes by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald Giese
- 4. Also note *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, pp. 292-312.

Many personal and denominational dragons (i.e., presuppositions and biases) live in these waters!

G. After thinking through this whole issue of a restored geographical Israel, it becomes obvious why dispensationalsim wants to separate Israel and the church. This relatively new system of thought (see C. Bass, *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*) takes seriously OT Scripture (cf. Matt. 5:17-19). If OT prophecy is literally true (and I am not sure this is true in light of genre studies, cf. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks* by D. Brent Sandy), there must be an end-time national Israel and we learn from chapters 38-39 that it will be invaded during a golden age of peace and security.

The problem comes when this is <u>not</u> the theological agenda of the NT, which focuses on believers and unbelievers and depreciates the Jew-Gentile divide (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). At this point the theological options are difficult to make.

- 1. OT Scripture has been superceded by the gospel
- 2. Israel is no longer the key to world evangelization
- 3. the OT prophesies about national Israel must be rethought
- 4. the whole theological system of dispensationalism which posits
 - a. all prophecies must be literally fulfilled to national Israel
 - b. the church and Israel are totally separate
 - c. there will be a secret rapture of the church so that OT prophecies can be literally fulfilled to Israel
 - d. the millennium (and the book of Revelation) are primarily about Israel and not the church

must be rejected as sincere and clever, but misguided! Its presuppositional grid is more logical than biblical! All systems have errors. The Bible does not support "systems."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:1-6

¹The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. ²He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, *there were* very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, *they were* very dry. ³He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." ⁴Again He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. ⁶I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

37:1 "The hand of the LORD was upon me" This has been a recurrent literary marker of a new revelation (cf. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HAND (ILLUSTRATED FROM EZEKIEL)

The word "hand" (BDB 388) has several connotations and usages.

- 1. literal (i.e., hand of a human)
 - a. symbol of the entire person, 3:18; 18:8,17; 33:6,8
 - b. symbol of human weakness, 7:17,27; 21:7; 22:14
 - c. symbol of foreign enemies, 7:21; 11:9; 16:39; 21:31; 23:9,28; 28:10; 30:12; 34:27; 38:12; 39:23
 - d. literal hand, 8:11; 12:7; 16:11; 37:17,19,20
 - e. symbol of false leaders' power, 13:21,22,23; 34:10
 - f. symbol of a nation, 23:31,37,42,45; 25:14; 27:15; 28:9; 30:10,22,24,25; 31:11; 39:3
- 2. anthropomorphic of deity
 - a. reception of revelation, 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1 (2:9 is another metaphor-scroll on a hand)
 - b. YHWH's power in judgment, 6:14; 13:9; 14:9,13; 16:27; 20:33; 25:7,13,16; 35:3; 39:21
 - c. YHWH Himself (His personal Presence), 20:22
 - d. YHWH's power to deliver, 20:34 (possibly key usage from Exodus, cf. 3:20; 4:17; 6:1; 7:19; 13:3)
- 3. anthropomorphic of Cherubim, 1:8; 8:3; 10:7,8,12,21
- 4. anthropomorphic of destroying angels, 9:1-2; 21:11
- 5. symbol of a pledge or oath, 17:18; 20:5(twice),6,15,23,28; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14
- 6. symbol of joy, 25:6
- 7. anthropomorphic of an angel, 40:3,5; 47:3

• "by the Spirit of the LORD" The word "Spirit" in vv. 1, 14 and the word "breath" in vv. 5, 6, 8, 9(twice), and 10 and the word "wind" in v. 9 all relate to one Hebrew term, *Ruah* (BDB 924), which means "wind, breath, spirit" and is a play on this word throughout this chapter.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA) IN THE NT

The Greek term for "spirit" is used in several ways in the NT. Here are some representative classifications and examples.

- A. of the Triune God
 - 1. of the Father (cf. John 4:24)
 - 2. of the Son (cf. Rom. 8:9-10; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11)
 - 3. of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1:11; Matt. 3:16; 10:20; John 3:5,6,8; 7:39; 14:17; Acts 2:4; 5:9; 8:29,35; Rom. 1:4; 8:11,16; I Cor. 2:4,10,11,13,14; 12:7)
- B. of the human life force
 - 1. of Jesus (cf. Mark 8:12; John 11:33,38; 13:21)
 - 2. of mankind (cf. Matt. 22:43; Acts 7:59; 17:16; 20:22; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; I Cor. 2:11; 5:3-5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18; II Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Phil. 4:23; Col. 2:5)
- C. of the spiritual realm
 - 1. spiritual beings
 - a. good (i.e., angels, cf. Acts 23:8-9; Heb. 1:14)

- b. evil (i.e., demonic, cf. Matt. 8:16; 10:1; 12:43,45; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; 19:12-21; Eph. 6:12)
- c. ghosts (cf. Luke 24:37)
- 2. spiritual discernment (cf. Matt. 5:3; 26:41; John 3:6; 4:23; Acts 18:25; 19:21; Rom. 2:29; 7:6; 8:4,10; 12:11; I Cor. 14:37)
- 3. spiritual things (cf. John 6:63; Rom. 2:29; 8:2,5,9,15; 15:27; I Cor. 9:11; 14:12)
- 4. spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 12:1; 14:1)
- 5. inspiration of the Spirit (cf. Matt. 22:43; Luke 2:27; Eph. 1:17)
- 6. spiritual body (cf. I Cor. 15:44-45)
- D. characterizes
 - 1. the attitude of the world (cf. Rom. 8:15; 11:8; I Cor. 2:12)
 - 2. thinking process of humans (cf. Acts 6:10; Rom. 8:6; I Cor. 4:2)
- E. of the physical realm
 - 1. wind (cf. Matt. 7:25,27; John 3:8; Acts 2:2)
 - 2. breath (cf. Acts 17:25; II Thess. 2:8)

It is obvious that this term must be interpreted in light of its immediate context. There are various shades of meaning which can refer to (1) the physical world; (2) the unseen world; (3) as well as persons of this physical world or of the spiritual realm.

The Holy Spirit is that part of the Triune God who is supremely active in this stage of history. The new age of the Spirit has come. All that is good, holy, right, and true relates to Him. His presence, gifts, and ministry are crucial in the furtherance of the gospel and the success of the Kingdom of God (cf. John 14 and 16). He does not draw attention to Himself, but to Christ (cf. John 16:13-14). He convicts, convinces, woos, baptizes, and matures all believers (cf. John 16:8-11).

• "the valley" This seems to refer to the place of slaughter (cf. Jer. 7:32-8:2). The place of idolatry and judgment (i.e., Jerusalem, the Valley of Topheth, Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, Gehenna) will become the very place of resurrection and restoration.

The real question is to whom does this refer?

- 1. past idolatrous leaders and Israelites (cf. Jer. 7:37-8:2)
- 2. current Judeans
- 3. the righteous remnant (see Special Topic at 5:2-4)
- 4. future Jews
- 5. symbol of God's people (cf. v. 11)

but not previous idolaters. It seems to me in context that #4 fits best. It is texts like this that cause some to say all Jews will be saved, but this violates too many NT texts, even the Jews of Romans 9-11 (as well as those of Zech. 12:10) must be repentant believers (cf. Jer. 3:22-4:2). There is no biblical support for the restoration of unbelieving, unrepenting descendants of Abraham. Only the people of faith are his true seed (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16). Remember that chapter 36 (i.e., new heart, new spirit) sets the contextual stage for chapter 37.

The term "valley" in Ezek. 37:1 is BDB 132, while Jer. 7:32 is BDB 161. However, they may still relate to one another.

37:4 Notice that the Spirit (wind, breath) and the Word (note v. 14) of the Lord are parallel (cf. Isa. 59:21). As God (i.e., Jesus, cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; 2:10) breathed into the newly formed human body (cf. Gen. 2:7) to create persons for fellowship, so He does again!

This emphasizes the power of the Word of God (cf. 6:3; 13:2,6; 16:35; 20:47; 25:3; 34:7,9; 36:1; Isa. 45:23; 55:11; Matt. 24:35). This is a re-creation event!

37:5 This is parallel to Gen. 2:7 (notice v. 8); there by God (i.e., Jesus) and here by His Spirit (cf. v. 14). Only God can give and sustain life! Only He has life! Here the "life" is national restoration to the Promised Land. The reversal of exile (national death) is the renewal of the covenant promises (conditional on covenant obedience, cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

37:6 This is a recurrent theme, usually connected to judgment (i.e., 35:9; 38:23; 39:6), but here to symbolic resurrection of a whole people (i.e., Joel 2:27; 3:17). In Isaiah 49 this phrase is linked to the inclusion of the Gentiles (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). This has always been God's plan!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:7-10

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life."¹⁰So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

37:7 "a noise" The term (BDB 876) can refer to

- 1. a human voice (Ezek. 27:30; 33:32)
- 2. a sound (cf. Gen. 3:8,9)
- 3. the Lord's voice (Isa. 6:8)
- 4. Cherubim wings (Ezek. 1:24; 3:13; 10:5)
- 5. Seraphim's voice (Isa. 6:4)
- 6. angel (Dan. 8:16)
- 7. animals/chariots (Ezek. 3:13)
- 8. musical instrument
- 9. thunder
- 10. lament (Ezek. 26:15; 31:16)

BDB (#2g) calls it an earthquake. However, the context implies it was the sound (i.e., rattling) of bones coming together. That these unburied bones could live again is amazing symbolism of resurrection and forgiveness (both corporate and individual).

■ "a rattling" In 12:18 this same word (BDB 950) is used of fear and trembling. It can also refer to an earthquake (cf. I Kgs. 19:11,12; Isa. 29:6; Ezek. 38:19; Amos 1:11; Zech. 14:5). These bones made a lot of noise as they assembled themselves.

37:8 Apparently the bones were scattered on the ground. At Ezekiel's prophesying they came together as a complete skeleton, but still lying on the ground (cf. v. 10b). This cannot be used as a proof-text that Israel will return to the Promised Land unconverted (i.e., *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* by Charles Lee Feinberg, p. 213.

37:9 "say to the breath" This verse has five commands.

- 1.,2. "prophesy," BDB 612, KB 659, Niphal IMPERATIVES directed to Ezekiel (cf. v. 12)
- 3. "come," BDB 97, KB 112, Qal IMPERATIVE
- 4. "breathe," BDB 655, KB 708, *Qal* IMPERATIVE directed to the breath/wind/spirit

5. "come to life," BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense to the newly formed bodies

This word "breath" can also be translated "wind," "spirit." Notice this breath is personified.

- 1. It comes from the four corners of the earth (cf. Isa. 43:5).
- 2. It, itself, breathes breath on the inanimate human bodies.
- 3. It comes into the human bodies (v. 10) and brings life.

This is all parallel to Genesis 2 (esp. v. 7). This is new life before the Fall, a new chance at obedience with a new heart and a new spirit!

• "from the four winds" This is a metaphor for all directions. The exiles will return from all directions; the Spirit is with them and will bring them home.

Note the enemies of chapters 38-39 are also from all directions. Evil is also pervasive!

37:10 "an exceedingly great army" Although this Hebrew term (BDB 298) can mean "army" (i.e., Ezek. 17:17; 27:10), it can be understood as a multitude (cf. NRSV, note v. 11). The new Israel does not need a great army, they have a great God (this is why chapters 38-39 are so surprising)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:11-14

¹¹Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' ¹²Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. ¹⁴I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD.'''

37:11 "we are completely cut off" There is a possible manuscript issue in this phrase.

NASB "we are completely cut off"

NKJV "we ourselves are completely cut off"

NRSV "we are cut off completely"

LXX "we are quite spent" or "we are lost"

Peshitta "we are completely gone"

The Tyndale OT Commentary Series, <u>Ezekiel</u>, by John Taylor mentions that F. Perles redivides the phrase to "our thread-of-life has been cut off" (238), which fits the context better than "we have been cut off for us" (*Niphal* PERFECT).

This refers to the Judean's view of themselves in light of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and the exile of the Davidic King. There was no hope humanly speaking (cf. 19:5)!

37:12-14 These are covenant promises (i.e., the land, cf. vv. 12,14) and covenant title (i.e., "My people," vv. 12,13). The covenant is renewed! Destruction and exile have ceased.

Again one asks the question, when did or will this occur?

- 1. post-exilic return under Nehemiah (seed of David) and Joshua (seed of High Priest)
- 2. some future time

Because Israel was attacked again by Rome and the temple destroyed again (A.D. 70), many modern interpreters assert a future orientation. There are certainly eschatological elements in chapters 36-48! My focus is on the conditional nature of prophecy. This reflects what God wanted His people to be and do, as well as what He wanted to do for them, but Genesis 3 (the Fall) got in the way again. Mankind's fallen propensity can be dealt with only by the Messiah's work and the new age (new covenant).

Chapter 36 surely reflects this, but what of 38-39? Israel is attacked again by surrounding enemies. Security is challenged!

The question is, "Was the opposition caused by

- 1. Israel's continuing sin
- 2. evil's attack on God?"

Number 1 fits the post-exilic period (cf. Malachi).

The hard question is, "Must all prophecy be literally fulfilled to Israel?" I think not. The NT focuses on Jesus, not Israel. The NT widens the OT promises to all humans. The national and/or geographic promises to Israel are not repeated or mentioned by Jesus or the Apostles! This is very surprising, but true (see Special Topic at 34:26).

37:12 "Thus says the Lord GOD" This recurrent literary phrase introduces (list from NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 445)

- 1. judgment against the surrounding nations (cf. 25:3; 30:2)
- 2. judgment against individuals (cf. 28:2; 39:1)
- 3. judgment against Judah (cf. 5:8; 12:19)
 - a. her mountains, 6:3
 - b. her false religious leaders, 13:3,18
 - c. her faithlessness, 20:30
 - d. her injustices, 45:9
- 4. call for Judah to repent (cf. 14:6)
- 5. message of restoration and forgiveness (cf. 36:33; 37:12,21; 39:25)
- 6. message of hope to Ezekiel himself (cf. 2:4; 3:11)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:15-23

¹⁵The word of the LORD came again to me saying, ¹⁶"And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.' ¹⁷Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸When the sons of your people speak to you saying, 'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?' ¹⁹say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand." ²⁰The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eves. ²¹Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; ²²and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.²³They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God."

37:16 This is a symbol of the reuniting of Israel's tribes that politically split in 922 B.C. under Solomon's son, Rehoboam (Judah, Benjamin, Simeon, and most of Levi) and the Emphraimatic labor leader, Jeroboam I, who took the Northern Ten Tribes.

Note the IMPERATIVES in this paragraph.

- 1. "take," v. 16, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 542, KB 534)
- 2. "write," v. 16, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 507, KB 503)
- 3. "take," v. 16, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB542, KB 534)

- 4. "write, v. 16, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB507, KB 503)
- 5. "join," v. 17, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 897, KB 1132)
- 6. "declare," v. 18 *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (BDB 616, KB 665)
- 7. "say," v. 19, Piel IMPERATIVE (BDB 180, KB 210)
- 8. "say," v. 21 *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 180, KB 210)

37:17-22 The one God will have one people, with one leader, in one place! This sense of "oneness" is also found in Eph. 4:4-6. It only makes sense that the one God (i.e., monotheism) who made all humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship, and who promised to redeem all humans in Gen. 3:15, would provide a way (Christ, cf. John 1:12; 3:16; 4:42) for all humans to come into this fellowship (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14).

In this context the oneness refers to a reunification of Israel and Judah. The people of God will be united again.

This text is a foreshadowing of the NT oneness! Monotheism demands a universal fulfillment to those who believe, not to those who can document their lineage.

My biases are showing in this chapter! I pray they are biblically based!

37:18 Ezekiel has been asked and has responded to several questions by the exiled Israeli community (cf. 12:9; 21:7; 24:19).

37:23 It is true that the exile cured God's people of idolatry, but unfortunately other sins returned as the book of Malachi and interbiblical history show.

YHWH does cleanse His people, but the pull of the fallen nature traps them again. They need the nature which only comes with the new covenant (36:22-38; Jer. 31:31-34; Joel 2:28-32).

There is a possible manuscript variant in this verse.

- 1. NASB, NKJV "dwelling places"
- 2. NRSV "all their apostasies into which they have fallen"
- 3. TEV "all the ways in which they sin and betray Me"
- 4. NJB "the acts of infidelity which they have committed"

The MT has מושבתיהמ, "their dwellings" (BDB 444), but many modern translations have משובתיהמ, "their backslidings" (BDB 1000). This kind of reversal of letters is surely possible in hand-copied manuscripts over an extended period of time.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:24-28

²⁴"My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. ²⁵They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. ²⁷My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ²⁸And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.''''

37:24 "My servant David will be king over them" This is a Messianic title and shows the new-covenant focus of this context (cf. 34:23-24; Isa. 55:3-5; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5).

It is surely possible that a new Davidic ruler, with a heart towards YHWH, will be manifested in order to fulfill II Sam. 7:16; Psalm 89; and Gen. 49:10! This ideal, godly king became a rallying hope for a godly people and the fulfillment of the conditional covenant promises. David was sinful, yet

forgiven, so too, Israel! Restoration and salvation are the work of God (i.e., new heart and new spirit), but the new covenant must be received and walked in!

• "they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them" For the terms "ordinances" (BDB 1048) and "statutes" (BDB 349) see the Special Topic at 5:7.

The VERB "walk" (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes a lifestyle obedience, as do the next two VERBS.

- 1. "keep," BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT
- 2. "observe," BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT

God's covenant people will be an obedient, godly people. This does not denote sinlessness, but a heart for God and His word (cf. I John 3:6,9). By their fruits you shall know them (Matt. 7:15-23, i.e., false prophets).

37:25, 26 "forever. . everlasting. . .forever" This word (BDB 761) must be dealt with in context (cf. v. 28) and it seems to imply the eternal kingdom, as in the book of Daniel (cf. Dan. 7:14). It seems inappropriate to use this for the return from the exile (i.e., post-exilic period) or for the millennium (Revelation 20).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER ('OLAM)

One Greek idiomatic phrase is "unto the ages" (cf. Luke 1:33; Rom. 1:25; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; I Tim. 1:17), which may reflect the Hebrew 'olam. See Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 321-319. Other related phrases are "unto the age" (cf. Matt. 21:19 [Mark 11:14]; Thess. 1:55; John 6:58; 8:35; 12:34; 13:8; 14:16; II Cor. 9:9) and "of the age of the ages" (cf. Eph. 3:21). There seems to be no distinction between these idioms for "forever." The term "ages" may be plural in a figurative sense of the rabbinical grammatical construction called "the plural of majesty" or it may refer to the concept of several "ages" in the Jewish sense of "age of innocence," "age of wickedness," "age to come," or "age of righteousness."

37:26 "a covenant of peace" This same period of restoration is discussed in chapts. 16 and 20. For the term "covenant," see Special Topic at 16:8. The full phrase "covenant of peace" is mentioned in 34:25. The covenant of peace is contingent on repentance, trust/faith/belief, obedience, and perseverance, as is the "new covenant" fully clarified in the NT. It is free from a sovereign God, but it has requirements! The very concept of "covenant" implies responsibilities on both parties!

NASB "And I will place them and multiply them"

NKJV "I will establish them and multiply them"

NRSV "and I will bless them and multiply them"

TEV "I will establish them and increase their population"

- NJB "I will resettle them and make them grow"
- LXX ----omits----

Peshitta "and I will multiply them"

The VERB "give" or "set" (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT with *waw*) is repeated twice. It seems that the LXX translators left out an entire phrase.

The MT has "set" or "establish," but NRSV changes the VERB to "bless." The UBS Hebrew OT Text Project gives "set" a B rating.

• "an everlasting covenant" The NIV Study Bible, p. 1279, has a good footnote about this. It is used sixteen times in the OT. Here are some examples.

- 1. Noah, Gen. 9:16
- 2. Abraham, Gen. 17:7,13,19 (cf. Ps. 105:9-10)
- 3. David, II Sam. 23:5 (cf. 7:12; Isa. 55:3)
- 4. the "new covenant," Jer. 32:40 (cf. 31:31-34; 50:5)
- 5. earlier in Ezekiel, 16:60
- 6. new Israel, Isa. 61:8

It is found most often in Isaiah (cf. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8).

37:28 God wants a righteous people who reflect His character to the nations. Israel was meant to be "a kingdom of priests" (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), but this wonderful call turned into an elitism! The goal of creation is not Israel, but the whole world in fellowship with its Creator. Monotheism cannot become a weapon of exclusivism. It must become a promise of inclusion!

• "I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel" YHWH transfers His holiness to His people (cf. 20:12). They are holy because of their relationship to Him. Now this positional sanctification must become fleshed out. See Special Topic at 20:12.

