

Chapter Ten

1) Then I looked and behold, on the firmament that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire in form resembling a throne. 2) And he said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the whirling wheels underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city." And he went in before my eyes. 3) Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house when the man went in; and a cloud filled the inner court. 4) And the glory of the Lord went up from the cherubim to the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the Lord. 5) And 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. 6) And when he commanded the man clothed in linen, "Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim," he went in and stood beside a wheel. 7) And a cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim to the fire that was between the cherubim and took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen who took it and went out. 8) The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings. 9) And I looked, and behold, there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like sparkling chrysolite. 10) And as for their appearance, the four had the same likeness as if a wheel were within a wheel. 11) When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went, but in whatever direction the front wheel faced the others followed without turning as they went. 12) And their rims and their spokes and the wheels were full of eyes round about—the wheels that the four of them had. 13) As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing the whirling wheels. 14) And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15) And the cherubim mounted up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar. 16) And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels did not turn from beside them. 17) When they stood still, these stood still, and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them. 18) Then the glory of the Lord went forth from the threshold of the house and stood over the cherubim. 19) And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth in my sight as they went forth with the wheels beside them; and they stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the Lord; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. 20) These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim. 21) Each had four faces and each four wings and underneath their wings the semblance of human hands. 22) And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the very faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. They went every one straight forward.

As not unexpected, a new chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* or “then” which indicates that as soon as the man clothed in linen finished what the Lord commanded him, attention shifts to Ezekiel’s new vision. When the prophet looks and beholds (*ra’ah* and

hineh (cf. 8.2), he's doing this after a near universal slaughter of Jerusalem's inhabitants. While the conjunctive does play an important role throughout the Book of Ezekiel as it does with many other biblical texts, in cases like the present one it's more important. That is to say, *v-* heightens the immediacy of tragic events, how they're connected with what just transpired and what is to transpire.

As for those whom the scribe had marked, nothing further is said; perhaps they decided to abandon the city and take refuge elsewhere. They will stand out, however, by reason of that *tav* or mark in the form of a cross on their foreheads which they can't remove. In one sense it's a badge of honor among all they encounter as well as a reminder of those who had been slain. One can't help but draw a certain parallel with the mark God put upon Cain in Gen 4.15, 'oth rendered also as a portent. Nevertheless, this 'oth prevented people from slaying him.

Ezekiel's attention is drawn to something resembling a sapphire or *saphyr* usually associated with the color blue which ties in with the firmament (*raqyah*, cf. 1.22) and image of the throne (*kise'*) chariot in 1.26. Vs. 1 also has the noun *demuth* (form, cf. 8.1). Note that 1.26 reads "above the firmament" or *mimahal* whereas the verse at hand reads "on the firmament" or the preposition 'el or literally "to." It seems that the current vision (though that term isn't used here) is the object of a more direct seeing and beholding. The major difference is that cherubim are involved (cf. 9.3) and are mentioned seventeen times in this relatively short chapter. This shows that they are a critical component of the vision as guardians of the ark of the Lord.

In the verse at hand these angelic beings are presented as supporting the firmament which in Gen 1.6 is "in the midst of the waters" serving to separate the waters above from those below. Thus we could say that on both sides of the firmament are the indeterminate waters over which the Spirit hovered. So from the chaos represented by the waters emerges this vision which happens right after the wholesale slaughter of men, women and children depicted in Chapter Nine.

In vs. 2 Ezekiel sees and beholds the Lord speaking to the scribe, the same man clothed in linen who put the mark of salvation upon those lamenting Jerusalem's abominable practices. He is to go in among the wheels beneath the cherubim. The preposition *beyn* is used from "among," more along the lines as "between" and not the familiar *betok* indicative of in the midst of. This is a dangerous thing to do because the wheels are whirring or *galgal*, a noun for such devices and found next in vs. 6. Compare with 'ophan in 1.15, *galgal* signifying more that which is round as a circle and hence the ability to turn quickly. Such wheels in vs. 2 are located beneath the cherubim—presumably four of them—and enable them to move. In the case at hand, this ark, if you will, (it forms the

representation associated with Moses and Solomon's temple) has the ability to move on its own compared with the one in Exodus which needed to be carried.

Beneath the wheeled cherubim are burning coals between (*beyn*) the cherubim which the scribe is to scatter over Jerusalem, *zaraq* also as to sprinkle. This verb is used frequently when Moses sprinkles the altar with the blood of sacrifice. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness" [36.25]. Apparently the scribe could pick up these coals in his bare hands just as in vs. 7 he receives fire from one of the cherubim. No direct explanation is given for this scattering of burning coals. However, it infers the cleansing of Jerusalem from abominable deeds once those who had practiced them are no more. In sum, Jerusalem is devoid of any inhabitants, even the presumably small number of those whom the scribe had marked. Vs. 2 concludes with the sentence "And he went in, in before my eyes," an observation which captures Ezekiel's feeling toward the scribe, wondering whether or not he'll be able to get out.

Vs. 3 specifies the location of the cherubim and hence the implied ark, that is, on the south side of the house, *bayth* (cf. 1.27) often used in reference to the temple. This term gives the sacred place a homey appeal, if you will, as well as contrasting it with the awful abominations that had taken place there. The south side represents the opposite or the north side, location of the "seat of the image of jealousy" noted in 8.3. It is the entry place for the scribe also described in terms of a cloud which filled the inner court or *chaser* (cf. 4.17). While taking this in, Ezekiel couldn't help but make the association with Moses who "went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain" [Ex 24.15].

Vs. 4 says that the divine *kavod* (first time mentioned in this chapter) went up from the cherubim. This implies that it rested upon these two angelic beings though the number isn't given, two from those which were fashioned to be placed upon the ark of the covenant. We have here what seems to be a hovering motion, for the *kavod* next moves to the temple's threshold or entrance filling the house with the cloud. As for the court or *chaser* (cf. vs. 3), it was filled with brightness emanating from the *kavod*, *nogah* implying splendor as in 1.28. So we have two opposites, if you will, cloud and brightness, both the same in the sense that they blocked vision.