• "when My sanctuary is in their midst forever" YHWH's sanctuary was abandoned by Him in chapters 8-10. Now Ezekiel asserts it will return to a sanctified, united Israel under a new Davidic ruler. Chapters 40-48 are a graphic symbol of this new day. This may be an allusion to Exod. 25:8.

However, as the temple was central in the OT, Jesus, the true temple, becomes central in the NT (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19; Acts 6:14). You may say to yourself, why bring Jesus into Ezekiel? He is the fulfillment of the OT. It is no longer about Israel (cf. John 8:31-59). These OT symbols and prophecies have their ultimate fulfillment and expansion through Him!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. How do chapters 36 and 37 relate to the people of Ezekiel's day?
- 2. How do they relate to end-time events?
- 3. Why are Deuteronomy 27 and 28 such important passages?
- 4. Explain what 36:27 means when it says, "I will put My Spirit within them."
- 5. Summarize chapter 37 in one sentence in your own words.

EZEKIEL 38

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles of Restoration (33:1-39:29)		
Prophecy About Gog and Future Invasion of Israel	Gog and Allies Attack Israel	The Gog and Magog Oracles (38:1-39:29)	Gog As the Instrument of God	Against Gog, King of Magog (38:1-39:29)
38:1-6	38:1-6	38:1-6	38:1-9	38:1-7
38:7-9	38:7-9	38:7-9		
				38:8-9
38:10-13	38:10-13	38:10-13	38:10-13	38:10-13
38:14-16	38:14-17	38:14-16	38:14-17	38:14-16
38:17-23	Judgment On Gog	38:17-23	God's Punishment of Gog	38:17-23
	38:18-23		38:18-23	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. In prophecy the historical setting and the literary unit are crucial in interpretation. In this case both are difficult.
 - 1. As far as history, to whom do these nations refer? Are they symbolic of evil in general or specific geographical nations (or directions)?

- 2. As far as the literary unit, are chapters 33-39 one unit or several? Are they all related to the post-exilic period or beyond? Is there a temporal relation between chapters 36-37 and 38-39? Is restoration followed by a final attack (cf. Revelation 19-20)?
- B. These questions haunt me! I cannot come to a place of peace about them! To read many of the commentaries available one would think there are no problems in interpreting these texts. One's systematic theology answers all the contextual questions. Part of my dilemma is my own presuppositional systematic theology (see Special Topics at 12:16 and 34:26). I guess when all is said and done, the teachings of Jesus, the writings of Paul, and the sharp contrast of the book of Hebrews have become priority for me! I read the OT through these filters! The NT is surprisingly similar and surprisingly different from the OT! A new day of a universal offer and consequence has arrived in Christ! The believing remnant has been expanded into the gospel offer (i.e., John 1:12; 3:16; Eph. 2:8-10). Abraham's seed are by faith, not descent (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Galatians 3-4).
- C. One thing is sure, history is teleological. There will be a final and decisive conflict between fallen mankind and its Creator! This invasion is not because of restored Israel's sin, but the greed of Gog and his followers. Evil was already defeated in Christ, but will one day be revealed and removed (i.e., isolated) from creation (i.e., hell, cf. Matt. 25:46; Dan. 12:1-2).
- D. This literary unit (i.e., chapters 38-39) is more about God's honor (cf. 37:22-38) than Israel. Israel (Israel and Judah) was exiled in shame, but restored Israel, faithful Israel, cannot be defeated because YHWH fights on her behalf. The hero of the OT is God, not Israel! The nations misunderstood the purpose of the exile (i.e., YHWH allowing, even instigating, His covenant people to be disciplined). They thought Israel's God was weak and unable to fulfill His covenant promises. Chapters 38-39 show this is not the case!
- E. When all is said and done, I cannot be sure of the who and when of chapters 38-39, but I am confident to whom they do not refer to! Prophecy cannot be read beside the morning newspaper without the great danger of reading our day, our history into every event!
- F. John Taylor, in the Tyndale OT Commentary Series, makes a good point about the genre of the literary unit (i.e., chapters 38-39).

"This is typical of Hebrew poetry and of the kind of semi-poetical writing which is used in these oracles. It is fond of repetition and delights to revert to previous statements and enlarge on them, even though the result is to destroy all sense of consecutive arrangement. Failure to appreciate this has led many western commentators to find doublets, contradictions and inconsistencies, and so to assume multiple authorship where this is quite unnecessary" (p. 247).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:1-6

¹And the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²''Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him ³and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. ⁴I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company *with* buckler and shield, all of them

wielding swords; ⁵Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them *with* shield and helmet; ⁶Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah *from* the remote parts of the north with all its troops — many peoples with you.

38:1 "the word of the LORD came to me saying" See note at 1:3.

38:2 "Son of man" See note at 2:1.

• "set your face toward" See note at 13:17.

• "prophesy" This is the second IMPERATIVE in verse 2. The VERB (BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) is used often in several forms. For a discussion of *Niphal* and all the Hebrew VERBAL STEMS see the Introductory Articles.

- 1. Niphal PERFECT, 4:7; 37:7
- 2. *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, 11:13; 37:7
- 3. *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, 12:27; 13:2,16; 38:17
- 4. *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, 6:2; 11:4 (twice); 13:2,17; 21:2,7,14,33; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 30:2; 34:2 (twice); 35:2; 36:1,3,6; 37:4,9 (twice),12; 38:2,14; 39:1
- 5. *Hithpael* PARTICIPLE, 13:17; 37:10

It is often used in connection with "set your face" (i.e., judgment oracle). It denotes that the message Ezekiel delivers to Israel, Judah, and the nations is from YHWH, not the prophet.

38:2 "Gog" This (BDB 155, KB 182) could refer to

- Gyges (Gugu in Ashurbanipal's records, ABD, vol. 2, p. 1056), seventh century king (670-652 B.C.) of Lydia, who lived several generations before Ezekiel (also spelled Giges or Gogo, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 7, p. 691)
- 2. Gaga or Gagaia (Amarna Letters), used as a general name for northern people groups
- 3. Gaga (Ras Shamra Texts), an Akkadian or Babylonian god (cf. Enuma Elish)
- 4. Gagi, a ruler of the city of Sabi (ZPBE, vol. 2, p. 770)
- 5. Gog or Gug, a Summerian word for "darkness" and thereby a metaphor for evil (ABD, vol. 2, p. 1057, and W. F. Albright)
- 6. leaders of the Scythians (Josephus, *Antiq.* 1.6.1, ZPBE, vol. 2, p. 770), a people who lived on the fringe of the Roman Empire and invaded it from the northeast
- 7. Gasga, a name appearing in Hittite texts and referring to a rebellious area on the border of Armenia and Cappadocia (*Introduction To the OT* by R. K. Harrison, p. 842)

The key to understanding this term is not to identify the exact person to whom it refers, but to see its symbolic usage (cf. #5) as an/the evil enemy from the north. In Jeremiah "the north" represents "invasion" (cf. 1:13-15; 4:6). Because of the desert between Mesopotamia and Palestine, Assyria and Babylon invaded from the north. The word itself became a symbol of evil invasion. This is not meant to be a geographical direction, although Magog, Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal are probably located in modern Turkey (i.e., Asia Minor) or between Cappadocia and Media (ZPBF, vol. 2, p. 770).

Gog is "the" eschatological enemy from the north (cf. Rev. 20:8)! This would correspond to the "Man of Sin" of II Thessalonians 2 or the "Antichrist" of I John. Evil is personified as a personal enemy and attempted replacer of Christ (the Davidic seed, cf. Ezek. 34:24; 37:24-25).

A good source for possible geographical identifications is Edwin Yamauchi's *Foes From the Northern Frontier*.

38:2 "the land of Magog" The term in Akkadian means "place/land of Gog/Gyges" (Gen. 10:2). Here in Ezekiel it is a land, but in John's use of it in the book of Revelation, 20:8, it is another evil nation (cf.

LXX). These terms are also found in the apocalyptic writings called the Sibylline Oracles (cf. 3:319, 512).

NASB, NKJV	"the prince of Rosh"
NRSV	"the chief prince of"
TEV	"chief ruler"
NJB	"the paramount prince of"

The NRSV, TEV, and NJB translations take "rosh" (BDB 910) as "head" or "chief" (i.e., Exod. 18:25; Ezek. 39:1), following the Aramaic Targums, Vulgate, and Aquila translations. However, it is a nation in Isa. 66:19.

■ "Meshech" KB 646 identifies it (BDB 604) with the mountain dwellers of Asia Minor (cf. Herodotus 3:94; 7:72). It is always associated with "Tubal" (cf. Gen. 10:2; I Chr. 1:5; Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2-3; 39:1; Isa. 66:19). In the Assyrian documents Meshech is Mushku of central Anatolia and Tubal is Tabal of eastern Anatolia (cf. *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 723).

■ "Tubal" The name's meaning is, like the others, uncertain. BDB (1063) thinks it is a territory related to Asia Minor or Cappadocia. KB (1694) lists several other options (i.e., craftsman tribe, possibly related to the Kenites).

All of these specific leaders are from the line of Japheth (cf. Genesis 10). Now at the end, all of the descendants of Noah attack the lines of Seth (cf. Gen. 4:25-26) and Shem (cf. Gen. 9:26-27)!

38:4-6 "all your army" Notice the wide geographical aspect of this end-time army assembled against the people of God.

- 1. Persia, Iran, and Afghanistan (old Assyria [it is surely possible that פתרוס) has been confused with איז since Pathros is mentioned in Ezekiel as connected to Egypt, cf. 29:14; 30:14, which is also like #3 in north Africa])
- 2. Ethiopia (Cush)
 - a. below Egypt (cf. Gen. 10:6-7) or
 - b. in Mesopotamia (cf. Gen. 10:8)
- 3. Put
 - a. Libya (LXX, but note Nahum 3:8) or
 - b. Somalia
- 4. Gomer, a son of Japheth (cf. Gen. 10:2), probably Cimmerians, who occupied Asia Minor in 8th century B.C. (i.e., Herodotus, cf. ABD, vol. 2, p. 1074)
- 5. Beth-togarmah, a son of Gomer (cf. Gen. 10:3). Josephus identified them as Phrygians because of Ezek. 27:14. However,
 - a. an Assyrian inscription (i.e., Til-Garimmu) makes it a city in east Cappadocia (ZPBE, vol. 4, p. 766)
 - b. a Hittite text locates it (i.e., Tegaramara) at the head waters of the Euphrates River (ABD, vol. 6, p. 595). (Possibly #a and #b are the same site)
 - c. Jewish Study Bible (p. 1115) identifies it with Armenia.

38:4 "I will turn you about" This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Polel* PERFECT) is also used in 39:2. It denotes YHWH's direct involvement (cf. Isa. 37:29). He is in complete control of world events for His own purpose (cf. Isa. 10:5-19; Hab. 1:5-11). History is in His hand (cf. Rom. 8:28-30)!

" "put hooks into your jaws" This parallel phrase also denotes YHWH's direct actions.

- 1. causing Israel to go to Egypt, 19:4
- 2. causing Israel to go to Babylon, 19:9
- 3. destroying Egypt, 29:4

Here it denotes YHWH's control and manipulation of these foreign empires (cf. v. 5; 29:4). YHWH will instigate the final conflict with evil (cf. 29:3-5), so as to destroy it once and for all. This is the theme that John uses in Revelation 20. Evil must be destroyed and removed for the purpose of creation (i.e., fellowship between God and humanity) to reach its full potential and design.

• "buckler and shield" These two terms (BDB 857 and 171) refer to two kinds of shields.

- 1. The first is a large shield to protect the whole body as well as another person, usually an archer. These were usually used in siege warfare.
- 2. The second is a smaller shield carried into battle by individuals.

When they are used together (cf. 23:24; 38:4), they denote soldiers fully armed for conflict.

38:6 *"from* the remote parts" This term (BDB 438) denotes the extreme north (cf. v. 15; 39:2), which is also the site of God's mountain (cf. Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13). This phrase may be parallel to "from the ends of the earth," used in Deut. 28:49 and Isa. 5:26. The nations from afar serve YHWH's purposes. As YHWH brought Babylon (cf. Isaiah 13), so too, now Gog.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:7-9

⁷"Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. ⁸After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, *whose inhabitants* have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them. ⁹You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you."

38:7 There are two IMPERATIVES that address this great army. Like v. 4, YHWH is directing this pagan, evil army for His purposes (note NJB translation, "and hold yourself at my service," also note v. 8).

- 1. be prepared, BDB 465, KB 464, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. prepare yourself, same VERB, but in the *Hiphil*

38:8 This verse obviously refers to a restored and peaceful Palestine. It describes the results of the new heart and new spirit of 36:22-38 and the restoration, gathering, and uniting of chapter 37.

■ "living securely" This VERB (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated in 36:28,33,35; 37:25 (thrice); 38:11 (twice); 12 (twice), 14; 39:6,9,26. They are back in the land of promise. The term "securely" (BDB 105) is repeated in 28:26 (twice); 34:25,27,28; 38:11; 39:26. God's people trust in Him to provide protection. YHWH vindicates His power and honor by totally and completely defeating the multi-national army (like Assyria's and Babylon's). His people were not exiled because of His weakness or indifference, but because of their sin, which has now been forgiven.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:10-13

¹⁰'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, ¹¹and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls

and having no bars or gates, ¹²to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are *now* inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.' ¹³Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, 'Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?''''

38:10-13 YHWH allows the evil greed of fallen humanity to gain control of the leaders of this northern army.

Is this literal? Is this future? John uses this scenario in Revelation 20 for a rebellion at the close of "the golden age" (i.e., millennium). Does YHWH need to be vindicated in history beyond the Second Coming of Christ? My study of the genre of prophecy and apocalyptic and my NT understanding tends to relegate this type of OT passage to symbolism and metaphor of God's total defeat of evil, accomplished at the cross, the empty tomb, and the second coming!

38:12	
NASB, NRSV	"at the center of the world"
NKJV	"in the midst of the land"
TEV	"at the crossroads of the world"
NJB	"at the navel of the world"

The Hebrew term translated "center" (BDB 371, KB 367) can mean "highest point" or "central." The second term "world" (BDB 75) can mean land or world. This refers either to

- 1. Palestine's geographical position as the only land connection between the powers of the Nile and the Tigris/Euphrates (cf. 5:5; TEV)
- 2. the people living in the hill country (NKJV)
- 3. Palestine as the special location of God's covenant people who are so special to Him (NJB). In Summerian/Babylonian mythology the temple in Nippur was the site where Enlil cut the navel cord that united heaven and earth (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 333).

38:13 "Sheba and Dedan" These were brothers listed in Gen. 10:7. They are connected to Arabia and the trade routes (cf. 27:20; Isa. 21:13). That is why they are linked to Edom in Ezek. 25:13; Jer. 49:8.

• "Tarshish" See note at 27:25.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:14-16

¹⁴"Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know *it*? ¹⁵You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army; ¹⁶and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog."

38:16 Notice the purpose of God allowing this treacherous invasion. God will manifest Himself, His power, glory, and holiness for all to see (cf. Isa. 43:8-13)! This theme (i.e., "know Me") is recurrent! God wants His highest creations to return to Him (cf. 36:23; 37:28; 38:23).

• "in the last days" This phrase is used of a future period (cf. Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 38:16; Dan. 2:28; 10:14; Hosea 10:14; Micah 4:1). In the NT this phrase becomes the time between the first coming of the Messiah and His glorious return (i.e., the overlapping of the two ages).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future by an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile, cf. Nehemiah 9) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this "progressive revelation." The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism):

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	Hebrews
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Matthew 13:22 & 29	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Mark 10:30	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 16:8	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 18:30	Eph. 1:21; 2:1,7; 6:12	
Luke 20:34-35	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled most of the OT prophecies of the inauguration related to the new age. However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

■ "My land" By creation all the earth is YHWH's (cf. Exod. 9:29; 19:5; Deut. 32:8), but Canaan/ Palestine was uniquely His (cf. Lev. 25:23; II Chr. 7:20; Isa. 14:25; Jer. 2:7; Ezek. 36:5; Joel 1:6; 3:2). It was the special place for the manifestation of Himself to the world (cf. Rom. 9:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:17-23

¹⁷'Thus says the Lord God, "Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days through My servants the prophets of Israel, who prophesied in those days for *many* years that I would bring you against them? ¹⁸It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "that My fury will mount up in My anger. ¹⁹In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare *that* on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. ²⁰The fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all the creeping things that creep on the earth, and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake at My presence; the mountains also will be thrown down, the steep pathways will collapse and every wall will fall to the ground. ²¹I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains," declares the Lord GOD.

"Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²²With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone. ²³I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the LORD."

38:17 This may allude to Psalm 2 or 83, but more probably Isa. 34:1-6 and 63:1-6 (if Edom is a symbol of all rebellious nations; this would also explain Ezekiel 35). This same theme is also found in Joel 3:9-16 (which I think is early post-exilic).

38:18-23 Note the metaphors of God's passion for His people and their enemies.

- 1. My fury, v. 18
- 2. My anger, v. 18
- 3. My zeal, v. 19
- 4. My blazing wrath, v. 19 (cf. 22:21,31)
- 5. the earth will shake at My presence, v. 20
- 6. a sword, v. 21 (cf. Ezekiel 21; 32:33)

Also notice the other metaphors.

- A. cosmic upheavels (as YHWH approaches)
 - 1. earthquake, v. 19
 - 2. animals tremble, v. 20
 - 3. mountains fall, v. 20
 - 4. walls fall, v. 20
 - 5. pestilence, v. 22
 - 6. torrential rain, v. 22 (cf. 13:11,13)
 - 7. hailstones, v. 22
 - 8. fire, v. 22
 - 9. brimstone, v. 22
- B. war motifs of a zealous (jealous) Covenant God
 - 1. humans tremble, v. 20
 - 2. a sword is loosed, v. 21
 - 3. blood, v. 22

Many of these will later be amplified into apocalyptic metaphors and phrases. I still think this literary unit in Ezekiel is a precursor of apocalyptic language (cf. *Cracking OT Codes*, p. 190), not one of its first examples, as is 40-48 (i.e. no angel guides, no number symbolism, no use of colors, no secret messages).

38:20 "the mountains also will be thrown down" This phrase can be seen in two ways.

- 1. The convulsing of nature at the coming of its creator (i.e., stars fall, sun darkened, moon turned to blood, cf. Isa. 24:23; 64:1,3; Joel 2:30-31).
- 2. An allusion to the trembling of the pagan gods (cf. Zeph. 2:11). The gods of Mesopotamia (Enlil and Ashur) and Canaan (El and Ba'al) are mountain gods. This may explain the strange references of Ps. 48:2; Isa. 14:13; and Ezek. 28:14,16.

This may explain how YHWH is tied to Mt. Sinai/Horeb and Mt. Zion. The culmination of history is at a mountain (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 11:9; 24:23; 25:6-12; 65:25; Micah 4:1-5).

• "the steep pathways will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground" The key term in the first phrase "steep pathways" (BDB 201) in Song of Songs 2:14 means a secret, inaccessible hiding place.

Therefore these two phrases are parallel and mean there will be no hiding places from YHWH's personal presence, no place for humans to seek refuge (cf. Rev. 6:15-16).

38:21 "Every man's sword will be against his brother" This is an interesting phrase. Judges 7:22 and II Chr. 20:23 describe an invading army destroying itself. I Samuel 14:20 describes metaphorically a great confusion. But Haggai 2:22 describes an act of God whereby Israel's now post-exilic leaders (Zerubbabel and Joshua) are established. This may be the thrust of Ezekiel 38-39!

38:22 As God has fought on Israel's behalf (i.e., the Exodus, cf. Exod. 14:14; 15:3; Deut. 1:30 and the Conquest, cf. Deut. 3:22; Josh. 10:14,42) and used the forces of nature, so too, again. Israel is at peace and has no army (this surely does not fit modern Israel) or walled cities! God will act on their behalf (covenant promises). Now the "destroyed army" will not be Israel's (i.e, Ezekiel 37), but the pagan evil, unbelieving nations on the fringes of the Mediterranean world, who had no contact with God's people (or His word) before this time.

38:23 "and make Myself known in the sight of many nations" This could be understood in two ways.

- 1. YHWH's judgment on sinful nations (cf. Ps. 9:4,16; Isaiah 34; 43:8-13)
- 2. YHWH's desire for the nations to know Him and come to Him (cf. 37:28; 38:16; 39:27)

Israel was meant to be a "kingdom of priests" because all the world belongs to YHWH (Exod. 19:5-6). Abraham's call included a blessing for all the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3). The initial "good news" (cf. Gen. 3:15) was to humanity, not Israel. Even the Law of Moses mentions God's purpose of informing the nations (cf. Deut. 4:5-8). Also several passages in Isaiah address the nations being included (i.e., 42:6; 49:6; 51:4-8; 66:18-21).

EZEKIEL 39

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles of Restoration (33:1-39:29)		
Prophecy Against Gog- Invaders Destroyed	Gog's Armies Destroyed	Magog Oracles (38:1-39:29) Gog's Defeat	The Defeat of Gog	Against Gog King of Magog (38:1-39:29)
39:1-6	39:1-8	39:1-6	39:1-7	39:1-7
39:7-8		39:7-8		
			39:8-10	39:8
39:9-10	39:9-10	39:9-10		39:9-10
	The Burial of Gog		The Burial of Gog	
39:11-16	39:11-16	39:11-16	39:11-16	39:11-16
	A Triumphant Festival			
39:17-20	39:17-20 (17b-20)	39:17-20	39:17-20	39:17-20
	Israel Restored to the Land		The Restoration of Israel	Conclusion
39:21-24	39:21-24	39:21-24	39:21-24	39:21-24
Israel Restored				
39:25-29	39:25-29	39:25-29	39:25-29	39:25-29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:1-6

¹"And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, ''Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal; ²and I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north and bring you against the mountains of Israel. ³I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand. ⁴You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field. ⁵You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken,'' declares the Lord GOD. ⁶''And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD.''

39:1 See notes at 38:2. Verses 1-16 parallel chapter 38.

39:2-6 Notice the VERBS which emphasize YHWH's actions (i.e., "for it is I who have spoken," vv. 5,8; 38:4,8) against Gog.

- 1. I shall turn you around, v. 2, BDB 996, KB 1427, Polel PERFECT
- 2. I shall drive you, v. 2, BDB 1058, KB 1664, *Piel* PERFECT (this word is found only here in the OT. KB says possibly, "lead along on a rope" or "lead a child")
- 3. I shall take you up, v. 2, BDB 748, KB 828, Hiphil PERFECT
- 4. I shall bring you against, v. 2, BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* PERFECT
- 5. I shall strike your bow, v. 3, BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PERFECT
- 6. I shall dash down your arrows, v. 3, BDB 656, KB 709, Hiphil IMPERFECT
- 7. I shall give you as food, v. 4, BDB 678, KB 733, Qal PERFECT

YHWH acts for Israel in 36:22-38, but here against the northern enemy!

39:2 "from the remotest parts of the north" This term (BDB 438) is used in Isa. 14:13 (cf. Ps. 48:2) for the far north. It is used in that same sense here (cf. 38:6,15). This term is used in Jeremiah to describe the invasion of Babylon (cf. Jer. 6:22; 25:32; 50:41). Another enemy is coming at YHWH's behest, but this one will not succeed, but be totally destroyed. This was a way to

- 1. show YHWH's power
- 2. vindicate YHWH's name (cf. v. 7)
- 3. reveal YHWH to the nations (cf. vv. 6,7)

• "against the mountains of Israel" This is a metaphor for Palestine (cf. 17:22-24). Earlier in Ezekiel these mountains are judged (cf. 6:2-7), but now in the context of a restored, forgiven, obedient Israel, they are defended by YHWH Himself.

This is another allusion to Isaiah 14 (esp. vv. 13-14). All of these world events are personally directed by YHWH for His revelatory and redemptive purposes (Isa. 14:26-27)!

39:4 "You shall fall on the mountains of Israel" This is a recurrent theme.

- 1. unfaithful Judah shall fall (cf. 6:2-7; 33:28)
- 2. Edom (Mt. Seir) shall fall (cf. 35:2-3,12; 36:4-7)
- 3. Egypt fell (cf. 31:12; 32:5,6)
- 4. Babylon fell (cf. 28:16)
- 5. and now another enemy from the north, Gog, will fall

■ "I shall give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field" This curse (cf. vv. 17-20) reflects the horror and carnage of ancient battle fields, where the number of dead is so large and complete that no one is left to bury them.

This curse is also directed toward

- 1. Egypt, 29:5; 32:4-5
- 2. faithless Judah, 33:27 (cf. Isa. 46:11)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:7-8

⁷"My holy name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I will not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸Behold, it is coming and it shall be done," declares the Lord GOD. "That is the day of which I have spoken. ⁹Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn *them*, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them."

39:7 This refers to 36:22-23! YHWH wants His name (i.e., Himself) to be known to all the world.

■ "the Holy One in Israel" The title ("Holy One of Israel") for YHWH is used often in Isaiah (cf. 12:6; 43:3,14; 55:5; 60:9,14) and probably is derived from the vision of Isaiah 6. YHWH as "holy" goes back to Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26. It is clearly stated in Josh 24:19. It speaks of His unique character (cf. I Sam. 2:2; Ps. 22:3; 99:3,5,9; 111:9). YHWH the Holy One is also the creator of Israel (cf. Isa. 43:15; 45:11). For "holy" see Special Topic at 20:12.

39:8 The concept of a final day of reckoning was crystalized in Amos' "day of the YHWH."

39:9 This verse describes the huge number of the invading coalition army which was/will be totally defeated by YHWH (cf. Zechariah 12).

The number seven speaks of the symbolic nature of this context (as does the use of "God" and "the remotest parts of the north").

Notice that the weapons take seven years to burn and the bodies seven months (cf. v. 12) to bury. See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 1:5. It is only western literalism that demands that eastern prophetic texts be interpreted as literal history! This is prophetic symbolism. It certainly reveals truth, but modern interpreters must be genre-sensitive and cognizant of Jewish number symbolism!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:10

¹⁰"They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them," declares the Lord GOD.

39:10 There is a series of VERBS followed by the PARTICIPLE of the same stem, which was a grammatical form of emphasis or intensity.

- 1. spoil, BDB 1021, KB 1531, Qal PERFECT, Qal PARTICIPLE, v. 10
- 2. plunder, BDB 102, KB 117, Qal PERFECT, Qal PARTICIPLE, v. 10
- 3. pass over, BDB 716, KB 778, Qal PERFECT, Qal PARTICIPLE, v. 15
- 4. bury, BDB 868, KB 1064, *Qal* PERFECT, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, v. 15 (also vv. 13,14)

Note the ironic reversal of the situation (so typical of the Bible). Those who came to gain spoils will be despoiled! Evil is overcome by the good God!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:11-16

¹¹"On that day I will give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call *it* the valley of Hamon-gog. ¹²For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land. ¹³Even all the people of the land will bury *them*; and it will be to their renown *on* the day that I glorify Myself," declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁴"They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search. ¹⁵As those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man's bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. ¹⁶And even *the* name of *the* city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land.""

39:11 "Hamon-gog" The Hebrew CONSTRUCT (BDB 242 and 155) means "the multitude of God" (cf. vv. 15-16). Earlier in the verse another CONSTRUCT (BDB 161 and 716) calls the same valley "the Valley of the Travelers" or "the Valley of those who pass by" (cf. vv. 14,15). It seems to be a wordplay (i.e., *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1117) on "the valley of Abarim" (i.e., Vulgate), which is east of the Dead Sea and from whose peak (i.e., Mt. Nebo) Moses viewed the land of Canaan (cf. Num. 27:12; Deut. 32:49). Therefore, this refers to the Arnon River Valley.

39:14-15 Unburied bodies polluted the land making it Levitically unclean (i.e., Deut. 21:22-23). The new restored Israel wants to fully and completely observe God's laws.

39:16 *"the* **name of** *the* **city will be Hamonah"** This means "multitude" (BDB 242) and apparently is a city located in this burial valley by the same name.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:17-20

¹⁷"As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, "Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as *though they were* rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. ¹⁹So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. ²⁰You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war,"' declares the Lord GOD.

39:17-20 This banquet for the birds of prey and carnivorous animals is symbolic of the judgment of God (cf. Isa. 18:6; 56:9; Jer. 12:9; Rev. 19:17-18). The unclean pagan soldiers are eaten by the unclean animals! The Deuteronomic curse, which threatened unfaithful Israel (cf. Lev. 26:22; Deut. 28:26) is now unleashed on Israel's end-time enemies.

Notice the number of IMPERATIVES in v. 17 to the wild, carnivorous birds and animals.

- 1. speak to, BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. assemble, BDB 867, KB 1062, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. come, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 4. gather, BDB 62, KB 74, Niphal IMPERATIVE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:21-24

²¹"And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them. ²²And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward. ²³The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword. ²⁴According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.""

39:21-24 YHWH will reveal Himself! He was revealed by Israel, but in an inappropriate way. His people were not exiled because of His lack of power or interest, but because of their covenant disobedience. Now He will reverse this misinformation (cf. 38:22-23) by restoring His people (cf. vv. 25-29) and destroying all opposing human armies!

Israel was meant to be a light to the nations, a kingdom of priests, but they failed. See Special Topic at 12:16.

39:23 "I hid My face from them" This is a metaphorical way of asserting that YHWH would not hear their prayers (cf. Deut. 31:17-18; Isa. 1:15; 54:8; 57:17; 59:2). YHWH will reverse this in v. 29. This phrase is an antithetical parallel to "I shall pour out My Spirit"! Prayer sent, received, and acted on was a concrete sign of the covenant.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:25-29

²⁵Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name. ²⁶They will forget their disgrace and all their treachery which they perpetrated against Me, when they live securely on their *own* land with no one to make them afraid. ²⁷When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. ²⁸Then they will know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the nations, and then gathered them *again* to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. ²⁹I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD.

39:25-29 For those who see every prophecy as eschatological, this paragraph must refer to the post-exilic period introduced by Cyrus the king of Medo-Persia.

Prophecy characteristically takes a current situation (positive or negative) and projects it into a future setting. How God's people live today determines what future they will experience. To take prophecy "literally" misses the point. To take prophecy "unconditionally" misses the point. To take prophecy "as modern western prose" misses the point! See Special Topic: OT Prophecy at 13:2.

35:25 "Jacob" This is the Patriarch from whom the name Israel comes (cf. Gen. 32:28). YHWH is promising to have mercy (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Piel* PERFECT) on all the exiled people of God (i.e., the northern and southern kingdoms, cf. 36:10; 37:21-22).

■ "I shall be jealous for My holy name" The VERB (BDB 888, KB 1109, *Piel* PERFECT) describes YHWH's special love and care for Israel (cf. Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:23-24), through whom He will reveal Himself to the world. They failed (cf. 36:22-23), but now through the new covenant (cf. 36:22-28; Jer. 31:31-34; Joel 2:28-32), He will succeed!

39:26 Israel will remember and be ashamed of her rebellion and sin (cf. 6:9; 16:61,63; 20:43; 36:31-32).

There is some variation in the translations of v. 26.

- 1. "forget" (BDB 674, נשה), NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV, REB
- 2. "bear" (BDB 669, נשא), Peshitta, NKJV, JPSOA, NET Bible

39:28 "I made them go into exile" It was not the power of the pagan deities of the nations of the Ancient Near East, but YHWH's judgment (i.e. Jer. 29:4,7,14; Amos 5:27) and personal activity (i.e., He used Assyria, Babylon, and later Persia for His revelatory and redemptive purposes). This is "the" major theological issue in Ezekiel (i.e., God's holy name).

39:29 "I shall have poured out My Spirit" The VERB (BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of YHWH's equipping presence

- 1. for life, Ezek. 37:14
- 2. for new covenant, Ezek. 11:19; 36:26-27; Joel 2:28 (all mankind)
- 3. for fertility, Isa. 32:15; 44:3

In the OT God's Spirit is used in the sense of His power to accomplish His will in the world. The full NT Trinitarian sense does not occur. See Special Topic: The Trinity at 2:2.

This is a sacrificial term (cf. Lev. 17:13; Deut. 12:16; 15:23). It is used of pagan practices in Ezek. 16:15; 23:8).

Just a balancing note about this VERB. It is also used of YHWH pouring out His wrath on the disobedient (cf. Isa. 42:25; Jer. 7:20; Lam. 2:4; Ezek. 21:31).

EZEKIEL 40

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
Vision of a Man With A Measuring Rod	A New City, A New Temple	The Temple Area, Gates, Outer and Inner Courts	Ezekiel Is Taken To Jerusalem	The Future Temple
40:1-4	40:1-5	40:1-4	40:1-3	40:1-4
Measurements Relating to the Temple			40:4	
			The East Gate	The Outer Wall
40:5-16		40:5-16	40:5-10	40:5
	The Eastern Gateway of the Temple			The East Gate
	40:6-16			40:6-16
			40:11-16	
	The Outer Court		The Outer Courtyard	The Outer Court
40:17-19	40:17-19	40:17-19	40:17-18	40:17-19
			40:19	
	The Northern Gateway		The North Gate	The North Gate
40:20-23	40:20-23	40:20-23	40:20-23	40:20-23
	The Southern Gateway		The South Gate	The South Gate
40:24-27	40:24-27	40:24-27	40:24-27	40:24-27
	Gateways of the Inner Court		The Inner Courtyard: The South Gate	The Inner Court. The South Gate
40:28-31	40:28-31	40:28-31	40:28-31	40:28-31
			The Inner Courtyard: The East Gate	The East Gate
40:32-34	40:32-34	40:32-34	40:32-34	40:32-34
			The Inner Courtyard: The North Gate	The North Gate
40:35-37	40:35-37	40:35-37	40:35-37	40:35-37
	Where Sacrifices Were Prepared		Buildings Near the North Gate	Subsidiary Buildings At the Gate
40:38-43	40:38-43	40:38-43	40:38-43	40:38-43
	Chambers for Singers and Priests			
40:44-47	40:44-46	40:44-47	40:44-46	40:44-46
	Dimensions of the Inner Court and Vestibule		The Inner Courtyard and Temple Building	The Inner Court
	40:47-49		40:47-41:4	40:47

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT TO EZEKIEL 40-48

- A. Brief outline
 - 1. Chapters 40-43 the Temple restored
 - 2. Chapters 44-46 the ritual restored
 - 3. Chapters 47-48 the land reallocated
- B. There is a series of special places where the God of Israel dwelt (i.e., the location of the Ark of the Covenant) and interacted with His people.
 - 1. the tabernacle
 - a. description, Exodus 25-40
 - b. procedures, Leviticus
 - 2. the temple of Solomon (based on a Phoenician pattern), I Kings 5-8; I Chronicles 17;22;28;29; II Chronicles 2-7
 - 3. the temple of Zerubbabel, Ezra; *I Esdras*; *I Macc.* 1:20-24; Josephus, *Apion* 1.22
 - 4. the temple of Herod, Josephus, Antiq. 15.11-12; Wars 5.5; Middoth in Mishna
 - 5. the temple of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48
 - 6. Jesus is the true Temple, Hebrews (esp. chapters 9-10)
- C. Ezekiel was a trained priest of the line of Zadok. He was greatly concerned that the temple had become idolatrous (i.e., chapters 8-11) and that YHWH had left and moved east to be with the exiles in Babylon. The temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army in 586 B.C. Chapters 40-48 represent YHWH's return to His special place with His people. One wonders

how much the prophecy of Jer. 31:38-40 affected Ezekiel; and how much Ezekiel affected Zechariah 2 and John's book of the Revelation. The imagery of the prophets reveal that

- 1. they knew of each other's writing
- 2. the Spirit used the same imagery again and again to tie God's promises together

The details (cf. 40:5-42:20) of steps and their width along with the type of metal were symbolic of the levels of holiness as one approaches the most holy of places, the place where YHWH symbolically dwelt, the Holy of Holies and its Ark of the Covenant.

- D. If taken literally, there is much disagreement between the procedures of Moses (Leviticus) and those of Ezekiel (chapters 40-48). The Rabbi Hananiah bar Hezekiah attempted to reconcile them (cf. *b. Shab* 13b). Some rabbis assert that it must refer to a future Messianic temple (cf. Seder Olam 26; Rashi).
- E. Some possible interpretations
 - 1. It was never meant to be literally fulfilled, but was a literary way to reverse chapters 8-11. It was written to encourage the exiles.
 - 2. It was conditional prophecy to which the Jews did not respond appropriately (i.e., sin of the post-exilic period, cf. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi).
 - 3. It was to be fulfilled in the return from the Exile under Zerubbabel (prince of Judah, seed of David) and Joshua (seed of the last high priest before the exile).
 - 4. It was fulfilled in Herod's temple.
 - 5. It will be fulfilled in an eschatological temple.
- F. Personal problems interpreting this text
 - 1. Ezekiel, in sharp contrast to Isaiah, is very Israel-focused. Isaiah's universalism (God's love and inclusion of all the nations) is totally missing. The nations will know God through His judgment on them and blessings on Israel.
 - 2. Ezekiel focuses exclusively on national geographical Israel, which is so different from the NT (see Special Topic at 34:26).
 - 3. Ezekiel takes seriously the curses and blessings of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29. He does predict an end-time Davidic seed and a restored sacrificial system (cf. 34:23-24; 37:24-28).
 - 4. The NT
 - a. specifically excludes an end-time sacrificial system in Hebrews 9 and 10 (see F. F. Bruce, *Questions and Answers*, pp. 32-33)
 - b. includes Gentiles, while Ezekiel 40-48 is very nationalistic
 - c. Jesus seems to have rejected the Jews as God's instrument of redemption in the parable of the wicked tenants (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)
 - 5. Although I believe that God will use national Israel in some way in the end-time setting (cf. Romans 9-11), I do believe that the Church is spiritual Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Galatians 3-4; 6:15-16; Eph. 2:11-3:13; Phil. 3:3; I Pet. 2:8-9; Rev. 1:6). This has surely affected the way I understand Ezekiel. But before you say to yourself, "aha!" let me remind you that you, too, are presuppositional. We are all trying to understand the individual books of the Bible and then put them together into a perspective that embraces all of God's revelation. And, it is not easy!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:1-4

¹In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was taken, on that same day the hand of the LORD was upon me and He brought me there. ²In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, and on it to the south *there was* a structure like a city. ³So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. ⁴The man said to me, "Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show *it* to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see."

40:1 "In the twenty-fifty year of our exile" This would be 573 B.C., dating from the exile of King Jehoiachin (i.e., 597 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 24:10-17).

■ "at the beginning of the year" It is uncertain if the new year began in the autumn with the month Tishri (cf. Lev. 25:9), or with the month Nisan (cf. Exod. 12:2). No New Year feast is mentioned in the OT or NT or by Josephus or Philo. See Special Topic: Ancient Near Eastern Calendars at 1:1.

• "after the city was taken" The VERB (BDB 645, KB 697, *Hophal* PERFECT, cf. 33:21) means "to be attacked and captured" (cf. II Kgs. 25:1-7).

• "the hand of the LORD was upon me" See note at 33:22.

■ "He brought me there" This VERB (BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) speaks of a spiritual (i.e., "in visions," cf. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2) transportation (this parallels 8:3; 11:1,24) from exile in Babylon to the site of a high mountain (same VERB is *Hiphil* PERFECT in 40:2). The Spirit does this to Ezekiel several times in chapter 40 (cf. vv. 2,3,4,17,28,32,35,48).

40:2 "set me on a very high mountain" Because of Ezek. 17:27 and 20:40, this seems to refer to the temple on Mt. Moriah (cf. Isa. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1).

■ "on it to the south" The Septuagint has "opposite it" (see RSV REB), which would refer to the (1) Mount of Olives or (2) Mt. Zion. This change involves only one consonant in the Masoretic text ("south," מעגב "in front of," למגד).

• *"there was* a structure like a city" This may relate to Ps. 48:2, but this is uncertain because of the description "in the far north" (cf. Isa. 14:13).

40:3 "a man" This turns out to be an angelic guide (cf. v. 3), so characteristic of apocalyptic literature.

• "line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand" The line of flax (BDB 833) was used to measure long distances, while the measuring reed (BDB 889) was used to measure short distances.

40:4 Ezekiel is given a series of commands.

- 1. see, BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. hear, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

- 3. give attention (lit. "set your heart"), BDB 962, KB 1321, Qal IMPERATIVE, cf. 44:5
- 4. declare, BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

• "declare. . .all that you see" This is theologically similar to Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Jer. 26:2. Ezekiel must disclose everything that was communicated to him from YHWH to the people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:5-16

⁵And behold, there was a wall on the outside of the temple all around, and in the man's hand was a measuring rod of six cubits, each of which was a cubit and a handbreadth. So he measured the thickness of the wall, one rod; and the height, one rod. ⁶Then he went to the gate which faced east, went up its steps and measured the threshold of the gate, one rod in width; and the other threshold was one rod in width. ⁷The guardroom was one rod long and one rod wide; and there were five cubits between the guardrooms. And the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate facing inward was one rod. ⁸Then he measured the porch of the gate facing inward, one rod. ⁹He measured the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and its side pillars, two cubits. And the porch of the gate was faced inward. ¹⁰The guardrooms of the gate toward the east *numbered* three on each side; the three of them had the same measurement. The side pillars also had the same measurement on each side. ¹¹And he measured the width of the gateway, ten cubits, and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. ¹²There was a barrier wall one cubit wide in front of the guardrooms on each side; and the guardrooms were six cubits square on each side. ¹³He measured the gate from the roof of the one guardroom to the roof of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits from one door to the door opposite. ¹⁴He made the side pillars sixty cubits high; the gate extended round about to the side pillar of the courtvard. ¹⁵From the front of the entrance gate to the front of the inner porch of the gate was fifty cubits. ¹⁶There were shuttered windows looking toward the guardrooms, and toward their side pillars within the gate all around, and likewise for the porches. And *there were* windows all around inside; and on *each* side pillar *were* palm tree ornaments.