Vs. 5 describes the loud sound of the cherubims' wings heard in the outer court, *chaser* again with *chytson* (outer) which implies an area which is not holy in and by itself but partaking of it by reason of its proximity. "Then he brought me into the outer court" [40.17]. Ezekiel likens this sound or *gol* (cf. 3.13) also as voice) not just to the Lord but the Lord Almighty when he speaks, "Almighty" or *Shady* (cf. 1.24) adding a more majestic element to the *gol*. This hearkens back to the vision of the throne chariot in 1.24, *gol* there being associated with a tumult or *hamulah*. As for the speaking the verb *davar* is prefaced

with the preposition *b-* or “in,” intimating that the Lord is in his *davar* or in his expressing of himself.

If the wings of the cherubim made such a *qol* resembling the Lord Almighty, the area between (*mibeynoth*) the cherubim mentioned in vs. 6 is relatively quiet since this *qol* is directed outward. Again keep in mind that the two heavenly beings are situated on top of the ark of the Lord with wings spread over it for protection. Note, too, that the cherubim aren’t mentioned in Ezekiel’s first vision but the so-called four living creatures (cf. 1.5). Now the Lord bids the man clothed in linen to take fire from between (*mibeynoth*) the whirling wheels or *galgal* (cf. vs. 2). So we have two in-betweens which the scribe must negotiate beginning by standing beside one of the four wheels. For him it’s a risky business, but then again, he just finished marking people who are destined to survive the slaughter within Jerusalem. He figured that anything to follow would pale in comparison.

To the scribe’s astonishment, in vs. 7 a cherub from between (*benoth*) his fellow cherubim stretched a hand out to the fire, took part of it and put it in the man’s hand. After this he promptly exited the whirling wheels. Nothing is said of a container for this fire; as intimated earlier, it was of such a nature that the man could handle it with his bare hands. Next in vs. 8 the observation is made that the two cherubim (again that number isn’t specified but presumed from the ark of the Lord) to have the form of a human hand, *tavnyth* being the noun for form (cf. 8.3) which fundamentally means a structure as well as image or exemplar. Ezekiel couldn’t help but compare this incident with his illustrious predecessor, the prophet Isaiah. He had a vision at the beginning of his ministry which consisted of six seraphim, six-winged angelic beings different from their cousins, the cherubim. If one of these seraphim touched Isaiah’s mouth with a live coal and did not harm him, surely the scribe came away unscathed as he bore the fire without a container.

Vs. 9 has Ezekiel looking and beholding, *ra’ah* and *hineh* (cf. vs. 1) which indicates a new phase of this vision. Part of it consists in wondering what happened to the scribe clothed in linen or more specifically, what he was going to do with the fire. Jerusalem had been pretty much wiped out. Such fire taken from a holy place may be intended not so much to destroy the city but to purify it. This is to be done after the scribe fills his hand with burning coals and scatters them over Jerusalem (cf. vs. 2). Between vs. 9 and vs. 14 we have a fairly detailed description of the wheels, there being four of them. Thus their description may be outlined as follows:

-Four wheels (*‘ophan*, cf. 3.13), not *galgal* or the whirling wheels beside each of the cherubim, their appearance or *mar’eh* (cf. 8.4) being as chrysolite which sparkles. *Heyn* is a noun commonly translated as eye and is used for the adjective “sparkling,” reading literally as “the eye of chrysolite” found in 1.16 or Ezekiel’s vision of the throne chariot.

-As for the appearance of the cherubim or *mar'eh*, they had the likeness as a wheel within a wheel, *demuth* suggesting more a form as in vs. 1. So here in vs. 10 we have the cherubim with both the same *mar'eh* and *demuth*. The preposition *betok*, more as in the center of, is used with regard to the wheels, '*ophan*. Thus the idea is a wheel physically located within another wheel while the two remain the same.

-It seems that the cherubim are the direct guiding force of this vision as clearly distinct from the throne chariot in Chapter One. As vs. 3 recounts, the closest thing it resembles is a cloud, that is, one on wheels. Vs. 11 says that these heavenly beings went in any of the four directions or *revah* (cf. 1.17 but not noted there) which translates more accurately as sides. Once a particular direction is chosen, the cherubim/cloud follows it without swerving, the front wheel leading the way. This front wheel intimates that the other three are set back some bit which not necessarily affects the shape.

-The **RSV** of vs. 12 reads "And their rims" whereas the Hebrew runs as "and their whole body and." This is followed immediately by "and their spokes" for "of life," these variations most likely a certain corruption of the text. In the same verse the wheels or '*ophan* are full of eyes all around, that is, each of the four wheels belonging to each of the four cherubim. Automatically this brings to mind God's throne depicted in Rev 4.8: "And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'"

-Ezekiel interjects an observation at this point (vs. 13), that is, these wheels ('*ophan*) were called whirling wheels (*galgal*) literally in his ears. In other words, they have a kind of high-pitched sound due to the rapid whirling.

-The last observation concerning this cherubim/cloud vision in vs. 14 describes the cherubim as having four different faces: cherub, man, lion and eagle. This harkens back to the verse before the previous one in Revelation cited just above, that is, 4.7: "The first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle." The difference is that Revelation has an ox for a cherub.

Now that the driving mechanism of cherubim/cloud has been described, from vs. 15 through the end of this chapter we see it departing the temple, a very sad sight to behold. In other words, the ark of the Lord is leaving its home in Jerusalem, the verb *ramam* meaning to be high or lofty and found next in vs. 17. Once airborne, if you will, Ezekiel recognizes that the cherubim are the same as the living creatures of his first vision by the Chebar, that "stormy wind that came out of the north" in 1.4. Nothing is said about how he made the transition from these creatures to cherubim; perhaps through the medium of the man clothed in linen.

In vs. 16 both cherubim and the wheels departed as one, these heavenly beings using their wings to mount on high. Then in vs. 17 Ezekiel observes that the cherubim first stands still, presumably being suspended for a moment in the air above Jerusalem almost wanting to go back, yet they continued to ascend. This is possible by reason of the spirit (the RSV has lower case ‘r’) or *ruach* which is not like the cloud associated with the cherubim though it isn’t mentioned after vs. 4. Here the Hebrew text reads literally, “for the spirit of the life was in them.”