40:5 "there was a wall on the outside of the temple all around" This begins the very detailed description of the new temple. This wall's length is measured in 42:20.

■ "a measuring rod of six cubits, *each of which was* a cubit and a handbreadth" There seem to have been two cubits: (1) described in Deut. 3:11 and II Chr. 3:3 as the distance from a man's elbow to his longest finger, about 18 inches; (2) a longer cubit was used in both Babylon and Egypt, which was the regular distance plus the width of a man's hand, which made it about 21 inches (cf. Ezek. 43:13). The Mishnah says that the measuring rod/reed was about 10 feet, 5 inches long.

40:6 This is the gate from which YHWH left the temple (cf. 11:1,22-23) and the direction from which He will return to the new temple (cf. 43:1-5).

• "went up its steps" Throughout chapter 40 a series of steps is mentioned (vv. 6, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37, and 39). These ascending steps and shrinking doorways seem to depict the levels of holiness as one approaches the Holy of Holies (cf. chapter 41:2-3.

40:9 NASB "its side pillars" NKJV "the gateposts" NRSV "its pilasters" NJB "its piers" This rare Hebrew word (BDB 18 II, KB 40 III) means "door jamb" in I Kgs. 6:31, but here (cf. vv. 9, 10, 14 [twice], 16 [twice], 21, 24, 26, 29, 31, 34, 36, 37 [twice], 38, 48, 49; 41:1, 3) its meaning is uncertain. The NIV translates it as "projecting walls" and "jambs." The same consonants can mean

- 1. ram
- 2. leader
- 3. prominent tree (terebinth)
- 4. strength (KB)
- 5. deer (KB)

KB 40 III offers "pillar of an archway" as a possible meaning.

40:14 This verse is very difficult in the Masoretic text. Note the different translations available to you.

40:16 "palm tree ornaments" These (BDB 1071, cf. vv. 22,26; 41:18) were also in Solomon's temple (cf. I Kgs. 6:29,32,35; 7:36; II Chr. 3:5), but not the tabernacle. Solomon elaborates the tabernacle's design and Ezekiel elaborates Solomon's design.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:17-19

¹⁷Then he brought me into the outer court, and behold, *there were* chambers and a pavement made for the court all around; thirty chambers faced the pavement. ¹⁸The pavement (*that is*, the lower pavement) *was* by the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates. ¹⁹Then he measured the width from the front of the lower gate to the front of the exterior of the inner court, a hundred cubits on the east and on the north.

40:17 "pavement" This (BDB 954) refers to some type of stone or mosaic floor covering.

- 1. Xerxes' palace ("in the court of the garden of the king," 1:5) in Susa, Esther 1:6
- 2. Solomon's temple, II Chr. 7:3
- 3. Ezekiel's temple (i.e., outer court), Ezek. 40:17,18; 42:3

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:20-23

²⁰As for the gate of the outer court which faced the north, he measured its length and its width. ²¹It had three guardrooms on each side; and its side pillars and its porches had the same measurement as the first gate. Its length *was* fifty cubits and the width twenty-five cubits. ²²Its windows and its porches and its palm tree ornaments *had* the same measurements as the gate which faced toward the east; and it was reached by seven steps, and its porch *was* in front of them. ²³The inner court had a gate opposite the gate on the north as well as *the gate* on the east; and he measured a hundred cubits from gate to gate.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:24-27

²⁴Then he led me toward the south, and behold, there was a gate toward the south; and he measured its side pillars and its porches according to those same measurements. ²⁵The gate and its porches had windows all around like those other windows; the length *was* fifty cubits and the width twenty-five cubits. ²⁶There were seven steps going up to it, and its porches *were* in front of them; and it had palm tree ornaments on its side pillars, one on each side. ²⁷The inner court had a gate toward the south; and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, a hundred cubits.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:28-31

²⁸Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate; and he measured the south gate according to those same measurements. ²⁹Its guardrooms also, its side pillars and its porches *were* according to those same measurements. And the gate and its porches had windows all around; it *was* fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. ³⁰There were porches all around, twenty-five cubits long and five cubits wide. ³¹Its porches *were* toward the outer court; and palm tree ornaments *were* on its side pillars, and its stairway had eight steps.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:32-34

³²He brought me into the inner court toward the east. And he measured the gate according to those same measurements. ³³Its guardrooms also, its side pillars and its porches *were* according to those same measurements. And the gate and its porches had windows all around; it *was* fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide. ³⁴Its porches were toward the outer court; and palm tree ornaments *were* on its side pillars, on each side, and its stairway had eight steps.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:35-37

³⁵Then he brought me to the north gate; and he measured it according to those same measurements, ³⁶with its guardrooms, its side pillars and its porches. And the gate had windows all around; the length *was* fifty cubits and the width twenty-five cubits. ³⁷Its side pillars *were* toward the outer court; and palm tree ornaments *were* on its side pillars on each side, and its stairway had eight steps.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:38-43

³⁸A chamber with its doorway was by the side pillars at the gates; there they rinse the burnt offering. ³⁹In the porch of the gate *were* two tables on each side, on which to slaughter the burnt offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering. ⁴⁰On the outer side, as one went up to the gateway toward the north, were two tables; and on the other side of the porch of the gate *were* two tables. ⁴¹Four tables *were* on each side next to the gate; *or*, eight tables on which they slaughter *sacrifices*. ⁴²For the burnt offering *there were* four tables of hewn stone, a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide and one cubit high, on which they lay the instruments with which they slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice. ⁴³The double hooks, one handbreadth in length, were installed in the house all around; and on the tables *was* the flesh of the offering.

40:43

- NASB "double hooks"
- NKJV "hooks"
- NRSV "pegs"
- TEV "ledges"
- NJB "runnels"

The Hebrew consonants in the words "hooks" (BDB 1052) and "ledges" are the same. Hooks fits v. 42 (i.e., sacrifice) and the last phrase of v. 43 ("and on the tables *was* the flesh of the offering"). However, "ledges" are mentioned in the "Temple Scroll" of the Dead Sea Scrolls (30:13, see IVP Bible Background Commentary, p. 725).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:44-47

⁴⁴From the outside to the inner gate were chambers for the singers in the inner court, *one of* which was at the side of the north gate, with its front toward the south, and one at the side of the south gate facing toward the north. ⁴⁵He said to me, "This is the chamber which faces toward the south, *intended* for the priests who keep charge of the temple; ⁴⁶but the chamber which faces toward the north is for the priests who keep charge of the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who from the sons of Levi come near to the LORD to minister to Him." ⁴⁷He measured the court, a *perfect* square, a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide; and the altar was in front of the temple.

40:44 NASB, NKJV, NRSV, JPSOA "chambers for the singers in the inner court" The MT has "chambers for the singers." The Septuagint has "two chambers" (RSV, TEV, NJB, REB) and says these rooms were "for the sacrificing priests" in v. 46. We can see the different functions of the Levite priests in vv. 45-46, therefore, "chambers" fits the immediate context better.

40:46 "These are the sons of Zadok" This was the lineage of Ezekiel. Zadok served Solomon in his temple. Jeremiah was from the line of Abiathar, who rebelled against David and was exiled from the temple service. Verses 45-46 may reflect the forgiveness of the line of Abiathar. As Israel and Judah are reunited, so too, the two families of priests. However, the sons of Zadok still exclusively attend the altar (cf. 43:19; 44:15-16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:48-49

⁴⁸Then he brought me to the porch of the temple and measured *each* side pillar of the porch, five cubits on each side; and the width of the gate was three cubits on each side. ⁴⁹The length of the porch was twenty cubits and the width eleven cubits; and at the stairway by which it was ascended *were* columns belonging to the side pillars, one on each side.

40:49 "and the width eleven cubits" The Septuagint has "twelve cubits," which seems to fit the overall structure better.

• "at the stairway by which it was ascended" The Septuagint adds "ten steps."

• "the sacred pillars" This seems to refer to the two free-standing pillars in the front of Solomon's temple, which were called Jachin and Boaz (cf. II Kgs. 7:15-22; II Chr. 3:17).

EZEKIEL 41

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
The Inner Temple	Dimensions of the Sanctuary		The Inner Courtyard and Temple Building 40:47-41:4	The Hekal
41:1-4	41:1-4	41:1-4		4:1-2
				The Debir
				4:3-4
	The Side Chambers on the Wall		The Rooms Built Against the Temple Walls	The Side Cells
41:5-11	41:5-11	41:5-11	41:5-11	41:5-7
				41:8-11
	The Building at the Western End		The Building on the West	The Building on the West Side
41:12	41:12	41:12	41:12	41:12-15a
	Dimensions and Design of the Temple Area		The Total Measurements of the Temple Building	
41:13-14	41:13-17	41:13-14	41:13-15	
41:15-20		41:15a	Details of the Temple Building	The Particulars of the Temple Itself
		41:15b-20	41:15b-21a	41:15b-21a
	41:18-20			
41:21-26	41:21-26	41:21-26	The Wooden Altar	The Wooden Altar
			41:21b-22	41:21b-22
			The Doors	The Doors
			41:23-26	41:23-26

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:1-4

¹Then he brought me to the nave and measured the side pillars; six cubits wide on each side *was* the width of the side pillar. ²The width of the entrance *was* ten cubits and the sides of the entrance were five cubits on each side. And he measured the length of the nave, forty cubits, and the width, twenty cubits. ³Then he went inside and measured each side pillar of the doorway, two cubits, and the doorway, six cubits *high*; and the width of the doorway, seven cubits. ⁴He measured its length, twenty cubits, and the width, twenty cubits, before the nave; and he said to me, "This is the most holy *place*."

41:1 "he brought me" Does the "he" refer to (cf. 40:17,24,28,32,35,48)

- 1. the hand of the Lord, 40:1,2
- 2. the Lord's Spirit
- 3. the angel guide, 40:45,47; 41:2,3,4,15

In context #3 fits best.

NASB, NRSV	V "the nave"
NKJV	"the sanctuary"
JPSOA	"the great hall"
TEV	"central room"
NJB	"the Hekal"

This word (BDB 228, KB 244) can refer to

- 1. palace/temple of God as the great king, II Kgs. 18:16; 23:4; 24:13; Jer. 7:4; 24:1; Ezek. 8:16
- 2. the holy place of Solomon's temple, I Kgs. 6:17; 7:50, and of Ezekiel's temple, 41:1, 4, 15, 21, 23
- 3. the heavenly temple of Isaiah, Isa. 6:1 (cf. Ps. 11:4; Micah 1:2; Hab. 2:20)
- 4. the second temple built by Zerubbabel, Hag. 2:15,18; Zech. 6:12,13,14,15; 8:9; Mal. 3:1

41:4 "This is the most holy *place*" This refers to the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant originally dwelt (cf. Exod. 26:33-34; I Kgs. 6:16; 8:6). This was the place of atonement, the place of YHWH's personal presence (cf. Leviticus 16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:5-11

⁵Then he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits; and the width of the side chambers, four cubits, all around about the house on every side. ⁶The side chambers were in three stories, one above another, and thirty in each story; and the side chambers extended to the wall which *stood* on their inward side all around, that they might be fastened, and not be fastened into the wall of

the temple *itself*. ⁷The side chambers surrounding the temple were wider at each successive story. Because the structure surrounding the temple went upward by stages on all sides of the temple, therefore the width of the temple increased as it went higher; and thus one went up from the lowest *story* to the highest by way of the second *story*. ⁸I saw also that the house had a raised platform all around; the foundations of the side chambers were a full rod of six long cubits *in height*. ⁹The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits. But the free space between the side chambers belonging to the temple ¹⁰and the *outer* chambers *was* twenty cubits in width all around the temple on every side. ¹¹The doorways of the side chambers toward the free space *consisted* of one doorway toward the north and another doorway toward the south; and the width of the free space was five cubits all around.

41:7

NASB	"the second story"
NKJV, NRSV	"the middle one"
LXX	"third story"

The term (BDB 1064, KB 1724) means "middle." From the context it must refer to the middle or second level (cf. 42:5,6).

The Jewish Study Bible, p. 1122, says v. 7 is describing a spiraling staircase.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:12

¹² The building that *was* in front of the separate area at the side toward the west *was* seventy cubits wide; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its length was ninety cubits.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:13-14

¹³Then he measured the temple, a hundred cubits long; the separate area with the building and its walls *were* also a hundred cubits long. ¹⁴Also the width of the front of the temple and *that* of the separate areas along the east *side totaled* a hundred cubits.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:15-20

¹⁵He measured the length of the building along the front of the separate area behind it, with a gallery on each side, a hundred cubits; *he* also *measured* the inner nave and the porches of the court. ¹⁶The thresholds, the latticed windows and the galleries round about their three stories, opposite the threshold, were paneled with wood all around, and *from* the ground to the windows (but the windows were covered), ¹⁷over the entrance, and to the inner house, and on the outside, and on all the wall all around inside and outside, by measurement. ¹⁸It was carved with cherubim and palm trees; and a palm tree was between cherub and cherub, and every cherub had two faces, ¹⁹a man's face toward the palm tree on one side and a young lion's face toward the palm tree on the other side; they were carved on all the house all around. ²⁰From the ground to above the entrance cherubim and palm trees were carved, as well as *on* the wall of the nave.

41:16

NASB "lattices windows"

NKJV "beveled window frames"

NRSV "windows with recessed frames"

TEV "the windows could be covered"

NJB "the windows were screened with latticework"

This descriptive term (BDB 31, KB 36) can mean

- 1. closed, barred, cf. v. 16c
- 2. framed, cf. I Kgs. 6:4; 7:4-5
- 3. narrow

• "were paneled with wood all around" This was just like Solomon's temple (cf. I Kgs. 6:15).

41:18 "cherubim and palm trees" These were the same decorations that were used in Solomon's temple (cf. I Kgs. 6:8,29; 7:29,36). There is some doubt as to the exact physical description of the Cherubim: (1) the Ark of the Covenant had Cherubim who had one face each; (2) in Ezekiel 1 and 10 they seem to have four faces; (3) Revelation 4 records a different face for each creature. See Special Topic: Cherubim at 1:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:21-26

²¹The doorposts of the nave were square; as for the front of the sanctuary, the appearance of one doorpost was like that of the other. ²²The altar *was* of wood, three cubits high and its length two cubits; its corners, its base and its sides *were* of wood. And he said to me, "This is the table that is before the LORD." ²³The nave and the sanctuary each had a double door. ²⁴Each of the doors had two leaves, two swinging leaves; two *leaves* for one door and two leaves for the other. ²⁵Also there were carved on them, on the doors of the nave, cherubim and palm trees like those carved on the walls; and *there was* a threshold of wood on the front of the porch outside. ²⁶There were latticed windows and palm trees on one side and on the other, on the sides of the porch; thus *were* the side chambers of the house and the thresholds.

41:22 "the altar of wood" There are two possibilities for this piece of furniture because it is called both an altar (BDB 258) and a table (BDB 1020): (1) the table of showbread (cf. Exod. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9; 1 Kgs. 6:20-22; 11 Chr. 3:lff) or (2) the altar of incense which stood before the inner veil (cf. Exod. 30:1-10; 37:25-29).

EZEKIEL 42

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
Chambers of the Temple	The Chambers For the Priests	The Priests' Chambers	Two Buildings Near the Temple	Subsidiary Buildings of the Temple
42:1-9	42:1-9	42:1-10a	42:1-10a	42:1-9
42:10-12	42:10-12			42:10-14
		42:10b-12	42:10b-12	
42:13-14	42:13-14	42:13-14	42:13-14	
	Outer Dimensions of the Temple	The Total Temple Area	The Measurements of the Temple Area	Measurements of the Courts
42:15-20	42:15-20	42:15-20	42:15-20	42:15-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:1-9

¹Then he brought me out into the outer court, the way toward the north; and he brought me to the chamber which *was* opposite the separate area and opposite the building toward the north. ²Along the length, *which* was a hundred cubits, *was* the north door; the width *was* fifty cubits. ³Opposite the twenty *cubits* which belonged to the inner court, and opposite the pavement which belonged to the outer court, *was* gallery corresponding to gallery in three stories. ⁴Before the chambers *was* an inner walk ten cubits wide, a way of one *hundred* cubits; and their openings *were* on the north. ⁵Now the upper chambers *were* smaller because the galleries took more *space* away from them than from the lower and middle ones in the building. ⁶For they *were* in three stories and had no pillars like the pillars of the courts; therefore *the upper chambers* were set back from the ground upward, more than the lower and middle ones. ⁷As for the outer wall by the side of the chambers, toward the outer court facing the chambers, its length *was* fifty cubits. ⁸For the length of the chambers which *were* in the outer court *was* fifty cubits; and behold, the length of those facing the temple *was* a hundred cubits. ⁹Below these chambers *was* the entrance on the east side, as one enters them from the outer court.

42:1 "he brought me" See note at 41:1.

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB, JPSOA	"outer court"
TEV	"outer courtyard"
RSV	"inner court"
The Hebrew OT	Text Project of the UBS gives "outer" an A rating

42:4

NASB, NRSV,

$\mathbf{MASD}, \mathbf{MASV},$	
REB	"a way of one <i>hundred</i> cubits"
NKJV	"at a distance of one cubit"

The MT has "one cubit," but the Septuagint and Peshitta have "one hundred cubits. The Expositors Bible Commentary (p. 967) says that "an inner walk" (BDB 237) of v. 4 can be understood as a step (1x10 cubits). There are many ambiguous and rare terms and phrases in this section that remain unknown.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:10-12

¹⁰In the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, facing the separate area and facing the building, *there were* chambers. ¹¹The way in front of them *was* like the appearance of the chambers which were on the north, according to their length so was their width, and all their exits *were* both according to their arrangements and openings. ¹²Corresponding to the openings of the chambers which were toward the south was an opening at the head of the way, the way in front of the wall toward the east, as one enters them.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:13-14

¹³Then he said to me, "The north chambers *and* the south chambers, which are opposite the separate area, they are the holy chambers where the priests who are near to the LORD shall eat the most holy things. There they shall lay the most holy things, the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering; for the place is holy. ¹⁴When the priests enter, then they shall not go out into the outer court from the sanctuary without laying there their garments in which they minister, for they are holy. They shall put on other garments; then they shall approach that which is for the people."

42:13 "the priests who are near to the LORD" This refers to Zadok's line which exclusively offered sacrifices (cf. 40:46). These priests were allowed to eat part of most sacrifices (cf. Lev. 2:3; 5:13; 6:16,26,29; 7:6,10; 10:12-14). The sacrifices are described in Leviticus 1-7.

42:14 The priests' garments (cf. Exod. 39:1-43) that they wore when ministering at the altar must be left in the "holy" place. This corresponds to Aaron's instruction in Lev. 16:23.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:15-20

¹⁵Now when he had finished measuring the inner house, he brought me out by the way of the gate which faced toward the east and measured it all around. ¹⁶He measured on the east side with the measuring reed five hundred reeds by the measuring reed. ¹⁷He measured on the north side five hundred reeds by the measuring reed. ¹⁸On the south side he measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. ¹⁹He turned to the west side *and* measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. ²⁰He measured it on the four sides; it had a wall all around, the length five hundred and the width five hundred, to divide between the holy and the profane.

42:16 "the measuring reed five hundred reeds by the measuring reed" The problem occurs in the length of a "measuring reed." Earlier in the literary unit (cf. 40:5) it was over ten feet, but here it seems to refer to one cubit (i.e., 21 inches). The MT scholars recognized the problem.

Qere (to be read), five hundred reeds

Ketiv (written), five cubits, reeds

This same confusion is repeated in vv. 17, 18, and 19.

If one assumes that a reed is over 10' the area was about 500 acres (The Jewish Study Bible, p. 1125), if 21" the area is about 14 acres. If the larger measurement is used it denotes the symbolic nature because of its size.

42:20 "to divide between the holy and profane" This is another example of architectural design to accentuate holiness. The wall was too low to provide protection; therefore, some commentators see it as a wall of holiness (similar to the dividing walls of Herod's temple).

EZEKIEL 43

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
Vision of the Glory of God Filling the Temple	The Temple, The LORD's Dwelling Place	Return of the Glory of God	The LORD Returns to the Temple	The Return of Yahweh
43:1-5	43:1-5	43:1-5	43:1-4	43:1-3
				43:4-9
			43:5-9	
43:6-9	43:6-9	43:6-9		
43:10-12	43:10-12	43:10-12	43:10-12	43:10-12
The Altar of Sacrifice	Dimensions of the Altar	The Altar of Burnt Offering	The Altar	The Altar
43:13-17	43:13-17	43:13-17	43:13-17	43:13-17
The Offerings	Consecrating the Altar		The Consecration of the Altar	The Consecration of the Altar
43:18-21	43:18-27	43:18-21	43:18-27	43:18-27
43:22-27		43:22-27		

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:1-5

¹Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east; ²and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. ³And *it* was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions *were* like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. ⁴And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. ⁵And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

43:2 "the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east" We must remember that the glory, or the presence of God, had left (cf. 10:18-22; 11:22-24). He is returning to His temple. It is a way of affirming that the ancient covenant had been re-established (cf. Ps. 24:7-10).

• "His voice was like the sound of many waters" See 1:24 and Rev. 1:15; 14:2.

• "the earth shone with His glory" The VERB (BDB 21, KB 24, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used of the Shekinah Cloud of Glory during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 13:21; 14:20). This is part of the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:25. It involved God's face (i.e., intimate presence) to shine in/on those whom He fully accepted. See Special Topic at 3:12.

43:3 This vision of the manifested glory of YHWH is the same as in the vision that Ezekiel saw in chapters 1 and 10 (i.e., the portable throne chariot of YHWH).

 NASB, NRSV, REB "when He came"
 NKJV, NJB "when I came"
 TEV "when God came"

The MT has "I" (בבי), but some Hebrew manuscripts (6) and the Vulgate have "He" (בבו). There is much confusion in Ezekiel related to the PRONOUNS "I," "you," "He," and "they."

• "I fell on my face" See 1:28; 3:23.

43:5 "the Spirit lifted me up and brought me" See note at 40:1 and 3:12.

• "the glory of the LORD filled the house" This was like the Shekinah cloud that came down on Mount Sinai (cf. Exodus 19:16,18,20), the Tabernacle (cf. Exodus 40:34,35), and Solomon's temple (cf. I Kgs. 8:10,11; II Chr. 5:14; 7:1-2). This is another way of showing that God present and the covenant was reestablished.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:6-9

⁶Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me. ⁷He said to me, "Son of man, *this is* the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die, ⁸by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with *only*

the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger. ⁹Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.''

43:6 "I heard one speaking to me from the house" From the next three verses we know it was YHWH Himself who had just returned from Babylon. This seems to imply that Ezekiel thought this message was for the post-exilic community. Surely YHWH does not stay in Babylon until the eschaton.

• "while a man was standing beside me" This refers to one of the angel guides (cf. 40:3-4).

43:7 "the place of My throne" Normally YHWH's throne is in heaven, but since the vision of chapters 1 and 10 (YHWH's portable Throne Chariot, cf. 1:26; 10:1), the new temple is both His throne (cf. Jer. 3:17; 14:21; 17:12) and His footstool (i.e., the space between the Cherubim on the Ark, cf. I Chr. 28:2; Ps. 132; 7: Isa. 66:1; Lam. 2:1). Obviously this is metaphorical of power and majesty and not meant to be turned into God, the eternal Spirit, actually sitting on a chair/throne! Even Ps. 45:6 probably refers to the coming Davidic descendant (i.e., Messiah, cf. II Samuel 7), not God (see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 270-271).

• "the place of the soles of My feet" Although YHWH lived in heaven, His feet were between the Cherubim (i.e., Jerusalem, Mt. Moriah, cf. Exod. 25:22; Isa. 37:16) above the Ark of the Covenant in the holy of holies (cf. I Chr. 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Isa. 60:13). This dedication service is very similar to Solomon's in I Kings 8 (cf. Isa. 66:1).

■ "where I will dwell among the sons of Israel" The VERB (BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used so often in Deuteronomy of the place God will cause His name to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:11; 14:23; 16:2,6,11; 26:2). This promise is also found in 37:26-27. It goes back to Exod. 25:8 (YHWH gave them a detailed pattern of the tabernacle, also Exod. 25:9); 29:45-46. This same covenant language is continued when the coming Messiah is called Emmanuel (i.e., God with us) in Isa. 7:14 (cf. Matt. 1:23). This is another way of showing that the covenant has been reestablished (cf. 16:60-63; 37:24-28).

• "forever" See Special Topic at 37:25,26.

■ "Israel will not defile My holy name" This is a recurrent issue in Ezekiel. YHWH wants His name revealed to the nations, not profaned among them (cf. 20:9,14,22,39; 36:21,22; 39:7; 43:7,8)! Israel was meant to be a kingdom of priests, but they turned into a kingdom of idolaters! This will change; a new day is coming! The nations themselves will witness to Israel (cf. Romans 9-11)! There will be no distinction between Jew and Gentile anymore (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Joel 2:28 has been realized (cf. Acts 2:14-21).

• "the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name" This reflects the new covenant discussed in 36:22-36. A new day of obedience is coming. Obedience is possible because of YHWH providing "a new heart" and "a new spirit." This new covenant not only involves forgiveness, but godly living! Notice the stated condition in vv. 9 and 11. **•** "the corpses" This term (BDB 803, KB 910) has several possible meanings.

- 1. the bodies of dead kings in their tombs/monuments in the vicinity of the temple (cf. Lev. 26:30)
- 2. the offering of dead bodies to *Molech* (same consonants as "king")
- 3. the place and practice of idolatry (cf. v. 8; 8:3,16)

The parallelism suggests #3.

NASB	"when they die"
NKJV	"on their high places"
NRSV, JPSOA	"at their death"
TEV, NJB,	
Peshitta	"by burying the corpses of their dead kings"
REV	"with the monuments raised to dead kings"
LXX	"the murders of <i>their</i> princes in the midst of them"

The only difference between the two options is the vowel points of the MT scholars. The Hebrew consonants are the same. The question is, "Does the context refer to idolatry (cf. 5:11; 23:36-45) or the monuments (stele) of dead sinful kings?"

43:8 "So I have consumed them in My anger" See Special Topic at 1:3.

43:9-11 There is a series of commands.

- 1. put away harlotry, v. 9, BDB 934, KB 1221, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 2. describe/declare, v. 10, BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 3. be ashamed of iniquities, v. 10, BDB 483, KB 480, Niphal IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- 4. make known to them, v. 11, BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 5. write, v. 11, BDB 507, KB 503, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 6. observe, v. 11, BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

43:9 "Now let them" Verses 9 & 11 show the conditional nature of Ezekiel's covenant, as all covenants in the OT were conditional on mankind's appropriate response to God in repentance, faith, and obedience.

• "and I will dwell among them forever" See note at v. 7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:10-12

¹⁰"As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the plan. ¹¹If they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the house, its structure, its exits, its entrances, all its designs, all its statutes, and all its laws. And write *it* in their sight, so that they may observe its whole design and all its statutes and do them. ¹²This is the law of the house: its entire area on the top of the mountain all around *shall be* most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house."

43:10 This elaborate plan of the new temple was meant to

- 1. remind them of the Exodus (a detailed pattern from YHWH of a place of worship and its procedures, cf. Exodus 25-31)
- 2. cause them to repent (cf. 6:9; 16:61,63; 20:43; 36:31; 43:11)
- 3. give them an opportunity for obedience (i.e., "and do them," v. 11)

43:11 Notice the parallelism between

- 1. design, BDB 849, KB 1017, only in this chapter, possibly drawing, plan, or form
- 2. statutes, BDB 349, cf. v. 18, see Special Topic at 5:7
- 3. laws, BDB 435, cf. v. 12(twice), see Special Topic at 5:7

YHWH is giving them a new temple (i.e., to build) and new procedures (i.e., to act on) to test their obedience. They failed the tabernacle test; they failed Solomon's temple test; they will fail Zerubbabel's and Herod's tests also! Only after the new covenant of chapter 36 and the restoration of chapter 37 can Israel be obedient.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:13-17

¹³"And these are the measurements of the altar by cubits (the cubit being a cubit and a handbreadth): the base *shall be* a cubit and the width a cubit, and its border on its edge round about one span; and this *shall be* the height *of the* base of the altar. ¹⁴From the base on the ground to the lower ledge *shall be* two cubits and the width one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge *shall be* four cubits and the width one cubit. ¹⁵The altar hearth *shall be* four cubits; and from the altar hearth shall extend upwards four horns. ¹⁶Now the altar hearth *shall be* twelve *cubits* long by twelve wide, square in its four sides. ¹⁷The ledge *shall* be fourteen *cubits* long by fourteen wide in its four sides, the border around it *shall be* half a cubit and its base *shall be* a cubit round about; and its steps shall face the east."

43:15 "and from the altar hearth shall extend upwards four horns" There are numerous references to the four horns (i.e., like cow horns) of the sacrificial altar in the OT (cf. Exod. 27:2; 29:12; 30:10; 1 Kgs. 1:50; 2:28). Even the incense altar had four horns. This was the most holy part of the sacrificial altar on which a small portion of the blood was smeared (cf. Exod. 29:12; Lev. 4:7,18,25; 9:9; Ezek. 43:20) before the rest was poured out at the base of the altar of sacrifice.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:18-21

¹⁸And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'These are the statutes for the altar on the day it is built, to offer burnt offerings on it and to sprinkle blood on it. ¹⁹You shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me,' declares the Lord GOD, 'a young bull for a sin offering. ²⁰You shall take some of its blood and put it on its four horns and on the four corners of the ledge and on the border round about; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. ²¹You shall also take the bull for the sin offering, and it *shall be* burned in the appointed place of the house, outside the sanctuary.'''

43:18 This clearly states that the altar was for the purpose of atonement, not a memorial (cf. 45:15, 17, 20). This is in direct conflict with the NT book of Hebrews (esp. chapters 9-10), which sees Jesus as the last sacrifice needed to atone for mankind's sin.

43:20 "cleanse it" This VERB (BDB 306, KB 305, *Piel* PERFECT) is repeated in vv 22(twice) and the *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT in v. 23. The *Piel* denotes cleansing by means of a blood sacrifice (cf. Lev. 8:15; Ezek. 45:18) as does the next VERB "make atonement" (BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. v. 26; 45:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:22-27

²²"On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering, and they shall cleanse the altar as they cleansed *it* with the bull. ²³When you have finished cleansing *it*, you

shall present a young bull without blemish and a ram without blemish from the flock. ²⁴You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them, and they shall offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD. ²⁵For seven days you shall prepare daily a goat for a sin offering; also a young bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be prepared. ²⁶For seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it; so shall they consecrate it. ²⁷When they have completed the days, it shall be that on the eighth day and onward, the priests shall offer your burnt offerings on the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you,' declares the Lord GOD."

43:24 "salt" Usually salt was put with the grain offerings (cf. Lev. 2:13) and here with blood offerings. Because of Ezek. 6:9 it possibly was put on all offerings. It was a symbol of the Israelite's covenant with YHWH (cf. Num. 18:19; II Chr. 13:5).

43:25,26 "for seven days" This purification and dedication procedure parallels Exod. 29:35-37; Lev. 8:33-36. Holy things had to have a special initiation and also rigid procedures for maintaining their holiness. The Mosaic legislation (and also that of Ezekiel) was keen on maintaining a strict separation between the holy and the mundane, the clean and the unclean. This ritual separation reflected their theology of the world and life, the physical and spiritual

• "goat" Goats were not used in the Mosaic system for dedication offerings.

43:27 "peace offering" This was the fellowship meal where God symbolically ate with the offerer. It was eaten in the temple setting and is a foreshadowing of the Lord's Supper.

■ "I will accept you, declares the Lord GOD" This was the purpose of Ezekiel's sacrificial cultus (i.e., reunite sinful Israel with a holy God). Ezekiel sees it in terms of ancient sacrificial ritual (i.e., Leviticus 1-7).

The VERB (BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* PERFECT) is also used in 20:40,41 of an accepted sacrifice. Because YHWH was with His people, purity, holiness, ceremonial cleanness must be maintained!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study <u>guide</u> commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

- 1. When were these chapters fulfilled?
- 2. What is the purpose of the end-time sacrificial system?
- 3. Describe the Cherubim.
- 4. What is the purpose of an end-time temple?

EZEKIEL 44

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
Gate For the Prince	The East Gate and the Prince	Temple Ordinances	The Use of the East Gate	The Use of the East Gate
44:1-3	44:1-3	44:1-3	44:1-3	44:1-3
	Those Admitted to the Temple		Rules For Admission to the Temple	Rules of Admission to the Temple
44:4-8	44:4-9	44:4-8	44:4-5	44:4-9
			44:6-8	
44:9-14		44:9-14	44:9	
	Laws Governing Priests		The Levites Are Excluded From the Priesthood	The Levites
	44:10-14		44:10-14	44:10-14
Ordinances for the Levites			The Priests	The Priests
44:15-27	44:15-27	44:15-27	44:15-19	44:15-31
			44:20-22	
			44:23-24	
			44:25-27	
44:28-31	44:28-31	44:28-31	44:28-31	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:1-3

¹Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut. ²The LORD said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. ³As for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate and shall go out by the same way."

44:1-3 This text is often used as a prophecy relating to modern Jerusalem, Israel. The modern city's wall has a sealed eastern gate, but these are not the walls of Jerusalem that were built by Solomon, Nehemiah, or even Herod. These modern walls were built by an Islamic ruler in the ninth century A.D. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70.

Ezekiel's temple is symbolic of YHWH's return to Palestine and His fulfillment of the covenant promises of the Mosaic covenant. Notice in context that this passage refers to YHWH Himself, who has already returned! He left the temple from this place (cf. chapters 8-10) and He once-and-for-all returned to this place (cf. v. 4; 43:4-5).

44:3 "the prince" This is a Messianic reference (cf. 34:24; 37:24-25).

■ "eat bread before the LORD" This is a metaphor of worship and covenant (cf. Gen. 31:54; Exod. 24:9-11). To eat with someone was a sign of friendship and fellowship. It was one way to seal a covenant. This fellowship meal is institutionalized in the Peace Offering and the meal that follows (cf. Leviticus 3 and 7).

Also note that there is no hint that the prince is divine. The NT deity of the Messiah was a surprise because it seems to conflict with monotheism. Only the NT clearly reveals this surprising truth (i.e., John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-18; Heb. 1:2-3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:4-8

⁴Then He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the house; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD, and I fell on my face. ⁵The LORD said to me, "Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes and hear with your ears all that I say to you concerning all the statutes of the house of the LORD and concerning all its laws; and mark well the entrance of the house, with all exits of the sanctuary. ⁶You shall say to the rebellious ones, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel, ⁷when you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, *even* My house, when you offered My food, the fat and the blood; for they made My covenant void — *this* in addition to all your abominations. ⁸And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have set *foreigners* to keep charge of My sanctuary."

44:4 "the glory of the LORD" This phrase refers to the personal presence of YHWH (cf. 1:28; 3:23; 43:4-5; Exod. 24:16).

• "filled the house" This is reminiscent of

- 1. the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 40:34-35)
- 2. Solomon's temple (cf. I Kgs. 8:11; II Chr. 5:14; 7:1-3)

It was a visible way of showing YHWH's acceptance and presence. Ezekiel saw YHWH's glory fill the temple in his vision of chapter 10 (cf. 10:4), as it would at YHWH's return (cf. 43:5).

• "I fell on my face" Ezekiel (as all humans) is staggered by the holy, glorious presence of God (i.e., 1:28; 3:23; 43:3; Gen. 17:3; Lev. 9:24; Dan. 8:17; 10:9,10,15; Rev. 1:17).

44:5 This verse is very similar to 40:4, with three commands.

- 1. mark well (lit. "set your heart on") BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. see BDB 906, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. hear BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Ezekiel is to be careful what he sees so he can describe this future temple accurately for a restored, obedient Israel, especially the new temple's entrances and exits.

44:6 "the rebellious ones" This NOUN (BDB 598) refers to Judah (cf. 2:5-8; 3:9,26,27; 12:2[twice], 3,9,25; 17:12; 24:3). They are called rebellious because they violated YHWH's statutes about the temple, especially in connection to non-Israelites' involvement in temple activities. This refers specifically to political alliances made with foreign powers (i.e., Egypt, Babylon, etc.). This involved their gods.

• "abominations" See Special Topic at 5:11.

44:7 "uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh" In context this refers to non-Israelites. It speaks of a rebellious heart, as well as an unbelieving (i.e., non-covenant) person. It could refer to

- 1. political alliances with foreign nations
- 2. welcoming foreign ambassadors by showing them the temple (i.e., II Kgs. 20:12-15)
- 3. foreign servants in the tabernacle (cf. Josh. 9:23,27)
- 4. the foreign guards in the temple (cf. I Kgs. 11:4-16)

but the exact reference is uncertain. Ezekiel witnessed some of the abominations which occurred in chapters 8-10.

The same expression, "uncircumcised of heart," can be used of rebellious Israelites (cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26).

Circumcision was a covenant sign (cf. Gen. 17:9-14) and a covenant attitude of obedience and humility. The priests had violated this covenantal trust (cf. vv. 9-14).

■ "profane" This term's (BDB 320) meaning is uncertain, but the same three consonant roots in Arabic meant "to loosen" or "untie," which came to mean "free from obligations." Here it refers to ceremonially defiling sacred places (cf. 7:21,22[twice]; 23:39; 24:21; Lev. 21:12,23). The temple was YHWH's house and the place of His dwelling. To disregard it was to disregard Him (cf. 23:36-45, esp. v. 39).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:9-14

⁹Thus says the Lord GOD, "No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary. ¹⁰But the Levites who went far from Me when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear the punishment for their iniquity. ¹¹Yet they shall be ministers in My sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house and ministering in the house; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them. ¹²Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn against them," declares the Lord GOD, "that they shall bear the punishment for their iniquity. ¹³And they shall not come near to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they will bear

their shame and their abominations which they have committed. ¹⁴Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house, of all its service and of all that shall be done in it.''

44:10 Some Levites were excluded because of their idolatry (cf. 44:12; chapters 8-10). Also Ezekiel goes back to the days of Solomon when he excluded the priestly line of Abiathar from ministering in the temple. Ezekiel extends this ban (cf. v. 15).

The other members of the tribe of Levi were to be temple servants with the responsibility of

- 1. being gate keepers, v. 11
- 2. accepting the sacrifices of the people, v. 11
- 3. slaughtering and butchering the sacrifices brought by the people, v. 11
- 4. not approaching YHWH's altar or holy things, v. 13
- 5. keeping charge of the temple (implying the daily activities of cleaning, preparation, and maintenance), v. 14

44:12 "I have sworn against them" This is literally "lifted up My hand." See note at 20:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:15-27

¹⁵"But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge. ¹⁷It shall be that when they enter at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and wool shall not be on them while they are ministering in the gates of the inner court and in the house. ¹⁸Linen turbans shall be on their heads and linen undergarments shall be on their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything which makes them sweat. ¹⁹When they go out into the outer court, into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments in which they have been ministering and lay them in the holy chambers; then they shall put on other garments so that they will not transmit holiness to the people with their garments. ²⁰Also they shall not shave their heads, yet they shall not let their locks grow long; they shall only trim the hair of their heads. ²¹Nor shall any of the priests drink wine when they enter the inner court. ²²And they shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman but shall take virgins from the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. ²³Moreover, they shall teach My people *the* difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. ²⁴In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances. They shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My sabbaths. ²⁵They shall not go to a dead person to defile themselves; however, for father, for mother, for son, for daughter, for brother, or for a sister who has not had a husband, they may defile *themselves*. ²⁶After he is cleansed, seven days shall elapse for him. ²⁷On the day that he goes into the sanctuary, into the inner court to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering," declares the Lord GOD.

44:15 "sons of Zadok" This designation goes back to David's day. As king he had two high priests (cf. II Sam. 8:17; 19:11; 20:25).

- 1. Zadok, son of Ahitub
- 2. Ahimelech, son of Abiathar

However, the line of Abiathar was involved in the attempted coup of David's son Adonijah and was removed from office by Solomon (cf. I Kgs. 2:35).

Remember, Ezekiel was of the line of Zadok, while Jeremiah was of the line of Abiathar.

• "fat and blood" These two items refer to the entire sacrificial system. They were the parts of the animals put on the altar of sacrifice.

- 1. The fat of the entrails was burnt.
- 2. The blood was
 - a. placed on the horns of the altar
 - b. poured out at the base

44:15-27 Here is a list of what the faithful Zadokian priests can and cannot do.