So here we are with the cherubim/cloud hovering over Jerusalem and gazed upon those righteous people marked by the scribe, no one else. As noted earlier, some may have remained in the city while others fled. Nevertheless, all couldn’t help but be transfixed by the sight. They paused, waiting for the divine *kavod* or glory (cf. vs. 4) to leave the threshold of the house or temple after which it stood above the cherubim. Note reference to threshold, as if the *kavod* were impatient to get out of that place and ascend to its proper dwelling. Vs. 19 recounts the cherubim mounted up from the earth with the wheels after which they stood at the east gate of the temple. Compare this with vs. 15, “And the cherubim mounted up,” the mounting in vs. 19 seeming to be a second but is associated with being done “in my (Ezekiel) sight.”

In the last verse of this chapter Ezekiel sees clearly that the living creatures by the river Chebar and the cherubim are one and the same. Then in the remaining verses he speaks briefly of the faces of the cherubim, pretty much to confirm at this point of the Lord’s departure from Jerusalem that what he had witnessed was genuine.

“Son of man” references: 0

1) ra’ah, hineh, saphyr, raqyah, demuth, 2) galgal, zaraq, 3) bayth, chaser, 4) kavod, chaser, nogah, 5) qol, chytson, shady, 6) galgal, 8) tavnyth, 9) ra’ah, hineh, ‘ophan, mar’eh, heyn, 10) mar’eh, demuth, betok, ‘ophan, 11) revah, 13) ‘ophan, galgal, 15) ramam, 17) ruach, 18) kavod

Chapter Eleven

1) The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the Lord which faces east. And behold, at the door of the gateway there were twenty-five men; and I saw among them Ja-azaniah the son of Azzur and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2) And he said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3) who say, 'The time is not near to build houses; this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh.' 4) Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man." 5) And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the Lord: So you think, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind. 6) You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its

streets with the slain. 7) Therefore thus says the Lord God: Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron; but you shall be brought forth out of the midst of it. 8) You have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, says the Lord God. 9) And I will bring you forth out of the midst of it and give you into the hands of foreigners and execute judgments upon you. 10) You shall fall by the sword; I will judge you at the border of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord. 11) This city shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the flesh in the midst of it; I will judge you at the border of Israel; 12) and you shall know that I am the Lord; for you have not walked in my statutes nor executed my ordinances but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are round about you." 13) And it came to pass while I was prophesying that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down upon my face and cried with a loud voice and said, "Ah Lord God! will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" 14) And the word of the Lord came to me: 15) "Son of man, your brethren, even your brethren, your fellow exiles, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'They have gone far from the Lord; to us this land is given for a possession.' 16) Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.' 17) Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.' 18) And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. 19) And I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh 20) that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21) But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will requite their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord God." 22) Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. 23) And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. 24) And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25) And I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had showed me.

As noted a number of times earlier, the conjunctive *v-* plays an important role to connect what had just happened with what is about to happen, and here has no English translation. As a footnote in the **RSV** says, "these verses should follow 8.18" because they come before the destruction of Jerusalem. In light of this, we could intimate that when the Spirit (*ruach*, cf. 10.17) lifts up Ezekiel (compare with being lifted by the lock of his hair in 8.3), it's done by going back in time. The Spirit isn't bound by such restrictions, so he's free to take Ezekiel anywhere he wishes.

The destination for Ezekiel? The east gate of the Lord's temple which, as often is the case, is called "house" as a way to designate a certain familiarity with Israel and now is in the unfortunate process of being forsaken. So when the Spirit brings the prophet to the gateway facing east—he doesn't necessarily let him down but keeps him suspended—he beholds (*hineh*, cf. 10.9) a considerably large group of twenty-five men. He singles out two

among them as princes or *sar* of the people although they aren't mentioned elsewhere. "Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon" [17.12].

Although Ezekiel singles out Ja-azaniah and Pelatiah by reason of their leadership roles, he must have known the others and intimates instinctively that they were conspiring something which wasn't good. The entire group must have sought control over Jerusalem at one time or another yet fortunately had been caught before they could achieve their goal. Now these conspirators decided to do their thing in a place least expected, within the temple...the home...of the Lord.

The Spirit confirms what Ezekiel had known from the moment he laid eyes upon these men, namely, that they are devising iniquity and wicked counsel in Jerusalem. *Chashav* is the verb for devising which also means to think out something or to impute. It's used with the noun '*aven*, also as emptiness or vanity. Their references are respectively: "And you will devise an evil scheme" [38.10]. "The young men of On (i.e., '*Aven*) and of Pibeseth shall fall by the sword" [30.17]. As for the counsel which is wicked or *rah* (cf. 8.9), the noun is *hetsah* (cf. 7.25) with the verb (participle) from which it's derived, *yahats*, as in Mic 4.9: "Has your counselor perished?"

Vs. 3 gives some details as to this plot, namely, that they are attempting to assure Jerusalem's inhabitants of their security and continue with building projects despite (as a footnote in the RSV says) the plot between Egypt and king Zedekiah's pro-Egyptian counselors against Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon. They put this false reassurance in terms of a rhetorical sentence (that is, in the Hebrew), "Is not the time near?" In the same breath the conspirators acknowledge that Jerusalem is a caldron (*syr*) or a pot for boiling and found next in vs. 11. Into this boiling pot they are destined to be cast. This moves the Spirit to have Ezekiel prophesy against them (*nava'*, cf. 6.1) which he does in the following verses. In order to carry it out, the Spirit must drop Ezekiel in the midst of these twenty-five conspirators. It's a risky maneuver since easily they could do away with him.

Chapter Eleven begins with the Spirit lifting up Ezekiel whereas vs. 5 has the same Spirit doing the opposite, that is, falling upon him, *naphal* (cf. 8.1). Such falling is a prelude to uttering a prophesy or the like. Here the verb '*amar* (not the more fuller *davar*, if you will) for to speak is used three times in rapid succession: said, say and thus says. A fourth instance can be thrown in translated as "so you think" rendered literally as "so you say." Despite this, the Lord (through Ezekiel, of course) knows what Israel had been up to, the verb *yadah* being used along with *ruach*, the lower case use compared with the upper case one or the Spirit.