	Accepted Actions	Forbidden Actions
1.	wear linen garments	could not wear wool while ministering
2.	leave garments in the holy place	do not wear holy garments into the outer courts
3.	only trim their hair	no shaved heads nor long hair
4.	-	no wine while on duty in the inner court
5.	marry virgins from Israel or the	not to marry a widow or divorced woman
	widow of a priest	
6.	teach laws related to ceremonial purity	
	(as a priest this was very important to Ezek	tiel,
	Lev. 10:10-11; 14:57; Ezek. 22:26)	
7.	judge according to God's revealed law	
8.	keep all laws themselves	
9.	-	not touch a dead person except in rare, special

not touch a dead person except in rare, special cases of compassionate necessity and then be excluded from service until a period of cleansing

This list was a literary way of asserting that the Mosaic covenant was reestablished!

44:18 "turbans" This term (BDB 802) refers to the headgear of all priests (cf. Exod. 28:40; 39:28), not the special miter of the High Priest.

■ "linen undergarments" The Israelite priests were to be modestly clothed (i.e., Exod. 20:26), which was in contradistinction to the ritual nudity of Mesopotamian religions (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 891). Israel was to be distinct from the surrounding polytheistic religions of the Ancient Near East.

• "sweat" From a Mosaic perspective, any bodily fluids made one ceremonially unclean. Ezekiel is very concerned with ceremonial purity. As a trained priest his vision of a future symbolic temple and its staff and procedures must conform to the details of the Mosaic legislation.

44:20 "they shall not shave their heads" This is a Hebrew grammatical form which intensifies an action (i.e., IMPERFECT VERB and INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same stem – BDB 493, KB 490). Here it means not just "clip," but do not shave the hair of the head. This term is found only here in the OT. This forbidden action is related to Lev. 21:5; Deut. 14:1, which denoted pagan rituals and/or practices. Much of the Levitical legislation can be understood as (1) limiting contact with Canaanite culture and (2) a way of differentiating between the common and the holy.

44:21 See Special Topic at 20:28.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:28-31

²⁸"And it shall be with regard to an inheritance for them, *that* I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no possession in Israel — I am their possession. ²⁹They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. ³⁰The first

of all the first fruits of every kind and every contribution of every kind, from all your contributions, shall be for the priests; you shall also give to the priest the first of your dough to cause a blessing to rest on your house. ³¹The priests shall not eat any bird or beast that has died a natural death or has been torn to pieces."

44:28 "I am their inheritance" The priests and Levites did not receive a part of the original land allotment (cf. Joshua 12-19), only special cities (cf. Joshua 20-21). They were to serve YHWH and trust Him for their provisions. He was their inheritance (cf. Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9; 18:1,2; Josh. 13:14,33).

44:29 The regulations are first stated in Lev. 5:14-6:7; 7:1-7.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SACRIFICIAL SYSTEMS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- I. Ritual laws in Mesopotamia
 - A. Sacrifice was primarily a meal offered to a god. The altar was the table of the god where the meal was placed. Beside the altar was the incense brazier which was to attract the god's attention. There was no ritual implication in the blood. The swordbearer cut the throat of the animal. The food was shared between the gods, the priest-king, and the attendants. The offerer received nothing.
 - B. There was no expiatory sacrifice.
 - C. Sickness or pain was punishment from the gods. An animal was brought and destroyed; this acted as a substitute for the offerer.
 - D. Israel's ritual was different and distinct. It seems to have originated in a person giving back to God part of his labor for necessary food (cf. Gen. 4:1-4; 8:20-22).
- II. Ritual laws in Canaan (very similar to Israel's)
 - A. Sources
 - 1. biblical accounts
 - 2. Phoenician literature
 - 3. Ras Shamra Tablets from Ugarit concerning Canaanite deities and mythology from about 1400 B.C.
 - B. Israel's and Canaan's sacrifices are very much alike. However, there is no emphasis placed on the blood of the victim in Canaan sacrifices.
- III. Ritual Laws in Egypt
 - A. Sacrifices were offered but not emphasized.
 - B. The sacrifice was not important but the attitude of the sacrificer was.
 - C. Sacrifices were made to stop the wrath of the gods.
 - D. The offerer hoped for deliverance or forgiveness.
- IV. Israel's Sacrificial System Israel's sacrifices were closer to Canaan's although not necessarily related to them at all.
 - A. Descriptive Phrases
 - 1. Sacrifice was a spontaneous expression of mankind's need for God.
 - 2. The OT laws which regulate sacrifice cannot be said to initiate sacrifice (cf. Gen. 7:8; 8:20).
 - 3. Sacrifice was an offering (animal or vegetable).
 - 4. Must be an offering that was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar in homage to God.

- 5. The altar was the place of sacrifice and symbolized the divine presence.
- 6. Sacrifice was an act of external worship (a prayer which was acted out).
- 7. The definition of sacrifice is "acted prayers" or "ritualized prayers." The significance of ritual and our cultural bias against it is revealed in Gordon J. Wenham (Tyndale, *Numbers*, p. 25-39). Leviticus and Numbers both contain large amounts of this type of material, which shows its importance to Moses and Israel.
- B. Sacrifice Involved
 - 1. Gifts to God
 - a. involve acknowledgment that all of the earth is the Lord's
 - b. all that a person has, he owes to God
 - c. therefore, it is right that people bring tribute to God
 - d. it was a special kind of tribute or gift. It was something that the man needed to sustain his own existence. It was more than just giving something, it was something he needed. It was giving a part of himself to God.
 - e. by destroying the gift it cannot be reclaimed
 - f. a burnt offering becomes invisible and goes up to God's realm
 - g. earlier altars were erected in places where God appeared. The altar came to be looked upon as a holy place, therefore, the offering was brought there.
 - 2. Expressing consecration of one's entire life to God
 - a. The burnt offering was one of three voluntary sacrifices.
 - b. The entire animal was burned to express to God deep-felt homage.
 - c. This was a very expressive gift to God.
 - 3. Fellowship with God
 - a. communion aspect of sacrifice
 - b. an example would be the peace offering which symbolized God and man in fellowship
 - c. sacrifice was made to obtain or regain this fellowship
 - 4. Expiation of sin
 - a. when man sinned he had to ask God to restore the relationship (covenant) which man had broken
 - b. there was no communal meal with the sin offering because of the broken relationship
 - c. the significance of blood
 - (1) placed on altar for man
 - (2) placed on veil for priest
 - (3) placed on mercy seat for High Priest and the nation (Lev. 16)
 - d. there were two types of sin offerings. The second is called the guilt offering or trespass offering. In it the offender was to restore to his fellow Israelite that which was taken or damaged along with the animal sacrifice.
 - e. there was no sacrifice for premeditated or intentional sin, 4:1, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14
- V. Procedures from Leviticus for the Different Sacrifices
 - A. Leviticus 1
 - 1. Introductory Formula, "The Lord spoke to Moses," 1:1-2; 4:1; 5:14; 6:1,19; 7:22, 28
 - a. From the herd or flock

- b. "When," v. 2, shows that this was not mandatory but voluntary
- 2. Burnt Offering, vv. 3-17 (6:8-13)
 - a. Altar
 - The brazen altar, which was also called altar of burnt offering, altar by door of Tabernacle, or altar of shittim wood, covered with bronze (cf. Exodus 27)
 - (2) this distinguished it from the incense altar (golden altar) in the Holy Place (cf. Exodus 30)
 - (3) coals from brazen altar were taken to incense altar
 - (4) brazen altar was right in the middle of the entrance of the Tabernacle
 - (5) altar had horns which were its most sacred part. The blood was applied to the horns (cf. Exod. 30:10).
 - (6) The horns were possibly for
 - (a) symbol of hands to hold offering up
 - (b) symbol of strength or prevailing power (Deut. 33:17; II Sam. 22:3.)
 - (c) later, anyone who grabbed the horns of the altar was safe until his case was decided by the court (I Kgs. 1:50-51; 2:28)
 - b. The Offering
 - (1) bullock without blemish which was mentioned first because of its importance and cost, v. 3
 - (2) male goat or sheep, v. 10
 - (3) turtle doves or young pigeons, v. 14 (provision for the poor)
 - c. Place of Burnt Offering was at the door of the Tent of Meeting
 - d. Laying on of the Hands this was only for the bulls, not for goats, sheep, birds, v. 4
 - (1) the offerer did this himself (not the priest)
 - (2) many feel it was a symbolic action for the transferring of guilt
 - (3) some believe it meant that
 - (a) this animal comes from this particular individual
 - (b) the sacrifice was to be presented in the offerer's name
 - (c) the fruit of this sacrifice belongs to the one who placed his hands on the animal
 - e. Slaughtering
 - (1) bull "before the Lord" by the man making the sacrifice. The offerer had to kill, skin, and cut up the animal. The priest's role (except in case of public sacrifices) began when the man brought the animal to the altar.
 - (2) sheep or goat, v. 11 "on north side of altar before the Lord." This designated a specific place for these lesser animals.
 - (3) bird The priest killed and offered this sacrifice. The offerer had to remove the bird's crop.
 - f. Handling of the Blood
 - (1) animals
 - (a) The priest threw blood against the altar, and sprinkled it round about the altar.

- (b) The life of the animal was in the blood (cf. Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11). Life already belonged to God, therefore, the blood represented no part of the gift of the man.
- (c) The bird's blood was drained on the side of the altar and not consumed in fire.
- g. Handling of the Flesh
 - (1) bull, v. 6
 - (a) The offerer skinned the offering. The priest could keep the skin (cf. 7:8)
 - (b) The offerer cut it into pieces
 - (c) The priest placed the offering on the altar in an arrangement as it was when alive
 - (d) The legs and entrails were washed with water from the laver
 - (e) The priest burned the whole animal on altar
- 3. Occasion of Burnt Offerings
 - a. Feast of Tabernacles, Booths
 - b. Day of Atonement
 - c. Feast of Weeks, First Fruits, or Pentecost
 - d. Feast of Trumpets
 - e. Wave Sheaf (Lev. 23)
 - f. Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover
 - g. Beginning of months, New Moon
 - h. Sabbath
- 4. Significance of Burnt Offering
 - a. A gift to God
 - b. Seen as the most valuable kind of sacrifice
 - c. It seems to deal with the concept of sin in general or thanksgiving
 - d. Most perfect representation of sacrificial idea
 - e. Symbolic offering of one's life
 - f. Represents complete consecration of the life of an individual to the service of God
 - g. Graded value of offering
 - (1) bull
 - (2) sheep goat
 - (3) birds
 - h. This shows that anyone conscious of spiritual need could approach God. God made provision for all men.
- 5. Special Instructions for Priest, 6:8-12
 - a. Burnt offering remained all night on hearth of the altar
 - b. Fire was to be kept burning continually under a burnt offering
 - c. Instructions involving the Priest's dress
 - d. Instructions involving the removal of the ashes
- B. Leviticus 2:1-16 (6:14-23)
 - 1. Introduction

- a. This chapter deals with the grain offering
- b. Grain offering was from the root meaning "gift." It became a technical term for non-animal, or vegetable gifts.
- c. After the Exile the grain offering appears as a supplement to the burnt offering and peace offering and the rabbis say it could be offered alone by the very poor.
- d. Salt covenant was also mentioned in Num. 18:19 and II Chr. 13:5. Salt was the opposite of leaven. It was used as a symbol of the covenant of God because it was non-corruptible and lasting.
- 2. The Grain Offering involved one's labor being given to God.
 - a. It was a gift to God from the daily food of the people.
 - b. It was generally a supplement (especially in post-exile days) to the burnt or peace offering.
 - c. Sacrifice was God's provision for the priest. Only a small part was burnt as a memorial of the whole.
 - d. The word "memorial" describes the offered portion, or that part which brings the whole before the Lord.
 - e. New Testament concept of the Lord's Supper as "memorial" expresses this Old Testament concept.
 - f. The distinction between the terms "holy" and "most holy" are
 - (1) "holy" priest and family could eat it at any clean place
 - (2) "most holy" could only be eaten by the priests and in court of Tent of Meeting
- 3. Types
 - a. Unbaked flour (for the rich), 2:1-3
 - b. Baked loaves or cake, 2:4-11
 - c. Green ears of corn or wheat (for the poor), 2:12-16
 - (1) Unbaked flour was the highest offering. It was the very best of wheat flour.
 - (2) Baked cakes
 - (a) oil was an ingredient
 - (b) prepared in oven, v. 4.
 - (c) on a baking iron, v. 5.
 - (d) in an earthen frying pan, v. 7.
 - (3) Green ears of corn or wheat
 - (a) must be parched
 - (b) broken into coarse grits
 - (c) arranged like a meal set before guests.
- 4. Ingredients
 - a. Fine flour corresponded to an animal without blemish
 - b. Oil was a symbol of prosperity and, therefore, a symbol of God's presence
 - (1) Used for food, sacrificing, medicine, and anointing
 - (2) Possibly use of oil was to replace offering of oil
 - c. Frankincense was from India or Arabia
 - (1) Seen as a very pure thing with a wonderful fragrance
 - (2) Symbolized prayer and praise

- d. Salt
 - (1) Life-giving as well as preserving qualities
 - (2) Possibly more for table fellowship than for preserving
- e. Elements excluded
 - (1) Leaven excluded, v. 11
 - (a) possibly because of fermentation
 - (b) leaven associated with corruption
 - (c) could be offered with first fruits and to priest
 - (2) Honey excluded
 - (a) syrup was from fruit not honeybee
 - (b) possibly because of its use in Canaanite ritual
- 5. Ritual of Offering
 - a. It was brought to the priest. He handled the whole ceremony (2:2,9,16).
 - b. Part of the offering was to be eaten by priest in the sanctuary. It was most holy.
- 6. Significance
 - a. Present from inferior to superior
 - b. Burning of a portion of it represented the consecration of a portion of one's labor to God
 - c. Apparent meaning
 - (1) Burnt offering consecration of one's life
 - (2) Meal offering dedication of one's daily labor
- 7. Special Instructions for Grain Offering, 6:14-23
 - a. Offering in front of altar
 - b. the laborer offered the gift to God, but in reality it supported the priesthood

C. Leviticus 3:1-17 (7:13-34), PEACE OFFERING

- 1. Introduction
 - a. Why
 - (1) communion offering
 - (2) covenant sacrifice
 - (3) corporate offering
 - (4) concluding sacrifice
 - b. It expressed thankfulness to God because of fellowship with God, family, and friends.
 - c. It was usually the final act in a series of sacrifices in which reconciliation had been established.
 - d. The burnt offering expressed the costliness of obedience, while the peace offering expressed the joy and happiness of fellowship with God.
 - e. Male or female but without blemish
 - f. Varieties of offering
 - (1) from herd; male or female
 - (2) the distinction that was made between the sheep and the goat was because of the fat of the tail of the sheep
 - (a) lamb of flock male or female

- (b) goat of flock male or female
- 2. Ritual
 - a. Presentation of offering
 - (1) Laid hands on offering
 - (2) Killed it at door of the Tent of meeting
 - (3) Identification of sacrifice was the same as the burnt offering
 - (4) Sprinkling of blood around altar
 - (5) Burning of choice parts on altar to God
 - (a) fat (sheep-fatty tail) symbolized prosperity
 - (b) kidneys, lobe of liver symbolized the seat of the will and emotions
 - (c) fatty portions placed on offerer's burnt offering or on morning lamb offering
 - b. Thanksgiving offering included (7:11-14)
 - (1) Unleavened cake mixed with oil
 - (2) Unleavened wafers spread with oil
 - (3) Fine flour mixed with oil
- 3. Priest's Portion, 7:28-34
 - a. Breast belonged to priest as a wave offering
 - b. Waving involves the placing of the offering upon the offerer's hands and the priest's hands. It showed the offering offered by the offerer to God, and then its reception back by the priest.
 - c. Right thigh belonged to officiating priest
 - d. Heave offering was lifted to God and received back by the priest
- 4. Offerer's Portion, 7:15-18
 - a. A Thanksgiving Offering shall be eaten on day of giving, v. 15
 - b. A Votive (vow) or freewill offering shall be eaten on day of offering or on the next day, v. 16
 - c. This portion was all that was not given to God and by God to the priest
 - d. God symbolically eats with the offerer and his family and friends in this offering
 - e. This offering stresses that fellowship relationships have been restored
- D. Leviticus 4:1-5:13 (6:24-30) SIN OFFERING
 - 1. Introduction
 - a. This is the first offering in which atonement was the dominant element.
 - b. This sacrifice re-establishes the covenant between man and God. It restores fellowship.
 - c. This offering involves:
 - (1) Sins of ignorance
 - (2) Sins of inadvertence
 - (3) Sins of passion
 - (4) Sins of omission
 - (5) It did not atone for sins committed intentionally in haughty rebellion against God. There was no sacrifice for intentional, high-handed, premeditated sin (cf. Num. 15:27-31).

- 2. Meaning
 - a. This offering expiated the guilt and punishment for sins.
 - b. It involved grace on God's part and faith on man's part.
 - c. No sacrifice achieves anything by mere ritual offering. It was the offerer's faith behind the act.
 - d. Yet, sacrifice was more than the mere expression of the offerer. It did something for him. It re-established the relationship with God.
 - e. Ritual was a God-given means of restitution, not a substitute for personal faith.
 - f. God hates any religious action without accompanying faith, Isa. 1:10-20; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8.
- 3. Ritual
 - a. For the High Priest, vv. 3-12
 - (1) High priest anointed priest
 - (a) Sin, in leading people wrongly
 - (b) Sin, in a personal nature
 - (c) The high priest, the spiritual representative of the community; if he sins, all sinned in him. This was the Jewish understanding of corporality (cf. Joshua 7; Romans 5:12ff).
 - (2) Procedures
 - (a) The High Priest brought a young bullock without blemish to the altar
 - (b) He laid hands on its head
 - (c) The High Priest slaughtered the animal
 - (d) The High Priest sprinkled the blood before the veil 7 times
 - i. this cleansed the Tabernacle
 - ii symbolically opened the way to God
 - iii. some blood placed on horns of incense altar
 - iv. remaining blood poured out at base of altar of burnt offering
 - (e) He placed all the fat on the altar to be burned
 - (f) The rest of the animal was taken outside the camp to a clean place, v. 12 (where the ashes are poured out from altar). There, the remainder of the animal was burned.
 - b. For the Nation, vv. 13-21
 - (1) They sinned when commands of the law were not met, vv. 13-21
 - (2) Procedures
 - (a) The Elders brought a young bullock without blemish to altar
 - (b) The Elders laid hands on the head
 - (c) The Elders slaughtered the animal
 - (d) The High Priest sprinkled the blood before the veil 7 times
 - i. this cleansed Tabernacle
 - ii. symbolically opened the way to God
 - iii. blood was placed on horns of incense altar
 - iv. the rest of it was poured out at base of the altar of sacrifice
 - (e) All of it was offered on the altar

- (f) All the rest of the animal was taken outside the camp to a clean place, v. 12 (where the ashes were poured out from the altar). There the remainder of the animal was burned.
- c. For leader, vv. 22-26
 - (1) Leader (ruler) vv. 22-26
 - (a) Leader of tribe
 - (b) Responsible person in community
 - (c) Elder
 - (2) Procedures
 - (a) The leader brought a male goat (old, shaggy goat) to altar
 - (b) The leader laid hands on its head
 - (c) The leader slaughtered the animal
 - (d) A High Priest placed blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering-the rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the altar of sacrifice
 - (e) All fat is burned on the altar
 - (f) Priests ate the rest of the flesh
- d. For individual, vv. 27-35
 - (1) For individual when he learned he had sinned he was to make this offering
 - (2) Procedures
 - (a) The individual brought a female goat or female lamb
 - (b) The individual laid hands on its head
 - (c) The individual slaughtered the animal
 - (d) A priest placed blood on the horns of the altar of sacrifice-the rest was poured out at base of altar
 - (e) All fat placed on altar and burned
 - (f) Priests ate the rest of the flesh
- e. Special cases involving the sin offering, 5:1-13 (These seem to involve intentional sin against a covenant partner)
 - (1) If a witness doesn't come forward and testify (failure to give information), 5:1
 - (2) Touching unclean animal, 5:2
 - (3) Touching unclean human, 5:3
 - (4) Speaking thoughtlessly with an oath, 5:4
 - (5) Offering for the above sins:
 - (a) Female goat or sheep
 - (b) Two turtle doves or two pigeons
 - (c) 1/10 ephah of fine flour
- f. Sin offering ritual, 6:24-30
 - (1) Priest could eat what was left
 - (2) If blood got on clothes, clothes must be washed
 - (3) If blood got on earthen vessel, vessel was broken
 - (4) If blood got on brass vessel, vessel was washed

- (5) If burnt offering's blood was brought into the Holy Place, then the flesh must be burnt and not eaten by priest
- g. Significance of the sin offering
 - (1) There is no offering for premeditated sin—only for inadvertent sin or sins of ignorance, 5:15,18
 - (2) What does forgiveness involve:
 - (a) Man's part is faith
 - (b) God's part is mercy
- E. Leviticus 5:14-19 GUILT OR TRESPASS OFFERING
 - 1. Introduction
 - a. While the Sin Offering dealt with sin committed, the Guilt Offering had to do with the damage that was done to a covenant partner and what restitution was possible.
 - b. The sin and trespass offerings were very similar.
 - c. The rights of the individual were expressed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
 - (1) home
 - (2) accumulation of good
 - (3) life
 - d. This offering emphasizes the harm done to a brother because of sinning and the restitution of the cost of that which was damaged plus 1/5 more.
 - 2. Sins Requiring an Offering
 - a. Against God or that which belongs to Him
 - (1) first fruits
 - (2) firstborn, 14-16
 - (3) tithe
 - (4) offering given incorrectly
 - (5) gifts of inferior value
 - b. "If a person sins and does any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, though he was unaware, still he is guilty, and shall bear his punishment."
- F. Ancient sacrifices were offered to
 - 1. appease an angry deity
 - 2. feed a deity
 - 3. communicate with a deity
 - 4. praise a deity
 - 5. foster a sense of forgiveness or reconciliation

44:30 "the first of all" This offering is described in Num. 18:12; II Chr. 31:4-6; Neh. 10:35-37. It was a tangible way of thanking God for the bountiful produce of the land. It symbolized His ownership of the land and His control of its fertility.