The words of prophesy (this term isn't used explicitly) continues through vs. 12 with reference to the evil the twenty-five men had committed under the leadership of the two princes mentioned in vs. 1. They are responsible for having multiplied the slain within Jerusalem, *ravah* being the verb in vs. 6. "They have made many widows in her" [22.25]. Corresponding with this *ravah* is *mala'* (cf. 10.4 but not noted there) or filling the streets with dead bodies. These corpses are the flesh within the walls of Jerusalem which form a caldron. However, the conspirators aren't to be consumed within it but are to be brought outside (*betok* with *min* prefaced to it; cf. 10.10) or from its midst or very center.

In sharp contrast to the just mentioned *betok* is the sword in vs. 8 awaiting these twenty-five men, that is, falling into the hands of foreigners or *zur* (cf. 7.21 but not noted there), a participle which also means enemy. They are to pass judgement, *shaphat* (cf. 7.8) which is in line with the Lord himself doing the same *shaphat* (cf. vs. 10), more specifically at the border of Israel or where this *gevul* (cf. vs. 11) rubs up against territory controlled by Babylon. And so *gevul* forms a larger caldron, if you will, compared with the smaller one of Jerusalem. To be slain there is a worse fate than within Jerusalem, hence the significance of *betok* with *min* ('from the midst of') prefaced to it as noted concerning vs. 7. If there is any last minute redemption, it consists in the fact that these conspirators will know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 5) the Lord.

Vs. 12 is a continuation of the previous verse which again speaks of the conspirators knowing (*yadah*) that the Lord is in charge. Following this *yadah* is the imputation of not following divine statutes or ordinances, *choq* and *mishpat* (cf. 7.27). For the former, cf. 16.27: "And diminished your allotted portion." Instead of these, they have followed the *mishpat* of the nations around Israel, hence the reason for the Lord bringing the conspirators to Israel's boundaries.

Vs. 13 shifts gears from the fate of these twenty-five men to Ezekiel lamenting the death of Pelatiah, that is, while he was finishing up his prophesy against them. As noted in vs. 1, he is one of the two princes among the twenty-five conspirators. Ezekiel gets quite emotional over his death, possibly because he had known him before he fell into apostasy. Then he blurts out to the Lord about making a full end to what is left of Israel, *kalah*. "And great hailstones in wrath to destroy it" [13.13]. As for this remnant or *sh'eryth* (cf. 9.8 but not noted there), most likely it hearkens back to those marked by the man clothed in linen "who sigh and groan over all the abominations" [9.4] committed in Jerusalem. Again, the number of that remnant isn't given but left to the reader to presume, mostly likely being quite small.

Vs. 14 is succinct, opening with the conjunctive *v-*, "and the word (*davar*) of the Lord came to me," this phrase being found last in 7.1. In the verse at hand the *davar* comes to

Ezekiel after he mourns the death of Pelatiah or more specifically, the complete destruction of Israel for all its abominable practices. The *davar* to be proclaimed is detailed through vs. 21, a good chunk of Chapter Eleven. It begins with the biting tone of “your brethren, even your brethren” which must have embarrassed Ezekiel at being associated with such people although by now he is very familiar with the Israel’s apostasy.

Ezekiel is referring to Israel not as the northern kingdom that split off from the Judah or southern kingdom after Solomon's death but as the entire people of God. From that point of view the Jews are the remnant of Israel. Ezekiel wants to know if God is going to destroy his entire ancient people and replies that he and his fellow Jews in exile are being maligned by those who still live in Jerusalem. They claim that they are far away from the Lord by reason of living in Babylon, so now God is going to give all the Promised land to them. In fact as God will show Ezekiel, it will be the exact opposite. The exiles will return and inherit the land and those in Jerusalem will be killed or scattered.

Note that one of the ways Ezekiel is identified with his fellows is by the phrase “your fellow exiles” which reads literally and more pertinently as “men of redemption,” *ge’ulah*, this term having a number of references in Chapter Twenty-Five of Leviticus beginning with 25.24: “And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land.” In sum, we have expression of a strain between two groups, those left in Jerusalem and those in exile. As for those in Jerusalem, they say that the land has been given them as a possession, *morashah* implying inheritance. “I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession” [25.4]. They come up with an excuse by claiming that those in Jerusalem have strayed far from the Lord, *rashaq* (cf. 8.6 but not noted there). To this the Lord bids Ezekiel to respond in vs. 16 where the Lord claims that he was a sanctuary in lands to which they had been scattered, *miqdash* (cf. 9.5). The English text reads “sanctuary to them for a while” whereas the Hebrew runs “in small measure.” Perhaps this is because the *miqdash* of exile is less than the *miqdash* or temple in Jerusalem, center of Jewish worship.

Vs. 17 begins with “thus says the Lord God” right after the same phrase in vs. 16 possibly due to the importance of what he has to communicate. The Lord will first gather then assemble the Israelites, *qavats* and *‘asaph* being two similar verbs. The first literally means to grasp by the hand or to gather and the second, to collect or to gather up. For references: the first is noted last in 10.1 but not noted there while the second may be found in 24.4: “Put in it the pieces of flesh.” The first is associated with the peoples or those who are not Israelites while the second, countries in which Israel had been scattered, *puts* also found in vs. 16 with reference to countries. Note that Israel is called land or *‘adamah* (cf. 7.2) which pertains more to the physical place while countries are *ham*, a word associated

with people or nation. Given the situation of exile, *'adamah* is far more important because it signifies the place of return.

Vs. 18 has the exiles arriving back home where they will remove all detestable things and abominations, *shiquts* and *tohevah*, both found together in 8.20. This they must do on their own which is followed by a specific divine intervention. That is to say, vs. 19 has the Lord step in order to give the people literally “one heart” (*lev*, cf. 6.9), emphasis upon one in that it will be essential to eradicate the presence of multiple deities in their native land of Israel. In addition to this, the Lord will give a new spirit or new *ruach* (cf. vs. 5) within the people, *qerev* meaning the interior or midst of anything. Compare with *betok* which is more around the middle of something or among. Both this one heart and new spirit (*lev* and *ruach*) will replace their stony heart for one of flesh. Note that nothing is said of replacing the *ruach*.

Vs. 20 says that the purpose of this twofold surgery, if you will, is for Israel to walk in the Lord’s statutes and ordinances, *choq* and *mishpat*, as found in vs. 12 where they had not done so. The first are to be kept (*shamar*) and the second to be obeyed (*hasah*, the common verb to do). A reference to the former which implies keeping watch is 20.18: “Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers nor observe their ordinance.” This *shamar* and *hasah*...keeping watch and doing...automatically results in Israel belonging to the Lord and he being their God which is rendered literally as “to (*l-*) God.”

Vs. 21 reads in Hebrew as pointed out by the RSV, “To the heart of their detestable things and their abominations their heart goes.” The noun *derek* (road, way) is used here most likely as “things.” This condemnation applies to those who are not part of the exile. Dealing with them is an important requisite for the exiles to return and reestablish true worship of the Lord. If they aren’t eliminated, the problem is bound to continue.

So after closing on both a hopeful and threatening note, the cherubim and the *kavod* (cf. 10.18) or glory of the Lord over them depart. More specifically, this *kavod* ascends from the midst of (*mehal tok* or from on midst) Jerusalem and takes position on the mountain east of the city, that is, the Mount of Olives. From there it seems to pause, even linger for some time, as the Lord with his cherubim take in one last sight of Jerusalem. For a human correspondence of this, refer to King David when he had to flee his son Absalom (cf. 2Sam 16.1+). As for what the Lord did afterwards, nothing is said after this, the picture intended to leave us in suspense.

Attention now shifts to Ezekiel in vs. 24 when the Spirit (*Ruach*, cf. vs. 19) lifts him up and brings him in vision or *mar’eh* (cf. 10.10) not simply by the Spirit by the Spirit of God. This harkens back to 8.3 when the same Spirit “brought me in visions of God to

Jerusalem.” In other words, the vision of Israel’s eventual restoration is complete and needs to be communicated to the exiles in Babylon which here is designated as Chaldea. Once there, this vision went up from Ezekiel after which he recounted everything that the Lord had shown him. Nothing is said of their response, but any ray of hope would be most welcome despite their relatively benign treatment in Babylon.

“Son of man” references: 3

1) ruach, hineh, sar, 2) chashav, ‘aven, rah, yahats, 3) syr, 4) nava’, 5) naphal, yadah, ruach, 6) ravah, mala’, 7) betok, 9) zur, shaphat, 10) shaphat, gevul, 11) yadah, 12) choq, mishpat, 13) kalah, sh’eryh, 15) ge’ulah, rashaq, morashah, 16) miqdash, 17) qavats, ‘asaph, naphats, puts, ‘adamah, 18) shiquts, tohevah, 19) lev, ruach, qerev, 20) choq, mishpat, shamar, hasah, 21) derek, 22) kavod, 24) ruach, mar’eh

Chapter Twelve

1) The word of the Lord came to me: 2) "Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house who have eyes to see but see not, who have ears to hear but hear not; 3) for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand though they are a rebellious house. 4) You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight as baggage for exile; and you shall go forth yourself at evening in their sight as men do who must go into exile. 5) Dig through the wall in their sight and go out through it. 6) In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel." 7) And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I went forth in the dark carrying my outfit upon my shoulder in their sight. 8) In the morning the word of the Lord came to me: 9) "Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' 10) Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.' 11) Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.' 12) And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder in the dark and shall go forth; he shall dig through the wall and go out through it; he shall cover his face that he may not see the land with his eyes. 13) And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon in the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it; and he shall die there. 14) And I will scatter toward every wind all who are round about him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will unsheathe the sword after them. 15) And they shall know that I am the Lord when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. 16) But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may confess all their abominations among the nations where they go and may know that I am the Lord." 17) Moreover the word of the Lord came to me: 18) "Son of man, eat your bread with quaking and drink water with trembling and with fearfulness; 19) and

say of the people of the land, Thus says the Lord God concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with fearfulness and drink water in dismay because their land will be stripped of all it contains on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it. 20) And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the Lord." 21) And the word of the Lord came to me: 22) "Son of man, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, 'The days grow long, and every vision comes to nought'? 23) Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.' But say to them, The days are at hand and the fulfillment of every vision. 24) For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25) But I the Lord will speak the word which I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, says the Lord God." 26) Again the word of the Lord came to me: 27) "Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, 'The vision that he sees is for many days hence, and he prophesies of times far off.' 28) Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word which I speak will be performed, says the Lord God."

“Word (*davar*) of the Lord” is prefaced with the conjunctive *v-*, this phrase being mentioned last in 11.14 and in the verse at hand, lacks the verb “came.” In other words, the Hebrew reads literally “and the *davar* of the Lord was to me.” There’s a certain tongue-in-cheek humor to vs. 2 when the Lord says that he dwells in the midst or very middle of (*betok*, cf. 11.7) Israel which is described as a rebellious house throughout Chapter Twelve. Humorous in the sense that Ezekiel must have shot back at the Lord with something like “Really?” In other words, he had known this from the very beginning of his ministry. How could anyone with some sense could not? As for the phrase “son of man,” it’s found six times in this chapter.

The phrase “rebellious house” is found five times in Chapter Two, *mery* being the adjective as in 2.8, so early on Ezekiel got a cram course on Israel being in this degenerate condition. Also mention of “house” with regard to Israel intimates something domestic, of taking place within a confined building, making it all the more contentious. Then add the just mentioned *betok* or very center along with Ezekiel dwelling there, and you really have an undesirable situation. As for the dwellers there, they have eyes and ears but can neither see nor hear, this being reminiscent of Is 6.10: “Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed.”

Vs. 3 is a continuation of the sentence begun in the previous verse, starting off with another mention of Israel as a rebellious house, again, this being for emphasis. This verse contains a second sentence where the Lord tells Ezekiel as “son of man” (second reference) to prepare baggage in the manner of someone going into exile or *galah* also meaning captivity as the following shows: “And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went

into captivity for their iniquity” [39.23]. You’d think that setting out under the cover of dark is best for this. However, the Lord bids Ezekiel to do it in broad daylight, more specifically as “in their sight” so no one of the entire house of Israel will miss the spectacle.