EZEKIEL 45

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
The LORD'S Portion of the Land	The Holy District	The Distribution of Land	The LORD'S Portion of the Country	The Division of the Country-The Portion for Yahweh
45:1-5	451-5	45:1-5	45:1-5	45:1-6
	Properties of the City and the Prince			
45:6	45:6-8	45:6	45:6	
Portion for the Prince			Land for the Prince	The Portion for the Prince
45:7-8		45:7-8	45:7-8	45:7-8
	Laws Governing the Prince		Rules for the Prince	
45:9	45:9-17	45:9	45:9	45:9-12
		Weights and Measures		
45:10-12		45:10-12	45:10	
			45:11	
			45:12	Offerings for Worship
45:13-17		45:13-17	45:13-15	45:13-17
			45:16-17	
	Keeping the Feasts	Festival Regulations	The Festivals	The Feast of the Passover
45:18-20	45:18-20	45:18-20	45:18-20	45:18-24
45:21-25	45:21-25	45:21-25	45:21-24	The Feast of Shelters
			45:25	45:25

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:1-5

¹"And when you divide by lot the land for inheritance, you shall offer an allotment to the LORD, a holy portion of the land; the length shall be the length of 25,000 *cubits*, and the width shall be 20,000. It shall be holy within all its boundary round about. ²Out of this there shall be for the holy place a square round about five hundred by five hundred *cubits*, and fifty cubits for its open space round about. ³From this area you shall measure a length of 25,000 *cubits* and a width of 10,000 *cubits*; and in it shall be the sanctuary, the most holy place. ⁴It shall be the holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the LORD, and it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. ⁵An area 25,000 *cubits* in length and 10,000 in width shall be for the Levites, the ministers of the house, *and* for their possession cities to dwell in."

45:1 "when you divide by lot the land" The VERB (BDB 656, KB 709, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) basically means "to fall," but in the *Hiphil* refers to casting lots to know the Lord's will on a matter. The concept (i.e., mechanism) originated with the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest (cf. Exod. 28:30; Num. 27:21). This method was to be used to divide the Promised Land (i.e., Canaan) among the twelve tribes (excluding Levi) as described in Num. 26:53-56; 33:54; 34:2,13; 36:2-3 and originally done in Joshua 13-22 (esp. 14:1-2). Ezekiel is drawing a mental image from the past to illustrate a new beginning!

• "an allotment to the LORD" The phrase is literally "set apart an offering." This refers to the temple area.

This offering/allotment is described in vv. 1-5.

- 1. length, 25,000 cubits or rods/reeds (cf. 42:15-20)
- 2. width, 10,000 cubits (LXX, 20,000) or rods/reeds, which means it includes the priestly and Levitical areas
- 3. containing a square 500 cubits by 500 cubits or rods/reeds for the holy place
- 4. square surrounded by an open space of 50 cubits or rods/reeds
- 5. contains YHWH's sanctuary and priests' housing
- 6. area for the Levites (25,000 cubits by 10,000 cubits or rods/reeds)

A cubit would be about 21 inches, a rod/reed about 10 feet.

45:5

NASB, NRSV,	
LXX	"cities"
NKJV, JPSOA	"chambers"
TEV, NJB	"towns"
Peshitta	"houses"
REB	"places in which they live"

The MT has "chambers" (לשכת), which is so common in this section of Ezekiel (cf. 40:17 [twice], 38,44,45,46; 41:10; 42:1,4,7 [twice],8,11), but the Septuagint has "cities" (לשבת). The B (*beth*) and K (*kaph*) consonants are formed in a similar way and are often confused in handwritten texts.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:6

⁶"You shall give the city possession of *an area* 5,000 *cubits* wide and 25,000 *cubits* long, alongside the allotment of the holy portion; it shall be for the whole house of Israel."

45:6 "the city" This area (5,000 by 25,000 cubits) is further described in 48:15-18,30-35. It is a holy area for all the house of Israel, similar to the courts of Herod's temple.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:7-8

⁷"The prince shall have *land* on either side of the holy allotment and the property of the city, adjacent to the holy allotment and the property of the city, on the west side toward the west and on the east side toward the east, and in length comparable to one of the portions, from the west border to the east border. ⁸This shall be his land for a possession in Israel; so My princes shall no longer oppress My people, but they shall give *the rest of* the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes."

45:7-8 "The prince shall have *land*" The allotment for the royal leader is described in vv. 7-8, which is adjacent to the holy common area for the people.

The purpose of the land is twofold.

- 1. symbolizes closeness to YHWH
- 2. symbolizes he is a servant of the people (i.e., outside the common area)

It is also a way of providing status and authority without oppressing the people (cf. v. 9; 22:27; 46:18).

This "prince" is an administrator fulfilling Isa. 9:6-7 and Micah 5:2-5. However, the "princes" (cf. vv. 8,9) are governmental leaders who must be admonished to live and act appropriately. Ezekiel takes seriously the corruption of the leadership which occurred regularly in the past. This very point shows that this does not directly refer to an "ideal Messianic" period, but future Israeli history. The results of the fall potentially continue and must be guarded against.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:9

⁹Thus says the Lord GOD, "Enough, you princes of Israel; put away violence and destruction, and practice justice and righteousness. Stop your expropriations from My people," declares the Lord GOD.

45:9-10 These verses list what the governmental leaders should and should not do.

- 1. put away violence (BDB 329) and oppression (BDB 994) BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE PLURAL
- 2. practice justice (BDB 1048) and righteousness (BDB 842) BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (terms often paired, cf. 18:5,19,21,27; 33:14,16,19)
- 3. stop your expropriations (BDB 177, literally, "lift your evictions") BDB 926, KB 1202, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 4. have just balances, *ephah* and *baths* BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:10-12

¹⁰"You shall have just balances, a just ephah and a just bath. ¹¹The ephah and the bath shall be the same quantity, so that the bath will contain a tenth of a homer and the ephah a tenth of a homer; their standard shall be according to the homer. ¹²The shekel shall be twenty gerahs; twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, *and* fifteen shekels shall be your maneh."

45:11-12,14 See Special Topic: Ancient Near Eastern Weights and Volumes at 4:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:13-17

¹³"This is the offering that you shall offer: a sixth of an ephah from a homer of wheat; a sixth of an ephah from a homer of barley; ¹⁴and the prescribed portion of oil (*namely*, the bath of oil), a tenth of a bath from *each* kor (*which is* ten baths *or* a homer, for ten baths are a homer); ¹⁵and one sheep from *each* flock of two hundred from the watering places of Israel — for a grain offering, for a burnt offering and for peace offerings, to make atonement for them," declares the Lord GOD. ¹⁶All the people of the land shall give to this offering for the prince in Israel. ¹⁷It shall be the prince's part *to provide* the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the drink offerings, at the feasts, on the new moons and on the sabbaths, at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel; he shall provide the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel; he shall provide the sin offering."

45:13-16 These verses describe what an Israelite worshiper should provide (either in kind or as a tax).

- 1. a sixth of an ephah (dry measure) from a homer of wheat
- 2. a sixth of an ephah from a homer of barley (cf. Num. 5:15)
- 3. a bath (liquid measure) of oil
- 4. one sheep
- which will make up
 - 1. a grain offering
 - 2. a burnt offering
 - 3. a peace offering

45:17 The prince (i.e., government) shall provide the offerings.

- 1. the burnt offering
- 2. the grain offering
- 3. the drink offering

for the feasts of

- 1. new moons
- 2. sabbaths
- 3. appointed feasts

to make atonement (cf. v. 15)

- 1. the sin offering
- 2. the grain offering
- 3. the burnt offering
- 4. the peace offering (often used to inaugurate a temple, cf. Lev. 9:4,18,22; I Kgs. 8:63-64; II Chr. 30:22; 31:2; Ezek. 43:27)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:18-20

¹⁸'Thus says the Lord GOD, "In the first month, on the first of the *month*, you shall take a young bull without blemish and cleanse the sanctuary. ¹⁹The priest shall take some of the blood from the sin offering and put *it* on the door posts of the house, on the four corners of the ledge of the altar and on the posts of the gate of the inner court. ²⁰Thus you shall do on the seventh *day* of the month for everyone who goes astray or is naive; so you shall make atonement for the house."

45:18-25 The lists of feasts (the year begins in the spring).

	Verse(s)	Month	Day	Parallel Texts
1.	18-19	1 st month	1 st day	Num. 28:11-15
2.	20	1 st month	9 th day	Leviticus 16
3.	21-24	1 st month	14 th day	Lev. 23:5; Num. 28:16-25
4.	21-24	1 st month	15 th -21 st days	Lev. 23:6
5.	25	7 th month	15 th -21 st days	Lev. 23:33-37; Numbers 29; Deut. 16:13-15

Even though #2 has elements of the Day of Atonement, probably vv. 18-20 reflect the New Year Feast, while vv. 21-24 reflect Passover/Unleavened Bread and v. 25 reflects the Feast of Booths/Tabernacles.

The last of this chapter and the next is the section that disagrees so much with the Mosaic regulation. The question is why. Ezekiel was a priest. He knew the law of Moses. I think that the differences and exaggerated land dimensions are a way to denote its symbolic nature (it is similar to John listing the tribes incorrectly in Revelation 7). Only literalists demand a future temple!

SPECIAL TOPIC: FEASTS OF ISRAEL

I. Mosaic Annual Feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; Lev. 23; Num 28; Deut. 16)

- A. All male Jews were required to attend three annual feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14,17; 34:23) if possible.
- B. These feasts had agricultural, as well as national significance.
- C. Each was a day of rest, worship, and community fellowship.
- D. The three required annual feasts
 - 1. Passover (cf. Exod. 12:1-14,21-28; Lev. 23:4-14; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8)
 - a. thanksgiving and dedication of the barley harvest
 - b. commemorates the Exodus
 - c. it was followed by an eight day Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Exod. 12:15-20; 34:18-20)
 - 2. Pentecost (Feast of Weeks, cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22)
 - a. thanksgiving and dedication of the wheat harvest
 - b. commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai (by rabbinical reckoning)
 - c. See Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31
 - 3. Tabernacles/Booths/Huts (Succoth)
 - a. thanksgiving for the general harvest
 - b. commemorates the beginning of the wilderness wandering period
 - c. see Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34-44; Deut. 16:13-17
 - d. it was followed by an eight day feast (cf. Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35-38)

- E. Other annual feasts
 - 1. New Year Celebration (Rosh Hashanah)
 - a. see Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6
 - b. this day of rest and sacrifice was held on the first day of Tishri
 - c. the feast aspect of this day, so common in the NT era, is unspecified in the Torah
 - 2. Day of Atonement "day of covering" or Yom Kippur (the only fast day)
 - a. a day of rest, fasting, and repentance
 - b. a ritual for the removal of corporate uncleanness (tabernacle, priests, and people)
 - c. see Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16; 23:26-32; 25:9; Num. 29:7-11
 - d. it is difficult to pin down when this feast was re-instituted after the Exile
- II. Other Mosaic Feast Days
 - A. the Sabbath
 - 1. weekly day of rest and worship
 - 2. see Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-16; Lev. 23:1-3; Num. 28:9-10
 - B. Sabbath Year
 - 1. every seventh year the land rested (no sowing)
 - 2. see Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1
 - 3. it signified that YHWH owned the land and gave it to Israel
 - 4. all slaves were set free (cf. Exod. 21:2-6) and all debts were forgiven (cf. Deut. 15:1-6)
 - C. Jubilee Year
 - 1. every seventh Sabbath year (i.e., 50th year)
 - 2. see Lev. 25:8-18; 27:17-24
 - 3. release of debt and returning of land, freeing of slaves (cf. Lev. 25:10,13, very similar to Sabbath Year)
 - 4. its inauguration is never recorded
 - D. New Moon
 - 1. special offerings and a day of rest
 - 2. see Num. 10:10; 28:11-15
 - 3. possibly commemorated the setting up of the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 40:2,17)
 - 4. Jewish calendar is based on lunar cycles
- III. These rituals and regulations show a development over time. These feasts and fasts may have had a beginning in pagan calendars, but developed into uniquely Jewish praise and devotion to YHWH. Nature (seasonal), agricultural (planting, rain, and harvest), and national events (Exodus, giving of the Law, etc.) combined to highlight certain times of the year for worship.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:21-25

²¹"In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. ²²On that day the prince shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. ²³During the seven days of the feast he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven bulls and seven rams without blemish on every day of the seven days, and a male goat daily for a sin offering. ²⁴He shall provide as a grain offering an

ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram and a hin of oil with an ephah. ²⁵In the seventh *month*, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall provide like this, seven days for the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering and the oil."

EZEKIEL 46

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
The Prince's Offerings	The Manner of Worship	Regulations Regarding the Prince	The Prince and the Festivals	Miscellaneous Regulations
46:1-10	46:1-8	46:1-8	46:1-8	46:1-7
				46:8-10
	46:9-11	46:9-10	46:9-11	
46:11-12		46:11-12		46:11-15
	46:12-15		46:12	
			The Daily Offering	
46:13-15		46:13-15	46:13-15	
	The Prince and Inheritance Laws		The Prince and the Land	
46:16-18	46:16-18	46:16-18	46:16-18	46:16-18
The Boiling Place	How the Offerings Were Prepared		The Temple Kitchens	
46:19-20	46:19-24	46:19-20	46:19-20	46:19-24
46:21-24		46:21-24	46:21-24	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:1-10

¹'Thus says the Lord GOD, "The gate of the inner court facing east shall be shut the six working days; but it shall be opened on the sabbath day and opened on the day of the new moon. ²The prince shall enter by way of the porch of the gate from outside and stand by the post of the gate. Then the priests shall provide his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate and then go out; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. ³The people of the land shall also worship at the doorway of that gate before the LORD on the sabbaths and on the new moons. ⁴The burnt offering which the prince shall offer to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; ⁵and the grain offering shall be an ephah with the ram, and the grain offering with the lambs as much as he is able to give, and a hin of oil with an ephah. 6On the day of the new moon he shall offer a young bull without blemish, also six lambs and a ram, which shall be without blemish. ⁷And he shall provide a grain offering, an ephah with the bull and an ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he is able, and a hin of oil with an ephah. ⁸When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the porch of the gate and go out by the same way. ⁹But when the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, he who enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate. And he who enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. No one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered but shall go straight out. ¹⁰When they go in, the prince shall go in among them; and when they go out, he shall go out."

46:1 "the gate of the inner court facing east" Remember the outer eastern gate was permanently sealed (cf. 44:2) because this is the gate by which YHWH left the temple (cf. chapter 10) and returned (cf. chapter 43).

"the new moon" This monthly feast is first mentioned in Num. 10:10 and explained in Num. 28:11-15. It is referred to in Ps. 81:3-5 and Ezek. 45:18; 46:3,6. Since the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the month (cf. Exod. 40:2,17), it is possible that it is connected to this event.

The Jews used a lunar calendar. See Special Topic at 1:1.

46:2 "his burnt offerings and his peace offerings" Also note, verse 12 lists several other offerings. See Special Topic at 44:29.

I "he shall worship" This is an unusual form of a common religious concept of "worship" or "bow down." The unusual form is called a *Hishtaphel*, which comes from this word. The first three consonants (השת) are common in other Semitic languages, but this is the only example in biblical Hebrew (Kittel, Hoffer and Wright, *Biblical Hebrew*, p. 182).

The basic stem seems to be חוה (KB 295 II), which in Ugaritic means "to prostrate oneself in worship" or שחו, "to bow down" (BDB 1005). It occurs three times in this paragraph (cf. vv. 2,3,9).

The prince has a special place at the gateway of the inner court where he can see the sacrificing being made, but cannot enter the sacred precincts of the priests.

• "the gate shall not be shut" This is a metaphor of access and availability. YHWH would receive the prince and the people in regular worship.

"*"***the prince***"* This future Davidic leader (*"*prince,*"* BDB 672) is mentioned several times in Ezekiel.

- 1. YHWH will establish him as shepherd over a united covenant people, 34:20-24
- 2. YHWH will restore the covenant people to their land and restore their Davidic prince. He will make an everlasting covenant of peace with an obedient Israel, 37:24-28
- 3. he will eat/worship before YHWH in the new temple, 44:2-3; 46:1-12
- 4. he shall receive a large special land allotment (i.e., great wealth) on both sides of the temple area to keep him from oppressing the people, 45:7-8; 48:21-22
- 5. the people will give offerings to the prince so that he can provide sacrifices on special days, 45:13-25
- 6. regulations about inheritance gifts given by the prince, 46:16-18

46:4-7 The prince shall offer

- 1. the sabbath
 - a. six lambs
 - b. one ram
 - c. one ephah of grain (with ram)
 - d. as much as able of grain (with the lambs)
 - e. a hin of oil
- 2. new moon
 - a. a young bull
 - b. six lambs
 - c. a ram
 - d. one ephah of grain (with bull)
 - e. one ephah of grain (with ram)
 - f. as much as able of grain (with lambs)
 - g. a hin of oil

46:4 "without blemish" This term (BDB 1071) denotes an animal that is healthy and without obvious defect. In other words, it is a prime example (typical) of its breed in color, shape, and size (i.e., Exod. 12:5; Lev. 3:1).

46:5 "ephah. . .hin" See Special Topic: Ancient Near Eastern Weights and Volumes at 4:11.

46:7

NASB	"as much as he is able"
NKJV, TEV	"as much as he wants to give"
NRSV	"as much as he wishes"
NJB	"what he pleases"
LXX	"according as his hand can furnish"
Peshitta, JPSOA,	-

REB "as much as he can afford"

The literal phrase is "as much as his hand can reach." The amount of sacrifices depended on two things.

- 1. the free-will offerings of the people
- 2. the wealth and/or ability and/or desire of the monarch

46:10 The prince has a special place to observe the sacrifices on the "special" days (i.e., appointed feasts), but on other days he was not allowed even this special place, but must enter and exit with other covenant people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:11-12

¹¹"At the festivals and the appointed feasts the grain offering shall be an ephah with a bull and an ephah with a ram, and with the lambs as much as one is able to give, and a hin of oil with an ephah. ¹²"When the prince provides a freewill offering, a burnt offering, or peace offerings *as* a freewill offering to the LORD, the gate facing east shall be opened for him. And he shall provide his burnt offering and his peace offerings as he does on the sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and the gate shall be shut after he goes out."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:13-15

¹³"And you shall provide a lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning you shall provide it. ¹⁴Also you shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning, a sixth of an ephah and a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour, a grain offering to the Lord continually by a perpetual ordinance. ¹⁵Thus they shall provide the lamb, the grain offering and the oil, morning by morning, for a continual burnt offering."

46:13 NASB, NKJV, REB "you" NRSV, NJB, LXX, Peshitta "he"

The MT has "you," but ancient translations understood it as a reference to "the prince" (same in v. 14).

• "morning by morning" This refers to the "continual" (i.e., post-exilic designation), which was a lamb offered every morning and evening at the temple (cf. Exod. 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-4; II Kgs. 16:15).