As for the place of exile, that’s not mentioned, again to make put the Israelites on edge. Which enemy will come and destroy our city, leading us into captivity? That’s the feeling Ezekiel wishes to impart. However, the Lord holds out some hope, albeit slim, that the people just might understand, *ra’ah* (cf. 10.9) being the verb which means to see. Use of *ra’ah* is somewhat ironic in that just a few verses above it’s used with “eyes to see but see not.” While everyone marveled at the strange behavior of Ezekiel (some would say it forebodes an invasion but never could say so publically), they did not *ra’ah* it; more importantly, they failed to *ra’ah* that they were a rebellious house.

In order to make this gesture more dramatic, in vs. 4 the Lord bids Ezekiel to bring out his baggage in full daylight which means he had to walk from his house through the streets of Jerusalem to the city wall. While vs. 3 says that the prophet is to go into exile during the day, vs. 6 has him carrying out his baggage in the dark. So it seems the preparation was done during daylight hours, deliberately drawn out to strike fear into the people, while the actual act of leaving through the wall was at night. Then again, in light of what comes later in this chapter concerning the unfulfilled prophecies of Jeremiah, most people simply looked the other way. So while making good his exit, Ezekiel is to cover his face so as not to see the land. He did this because the land is polluted with abominations, this gesture being a sign or *mopheth* (cf. vs. 11) for Israel, the noun also applicable to a miracle or proof. While the crowd grew throughout the day, by night virtually all Jerusalem’s inhabitants had gathered around Ezekiel, torches and other means of illumination filling the area.

In vs. 7 Ezekiel says that he carried out what the Lord bade him to do and exited through the wall under the cover of darkness. Then he disappeared into the night to a place he had no idea to which he was going. All those in Jerusalem who had huddled around him certainly wondered the same. We can be sure of one thing, namely, no one, absolutely no one, dared to follow. However, people were attentive to any bit of information that might trickle in the next few days.

Vs. 8 backs up a bit the sequence of events by referring to the morning of Ezekiel’s very public departure through the wall of Jerusalem. During that time the *davar* of the Lord came to him, possibly within his house before making a public display of his departure. For the third time the Lord addresses him as “son of man,” this occasion being the people wondering what his public gesture is all about. People living in walled towns naturally get nervous when it comes to any intimation of their vulnerability as through a siege, so

obviously Ezekiel had put them on edge. If his prophesying won't convert them, surely an invasion would do the trick.

In vs. 10 the Lord tells Ezekiel what he is to say to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, again that "rebellious house," many of whom already were gathering outside his door waiting for him to make his way to the wall. If they or at least a few of them realized their rebellious nature, there just might be some hope. However, prospects for that, already dim, now have disappeared. What Ezekiel is about to say pertains more specifically to the prince in Jerusalem commonly accepted as King Zedekiah; included, of course, is the house of Israel, he being its head. The Hebrew text reads for "who are in it" "in the midst (*betok*, cf. vs. 1) of them." As for the king, most likely he didn't go out to watch Ezekiel pass through the wall. That would have meant conceding to the prophet as well as sending shivers throughout the population. Nevertheless, he must have sent out spies in order to report back to him.

Ezekiel is a sign or *mopheth* (cf. vs. 6) for Israel as well as for King Zedekiah which he states clearly as the city's future going into exile which also means captivity, *shevy*. "And the women shall go into captivity" [30.17]. Then he continues with mention of King Zedekiah though not by name, but everyone knows whom he is talking about. However, the king is destined to be captured and led off to Babylon which he won't see because as punishment he will be blinded. In addition to this the Lord will scatter to the four winds Zedekiah's entourage, *zarah* (cf. 5.12) being the verb.

Despite this terrible fate in store for Jerusalem's elite, the Lord adds it's for them to realize that he is the Lord, that all-important *yadah* which transcends everything else. As for *zarah*, a comparable verb in vs. 15 is *puts* (cf. 11.17) or disperse with respect to these officials among nations and thus effectively lost forever. Nevertheless, the Lord decides to leave a few survivors behind, that is, to escape the sword, famine and pestilence, the last two being a result of Jerusalem's destruction. The identity or number of such persons isn't given which is incidental. What counts is that they will confess or *saphar* their abominations (*tohevah*, cf. 11.18) among the nations and know (*yadah* again) that God is the Lord. The verb *saphar* (cf. 9.3 but not noted there) fundamentally means to inscribe or write down implying that these survivors will not only speak of the evil they had done but will produce an enduring written record of their misdeeds. If this comes off right, the nations to which the survivors had come will be converted and set an example for the native inhabitants of both Jerusalem and Israel.

In vs. 17 the *davar* of the Lord comes again to Ezekiel or later in the day, the last occurrence being quite recently or that morning (cf. vs. 8). Now Ezekiel is to eat and drink with quaking, trembling and fear or *rahash* (cf. 3.12), *ragzah* (only use of this term in the

Bible) and *d'agah* (cf. 4.16 but not noted there). With everyone surrounding him and waiting for his next move, Ezekiel is to say of Jerusalem's inhabitants that like him, they are to eat and drink with fearfulness and dismay, *d'agah* and *shimamon*, the latter being the only use of this term in the Bible. The reason? The land is destined to be stripped of virtually everything because of the violence found in it, *chamas* (cf. 8.17). It seems that their evil deeds will sink down and pollute the very soil.

Furthermore, other cities and towns will suffer the same fate as Jerusalem, that is, be laid waste, *charav* (cf. 6.6 but not noted there) meaning to be dried up. As for the land or rest of Israel, it will become a desolation or *shemamah* (cf. 6.14), a noun akin to *shimamon* of vs. 19. Yet again, this is done that the survivors...and they must be very few, given the devastation being described...are to know the Lord, *yadah*. Such is the price to be paid for this knowledge which is beyond anything Ezekiel or his fellow Israelites could conceive. Vs. 21 has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel the fourth time, here calling him "son of man" for the next-to-last time. He inquires about a proverb or *mashal* (cf. vs. 22) which concerns not just Israel but its land or '*adamah* (cf. 11.17). Reference to the days growing long intimates the extended period of the prophet Jeremiah's foretelling the fall of Jerusalem which had not happened. It was not uncommon for the people not to pay attention, something Ezekiel needed to heed with his own prophecy. As for this prophecy intimated in the proverb at hand, every vision doesn't come to fruition, *chazon* (cf. 7.26) being the noun.

In vs. 23 the Lord claims that he will do away with the proverb of vs. 22, the verb being *shavath* (cf. 7.24 but not noted there). He will effect it by bring about the long-neglected prophecy of Ezekiel's predecessor, Jeremiah. Now the days are near (*qarav*, cf. 9.1) of fulfilment are at hand along with the fulfilment of every vision or *chazon* as in the previous verse. The noun *davar*...word-as-expression...is used for fulfillment.

Vs. 24 continues with this long awaited fulfilment of a thirty year old prophecy, namely, that no longer will there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel, that is, *betok* (cf. vs. 10) or within its very center. That is, we have here a *chazon* which is *shav'*, a noun meaning vanity or consisting of lies or deception. "They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie" [13.6]. *Miqsam* means divination and has one other biblical reference, 13.7: "Have you not seen a delusive vision and uttered a lying divination?" In the verse at hand, such a *miqsam* is modified by the adjective *chalaq* meaning to be smooth. "A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works in ruin" [Prov 26.28].

Vs. 25 reveals the Lord's determination to bring about what he wishes against Israel as a rebellious house. That is to say, he will *davar* a *davar* which will come to fruition. Usually

something like this isn't said because a *davar* by its very nature is bound up with fulfilling what the Lord wishes. Thus the verb *hasah* (to do, cf. 11.20) is added more for emphasis though from the Lord's point of view, it doesn't have to be such. To delay this *davar* is simply impossible, *mashak* being the verb which implies a drawing out and is found next in vs. 28.

Vs. 26 has the final instance in this chapter of the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel followed by the equally last occasion of "son of man." When the Israelites heard the prophet's message (Jeremiah may be included as well) they claim that his vision or *chazon* (cf. vs. 23) won't come true for many days which goes against what the Lord says in vs. 25, "It (*davar*) will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will *davar* the *davar* and perform it." The same applies to his prophecies which by now they have come to scorn. Even when vs. 28 has the Lord saying through Ezekiel that his *davar* won't be delayed (*mashak*), the current *davar* which he will *davar* will come to pass, the verb *hasah* being used as in vs. 25. Thus towards the end of Chapter Twelve the Lord crowds in a whole bunch of *davar* in response to Israel having lost faith in his prophecies through Jeremiah and then Ezekiel.

"Son of man" references: 6

1) betok, 2) mery, 3) ra'ah, 6) mopheth, 10) betok, 11) mopheth, 14) zarah, 15) puts, yadah, 16) saphar, tohevah, yadah, 18) rahash, ragzah, d'agah, 19) d'agah, shimamon, chamas, 20) charav, shemamah, yadah, 22) mashal, 'adamah, chazon, 23) shavath, qarav, chazon, 24) betok, chazon, shav', miqsam, chalaq, 25) hasah, mashak, 26) chazon, 28) mashak

Chapter Thirteen

1) The word of the Lord came to me: 2) "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, prophesy and say to those who prophesy out of their own minds: 'Hear the word of the Lord!' 3) Thus says the Lord God, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4) Your prophets have been like foxes among ruins, O Israel. 5) You have not gone up into the breaches or built up a wall for the house of Israel that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord. 6) They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie; they say, 'Says the Lord,' when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. 7) Have you not seen a delusive vision and uttered a lying divination whenever you have said, 'Says the Lord,' although I have not spoken?" 8) Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Because you have uttered delusions and seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you, says the Lord God. 9) My hand will be against the prophets who see delusive visions and who give lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord God. 10) Because, yea, because they have misled my people, saying, 'Peace,' when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, these

prophets daub it with whitewash; 11) say to those who daub it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind break out; 12) and when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, 'Where is the daubing with which you daubed it?' 13) Therefore thus says the Lord God: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath; and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger and great hailstones in wrath to destroy it. 14) And I will break down the wall that you have daubed with whitewash and bring it down to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it; and you shall know that I am the Lord. 15) Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have daubed it with whitewash; and I will say to you, The wall is no more nor those who daubed it, 16) the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her when there was no peace, says the Lord God. 17) "And you, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own minds; prophesy against them 18) and say, Thus says the Lord God: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature in the hunt for souls! Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people and keep other souls alive for your profit? 19) You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death persons who should not die and keeping alive persons who should not live by your lies to my people who listen to lies. 20) "Wherefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls that you hunt go free like birds. 21) Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey; and you shall know that I am the Lord. 22) Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened him, and you have encouraged the wicked that he should not turn from his wicked way to save his life; 23) therefore you shall no more see delusive visions nor practice divination; I will deliver my people out of your hand. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* as “and,” not translated in the **RSV**. It’s associated with the ninth reference to the words “the *davar* of the Lord came to me,” the last being in 12.26, and the current one with “son of man.” The *davar* at hand concerns prophesying (*nava’*, cf. 11.4) against (*el-*, literally as ‘to’) Israel’s prophets who are in exile in Babylon. Next the English reads “prophesy” whereas the Hebrew has “who prophesy,” this phrase occurring a second time but with the words “out of their minds” where *lev* is used, most commonly as heart (cf. 11.19). In this instance *lev* has a negative sense, that these unnamed prophets (and their number isn’t given) are fabricating their own prophecies to the detriment of their fellow Israelites. One can just imagine them gathered secretly, perhaps at night, figuring out how to deceive their people, oblivious of the harm they’re causing. This makes Ezekiel’s exclamation to them as to hearing the *davar* of the Lord all the more urgent. It seems that the so-called prophets have blocked their ears to be receptive to this hearing. Given Ezekiel’s experience thus far, it seems highly unlikely they will listen. Still, he remains true to his calling, biting his lips, if you will, as he continues with this *davar*.