46:14 "a perpetual ordinance" See Special Topic at 37:25,26. The Hebrew term "forever" (עולמ, BDB 761) is used in several senses as the Special Topic shows and must be interpreted in each context.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:16-18

¹⁶'Thus says the Lord GOD, "If the prince gives a gift *out of* his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. ¹⁷But if he gives a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty; then it shall return to the prince. His inheritance *shall be* only his sons'; it shall belong to them. ¹⁸The prince shall not take from the people's inheritance, thrusting them out of their possession; he shall give his sons inheritance from his own possession so that My people will not be scattered, anyone from his possession."

46:17 "the year of liberty" This refers to the "year of Jubilee" (cf. Lev. 25:8-17, esp. v. 10), in which the land returns to its original tribal owners because the land was a gift from YHWH (cf. Joshua 13-23).

46:18 This verse links to 45:8, where the prince is given a large section of land to keep him from taking common land from the people.

This shows that "the prince" was understood as a person still affected by Genesis 3. This would not fit a NT understanding of "Messiah" (this is also true of Isa. 42:1 vs. 42:18-19). Oppression was often associated with the kingship (cf. 18:7,12,16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:19-20

¹⁹Then he brought me through the entrance, which *was* at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers for the priests, which faced north; and behold, there *was* a place at the extreme rear toward the west. ²⁰He said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering *and* where they shall bake the grain offering, in order that they may not bring *them* out into the outer court to transmit holiness to the people."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:21-24

²¹Then he brought me out into the outer court and led me across to the four corners of the court; and behold, in every corner of the court *there was* a *small* court. ²²In the four corners of the court *there were* enclosed courts, forty *cubits* long and thirty wide; these four in the corners were the same size. ²³There was a row of masonry round about in them, around the four of them, and boiling places were made under the rows round about. ²⁴Then he said to me, "These are the boiling places where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifices of the people."

46:22 "corners. . .enclosed" Both of these words are uncertain.

- 1. "corners" the VERB (BDB 893) is found only here in the OT. Many OT scholars assume it is a *Hophal* PARTICIPLE. The noun is found in 26:24; 36:29; 46:21(twice). It could refer to a corner post. Many of Ezekiel's architectural terms are rare and uncertain.
- 2. "enclosed" BDB 883 (קטר) could also mean "vaulted" or "covered" (NEB, REB). JPSOA has "uncovered," following the Mishnah (Middoth 2.5). The Septuagint assumes a different stem (קטנות), "smaller," and is followed by Peshitta, NRSV, TEV, and NJB or possibly "the same size" (NEB, JPSOA footnote. REB).

EZEKIEL 47

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
Water From the Temple	The Healing Waters and Trees	The Sacred River	The Stream From the Temple	The Spring in the Temple
47:1-2	47:1-2	47:1-2	47:1-6a	47:1-12
47:3-12	47:3-5	47:3-6a		
	47:6-12			
		47:6b-12	47:6b-12	
	Borders of the Land	Israel's Boundaries	The Boundaries of the Land	The Frontiers of the Holy Land
47:13-14	47:13-20	47:13-14	47:13-14	47:13-23
47:15-17		47:15-17	47:15-17	
47:18		47:18	47:18	
47:19		47:19	47:19	
47:20		47:20	47:20	
47:21-23	47:21-23	47:21-23	47:21-23	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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- 1. First paragraph
- 2. Second paragraph
- 3. Third paragraph
- 4. Etc.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:1-2

¹Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar. ²He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by way of *the gate* that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side.

47:1 "water was flowing" For desert people water was a sign of God's blessing and presence (i.e., Joel 3:18). The eschatological sense is present in Zech. 13:1 and 14:8. It is used by John in Rev. 22:1,17. The covenant promises of Deuteronomy 27-30 have become a reality!

This is metaphorical (cf. Ps. 46:4; 65:9) and not meant to be taken literally. It conveys

- 1. original creation
- 2. Eden
- 3. covenant promises

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:3-12

³When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water *reaching* the ankles. ⁴Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water *reaching* the knees. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water reaching the loins. ⁵Again he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not ford, for the water had risen, enough water to swim in, a river that could not be forded. ⁶He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen *this*?" Then he brought me back to the bank of the river. ⁷Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh. ⁹It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and *the others* become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. ¹⁰And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many. ¹¹But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. ¹²By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing."

47:3 "the man" This is the angel of 40:3. This measuring angel is also mentioned by John in Revelation 21.

47:7 "many trees on the one side and the other" This is a metaphor of fertility (cf. v. 12). This is another metaphor used by John in Revelation 22.

47:8 Many commentators have asserted that the verse refers to a miraculous change of saltwater to fresh water, but it seems to me that it refers to the abundance of waters which fills up the Arabah depression and overflows it.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:13-14

¹³Thus says the Lord GOD, "This *shall be* the boundary by which you shall divide the land for an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel; Joseph *shall have two* portions. ¹⁴You shall divide it for an inheritance, each one equally with the other; for I swore to give it to your forefathers, and this land shall fall to you as an inheritance.

47:13 This is the beginning of the reallocation of the land (i.e., Joshua 12-23).

47:14 "each one equally" In Joshua the land was divided according to the size of the individual tribes.

• "for I swore to give it to your forefathers" This reflects the promises to the Patriarchs beginning in Genesis 12 and 15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:15-17

¹⁵"This *shall be* the boundary of the land: on the north side, from the Great Sea *by* the way of Hethlon, to the entrance of Zedad; ¹⁶Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazer-hatticon, which is by the border of Hauran. ¹⁷The boundary shall extend from the sea to Hazar-enan *at* the border of Damascus, and on the north toward the north is the border of Hamath. This is the north side.

47:15-20 The southern boundaries are close to Joshua' boundaries (cf. Num. 34:1-12) and the kingdoms of David and Solomon, but the northern part is expanded northward and eastward as far as Hamath and including most of Syria.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:18

¹⁸"The east side, from between Hauran, Damascus, Gilead and the land of Israel, *shall be* the Jordan; from the *north* border to the eastern sea you shall measure. This is the east side.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:19

¹⁹"The south side toward the south *shall extend* from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the brook *of Egypt and* to the Great Sea. This is the south side toward the south.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:20

²⁰"The west side *shall be* the Great Sea, from the *south* border to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This is the west side.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:21-23

²¹"So you shall divide this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel. ²²You shall divide it by lot for an inheritance among yourselves and among the aliens who stay in your midst, who bring forth sons in your midst. And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of

Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. ²³And in the tribe with which the alien stays, there you shall give *him* his inheritance," declares the Lord GOD.

47:22 "aliens" This is the one section of the book that seems to be inclusive instead of exclusive. This is similar to Isa. 56:3-8 and follows the pattern of Lev. 24:22 and Num. 15:29.

EZEKIEL 48

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Vision of the Restored Temple and Land (40:1-48:35)	Vision of the Future Temple (40:1-48:35)	
Division of the Land	Division of the Land	The Allotment of the Land	The Division of the Land Among the Tribes	Distribution of the Holy Land
48:1-7	48:1-7	48:1-7	48:1-7	48:1-8
			The Special Section in the Center of the Land	
48:8-9	48:8	48:8-14	48:8	
Portion for the Priests	48:9-12		48:9-14	48:9-22
48:10-14				
	48:13-14			
48:15-20	48:15-20	48:15-20	48:15-19	
Portion for the Prince			48:20	
48:21-22	48:21-29	48:21-22	48:21-22	
Portion for the Other Tribes			Land for the Other Tribes	
48:23-29		48:23-29	48:23-27	48:23-29
			48:28	
			48:29	
The City Gates	The Gates of the City and Its Name	The New Jerusalem	The Gates of Jerusalem	The Gates of Jerusalem
48:30-35	48:30-35	48:30-35	48:30-35	48:30-35a
				48:35b

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- 4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Judah to the north and Benjamin to the south are closest to the central sanctuary. The "prince" has the land to the east and west of it.
- B. The tribal divisions are unrelated to the divisions found in Joshua 12-23.
- C. The children of Jacob's wives' servants are farthest from the sanctuary.
- D. Ezekiel describes the gates of the city of Jerusalem and how they relate to specific tribes. John, in Revelation 21, draws on this imagery.
- E. The imagery denotes a complete new covenant start. Jacob's descendants are to begin again!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:1-7

¹"Now these are the names of the tribes: from the northern extremity, beside the way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, *as far as* Hazar-enan *at* the border of Damascus, toward the north beside Hamath, running from east to west, Dan, one *portion*. ²Beside the border of Dan, from the east side to the west side, Asher, one *portion*. ³Beside the border of Asher, from the east side to the west side, Naphtali, one *portion*. ⁴Beside the border of Naphtali, from the east side to the west side, Manasseh, one *portion*. ⁵Beside the border of Manasseh, from the east side to the west side, Reuben, one *portion*. ⁶Beside the border of Ephraim, from the east side to the west side, Reuben, one *portion*. ⁷Beside the border of Reuben, from the east side to the west side, Judah, one *portion*."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:8-14

⁸"And beside the border of Judah, from the east side to the west side, shall be the allotment which you shall set apart, 25,000 *cubits* in width, and in length like one of the portions, from the east side to the west side; and the sanctuary shall be in the middle of it. ⁹The allotment that you shall set apart to the LORD *shall be* 25,000 *cubits* in length and 10,000 in width. ¹⁰The holy allotment shall be for these, *namely* for the priests, toward the north 25,000 *cubits in length*, toward the west 10,000 in width, toward the east 10,000 in width, and toward the south 25, 000 in length; and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in its midst. ¹¹It shall be for the priests who are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray when the sons of Israel went astray as the Levites went astray. ¹²It shall be an allotment to them from the allotment of the land, a most holy place, by the border of the Levites. ¹³Alongside the border of the priests the Levites *shall have* 25,000 *cubits* in length and 10,000 in width. The whole length *shall be* 25,000 *cubits* and the width 10,000. ¹⁴Moreover, they shall not sell or exchange any of it, or alienate this choice *portion* of land; for it is holy to the LORD."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:15-20

¹⁵"The remainder, 5,000 *cubits* in width and 25,000 in length, shall be for common use for the city, for dwellings and for open spaces; and the city shall be in its midst. ¹⁶These *shall be* its measurements: the north side 4,500 *cubits*, the south side 4,500 *cubits*, the east side 4,500 *cubits*, and the west side 4,500 cubits. ¹⁷The city shall have open spaces: on the north 250 cubits, on the south 250 cubits, on the east 250 cubits, and on the west 250 *cubits*. ¹⁸The remainder of the length alongside the holy allotment shall be 10,000 cubits toward the east and 10,000 toward the west; and it shall be alongside the holy allotment. And its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. ¹⁹The workers of the city, out of all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. ²⁰The whole allotment shall be 25,000 cubits; you shall set apart the holy allotment, a square, with the property of the city."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:21-22

²¹"The remainder *shall be* for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy allotment and of the property of the city; in front of the 25,000 *cubits* of the allotment toward the east border and westward in front of the 25,000 toward the west border, alongside the portions, *it shall be* for the prince. And the holy allotment and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the middle of it. ²²Exclusive of the property of the Levites and the property of the city, *which* are in the middle of that which belongs to the prince, *everything* between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall be for the prince."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:23-29

²³"As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west side, Benjamin, one *portion*. ²⁴Beside the border of Benjamin, from the east side to the west side, Simeon, one *portion*. ²⁵Beside the border of Simeon, from the east side to the west side, Issachar, one *portion*. ²⁶Beside the border of Issachar, from the east side to the west side, Zebulun, one *portion*. ²⁷Beside the border of Zebulun, from the east side to the west side, Gad, one *portion*. ²⁸And beside the border of Gad, at the south side toward the south, the border shall be from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, to the brook *of Egypt*, to the Great Sea. ²⁹This is the land which you shall divide by lot to the tribes of Israel for an inheritance, and these are their *several* portions,'' declares the Lord GOD.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:30-35

³⁰"These are the exits of the city: on the north side, 4,500 *cubits* by measurement, ³¹shall be the gates of the city, named for the tribes of Israel, three gates toward the north: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate of Levi, one. ³²On the east side, 4,500 *cubits*, shall be three gates: the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one. ³³On the south side, 4,500 *cubits* by measurement, shall be three gates: the gate of Simeon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zebulun, one. ³⁴On the west side, 4,500 *cubits*, *shall be* three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one. ³⁵The city shall be 18,000 *cubits* round about; and the name of the city from *that* day *shall be*, 'The LORD is there.'''

48:35 "The LORD is there" This reflects the covenant promise of YHWH's personal presence with His people. The same concept is expressed by the name "Emmanuel" (God is with us).

The exile is over! YHWH has returned!

APPENDIX ONE INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the "Prophets" (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and "Writings" sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. It is basically thought-based in balanced, parallel lines.
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays
- III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp.965-975)
 - A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic the next two or three lines develop the thought Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
 - 4. chiasmic a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.
 - B. Charles A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
 - 1. emblematic one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3

- 2. climatic or stair-like the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22
- 3. introverted a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915), developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
 - 1. complete balance where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
 - 2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which usually denotes a number of parallel lines (a,b,b,a; a,b,c,b,a) forming an hour glass shape, often the central line(s) is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
 - 1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lamentations 1-4)
 - 2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
 - 3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
 - 4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
 - 5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
 - 6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related.
 - 1. dedication song Num. 21:17-18
 - 2. work songs (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
 - 3. ballads Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
 - 4. drinking songs negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
 - 5. love poems Song of Songs, wedding riddle Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song Ps. 45
 - 6. laments/dirge (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25) II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19)
 - 7. war songs Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
 - 8. special benedictions or blessing of leader Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
 - 9. magical texts Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
 - 10. sacred poems Psalms
 - 11. acrostic poems Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
 - 12. curses Num. 21:22-30
 - 13. taunt poems Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
 - 14. a book of war poems (Jashar) Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.

- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 & 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exod. 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

APPENDIX TWO INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Opening Statements
 - 1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
 - 2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
 - a. premonarchial (before King Saul)
 - 1) individuals called prophets
 - a) Abraham Gen. 20:7
 - b) Moses Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - c) Aaron Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
 - d) Miriam Exod. 15:20
 - e) Medad and Eldad Num. 11:24-30
 - f) Deborah Jdgs. 4:4
 - g) unnamed Jdgs. 6:7-10
 - h) Samuel I Sam. 3:20
 references to prophets as a group Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 prophetic groups or guilds I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
 Messiah called prophet Deut. 18:15-18
 - b. non-writing monarchial prophets (they address the king) Gad - I Sam. 7:2; 12:25; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 29:29 Nathan - II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22 Ahijah - I Kgs. 11:29 Jehu - I Kgs. 16:1,7,12 unnamed - I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22 Elijah -I Kgs. 18; II Kgs. 2 Milcaiah - I Kgs. 22 Elisha - II Kgs. 2:8,13
 - c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah—Malachi (except Daniel)
- B. Biblical Terms
 - 1. *ro'eh* = seer, I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means "prophet" and comes from the root, "to call." *Ro'eh* is from the general Hebrew term "to see." This person understood God's ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God's will in a matter.
 - 2. *hozeh* = seer, II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *ro'eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term "to see in a vision." The participle form is used most often to refer to prophets.
 - 3. *nabi'* = prophet, cognate of Akkadian verb *nabu* = "to call" and Arabic *naba'a* = "to announce." This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but "to call" at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes form YHWH's description of Moses' relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).
 - 4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chron. 29:29; Samuel *Ro'eh*; Nathan *Nabi'*; and Gad *Hozeh*.

- 5. The phrase *'ish ha 'elohim*, "man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
- 6. The word "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro* = "before" or "for"; (2) *phemi* = "to speak."

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The Jews labeled the history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation" (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896).
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present" ("Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 1152).

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's Covenants. Often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected it into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history (teleological) is unique to Israel and her sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and supplant the office of High Priest as a way of knowing God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi (or the writing of Chronicles). It does not appear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of "prophecy" relates to the OT. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation, but forth-tellers and fore-tellers of God's will in recurrent situations.
- D. Prophecy is <u>not</u> exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted ". . .less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come" (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).
- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.

F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time-frame, or clear division between oracles, it is difficult (1) to read the books through in one sitting; (2) to outline them by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of "prophet" and "prophecy." In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase "the sons of the prophets" was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets at times were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into the time of individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israelite society (Amos, Micah). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14).
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on a person's or a people's immediate response. Often the prophet's task was to unfold God's universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of Israel in the Ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets were primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation of Israel.
- D. Most prophetic material was presented orally. It was later combined by means of theme or chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature, which are lost to us. Because it was oral, it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages
 - 1. Court scene God takes His people to court; often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 - 2. Funeral dirge the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic "woe" sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 - 3. Covenant blessing pronouncement the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-29).

V. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION OF A TRUE PROPHET

- A. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (predictions/signs are linked to monotheistic purity)
- B. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (false prophets/true prophets)

- C. Both men and women are called and designated as prophets or prophetesses
 - 1. Miriam Exodus 15
 - 2. Deborah Judges 4:4-6
 - 3. Huldah II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-28
- D. In the surrounding cultures prophets were verified by means of divination. In Israel they were verified by
 - 1. a theological test the use of the name of YHWH
 - 2. a historical test accurate predictions

VI. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

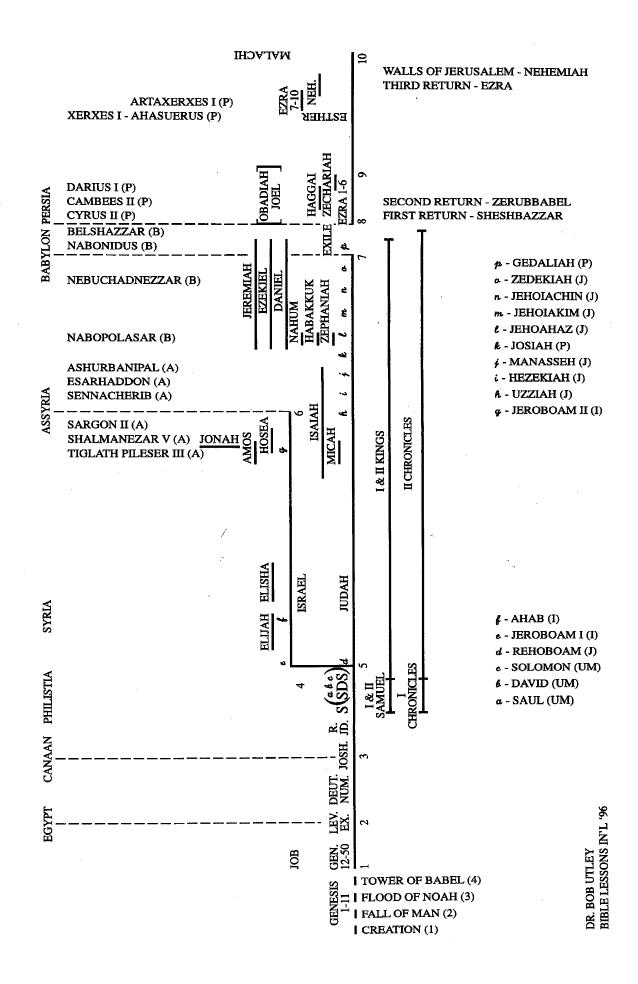
- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book (by literary units and to paragraph level).
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then attempt to put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember that this is Ancient Near Eastern literature, not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat predictions with care
 - 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
 - 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
 - 3. Are they yet future events?
 - 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 - 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns:
 - 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 - 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 - 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillments?
 - 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired, we best leave this approach to them.

VII. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. A Guide to Biblical Prophecy by Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque
- B. How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. Cracking the Old Testament Code, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr.

APPENDIX THREE

CHART OF THE WHOLE OLD TESTAMENT (on next page)



Undateable Events (Genesis 1-11)

- 1. Creation (Gen. 1-2)
- 2. Fall of Man (Gen. 3)
- 3. Flood of Noah Day (Gen. 6-9)
- 4. Tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11

Dateable Events

1.	Patriarchal Period (Gen. 12-50 and Job)	2000 в.с.
2.	Exodus from Egypt (Exodus)	1445 or 1290 B.C.
3.	Conquest of Canaan (Joshua)	1440 or 1250 B.C.
4.	United Monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon)	1000 b.C.
5.	Divided Monarchy (Rehoboam-Jeroboam I)	922 B.C.
6.	Fall of Samaria (Israel) to Assyria	722 B.C.
7.	Fall of Jerusalem (Judah) to Babylon	586 B.C.
8.	Decree of Cyrus (Persia) to Return	538 B.C.
9.	Temple Rebuilt	516 B.C.
10.	Close of OT Period (Malachi)	430 в.с.

APPENDIX FOUR

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts, which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus, need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."