Without missing a beat, Ezekiel proceeds in vs. 2 with his *davar* put familiarly as “Thus says (*amar*) the Lord,” this following right on the heels of “Hear the *davar* of the Lord.” The prophets are called out for what they are, speaking from their *lev*, foolish or *naval*, also implying wickedness as well as impiety. “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”” [Ps 14.1]. Such foolishness results from following their own spirit or *ruach* (cf. 11.24), this being similar but differing from *lev* just mentioned. The former is more dynamic by reason of being associated with the in and out of breathing whereas the latter is located deep within a person and protected by muscle. One could say that *lev* gives birth to *ruach*, that in turn, nourishing its source. In the verse at hand, Ezekiel exclaims that the false prophets have seen nothing, *nava*’, that is to say, the act of prophesying associated as with seeing instead of hearing. And it’s this hearing which makes a genuine prophet receptive to hearing the divine *davar*, not spewing forth one’s person visions.

In vs. 4 Ezekiel compares these prophets planning mischief detriment to foxes or *shuhal* which has five other biblical references, one of which is Sg 2.15: “Catch the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for your vineyards are in blossom.” Usually such animals are images of deception and stealth. Here they are true to that image by taking refuge among ruins, this word intimating, albeit vaguely, that Jerusalem is destined to fall at some future date even though the prophesy is in Babylon. The false prophesy at such a great distance from Jerusalem gives those uttering their predictions a certain safety and cushion, if you will. No one can prove or disprove what they are uttering.

So while the inhabitants are being slain and others led off into captivity, these foxes will have ensconced themselves safely among the collapsed city walls and come out once the destruction has been wrought. Not only this, but the false prophets failed to repair any breeches or build up the city walls in order to withstand any further attack. Thus the in the end they behave in a cowardly fashion. However, their true nature will be revealed “in the day of the Lord” [vs. 6], a day to which they are completely blind.

Vs. 6 speaks of the falsehood and divination consisting of lies which these prophets pass off in imitation, if you will, of Ezekiel when they proclaim “Thus says the Lord,” *na’am* being the verb (cf. 5.28 but not noted there). Almost always *na’am* is used with respect to a divine communication as through a prophet, but in the case at hand, it lacks validity. So while they utter this *na’am*, in truth they have no expectation (*yachal*) of the Lord fulfilling it. For another sense of this verb, cf. Ps 33.22: “Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us even as we hope in you.” That which is the object of this verb is *davar* which applies to the false prophets.

As for the falsehood and divination involved, the first word consists of two in the Hebrew, *chazah* (to see in the sense of behold; cf. 12.27 but not noted there) and *shav’* (wickedness

or iniquity, cf. 12.24). As for the verb *divined*, it's the noun *qesem* with *kazav*, the former found next in vs. 23 and the latter in vs. 7. For a lie to be divined suggests something both fabricated and summoned from the underworld, this hybrid partaking neither of the truth nor fully a lie. In the situation at hand, the false prophets use this to their advantage to deceive a confused and frightened people.

This first part of Chapter Thirteen consisting of “Thus says the Lord” concludes with a rhetorical question in vs. 7 intended as both a warning and confrontation. That is to say, the false prophets have seen a vision which is delusive, *machazeh* and *shav'* (cf. vs. 6). The verb *chazah* as in vs. 6, *machazeh* being derived from it with two other biblical references, Gen 15.1 and Num 24.4, the former being cited here: “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.” As expected, this question gets no response nor does the Lord expect one.

The Lord continues uncovering the deceitfulness of the false prophets in vs. 8 with the second of five “Thus says the Lord” utterances. So if this is number two in a chapter of twenty-three verses, it's quite important. These people have uttered both delusions and have seen lies, *davar* being used which gives their perversity more weight, if you will, in the negative sense. *Shav'* is the noun for delusions just mentioned and will make its appearance several more times in the next few verses. As for lies, the noun is *kazav* with the verb *chazah*, both as in vs. 6. So once the Lord brings this to their attention, he uses the exclamation *hineh* (cf. 11.1) or behold coupled with *laken*, therefore...“therefore behold.” Next follows the succinct statement that the Lord is against these false prophets, the preposition *'el-* being used, literally as “to” which can be indicative of pushing against them.

Vs. 9 forms part of the preceding verse, that is, one sentence where the Lord brings his hand literally to (*'el-* once again) the prophets with the delusive visions and lying divinations, *machazeh* and *shav'* (cf. vs. 7). The image is one of a huge hand pressing no so much down upon but up against, as to push away. In other words, the Lord is shoving these so-called prophets away from having any council with his people, *sod* fundamentally meaning a couch or cushion and hence a sitting together. “The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him” [Ps 25.14]. Thus *sod* implies something intimate and confidential among those participating in such council.

The Lord's hand will push these prophets out from the register of Israel as well as not allow them to return there, the verb *kataw* as to write and the noun derived from it, *ketav*. A reference for the latter is 1Chron 28.19: “All this he made clear by the writing from the hand of the Lord concerning it, all the work to be done according to the plan.” Thus not to be registered...written...means to be blotted out of memory and inheritance. Such writing

most likely was done on a scroll though it could have been on stone and set up as a kind of memorial to caution future generations. Regardless, to be treated such was akin to a death sentence. After this thorough condemnation, the combined verses of 8 and 9 end with the familiar “you shall know (*yadah*, cf. 12.20) that I am the Lord God.” If these false prophets chose to know the Lord, what was just recounted never would have happened.

Vs. 10 opens with *yahan hoveyhan* rendered by the RSV as “Because, yea” and literally reads “because in because” pretty much for emphasis which again applies to a ringing condemnation of the false prophets. Here they’re accused of misleading the people, their very own flesh and blood, *tahah* being the only use of this verb in the Bible which implies being seduced. Such seduction consists of proclaiming *shalom* when it doesn’t exist; most likely the people realize this but in their desperation are willing to be deceived. After all, the false prophets have been active for some time and by now have gathered supporters to their ignoble cause. A chief way of bringing about this *tahah* is by daubing a newly built wall with whitewash which if applied in a physical sense would mean Jerusalem. This forms the subject of quite a few verses in this chapter, that is, through vs. 16. However, mention of the mere term “whitewash” evokes trying to cover something which eventually will be revealed and broken down. Regardless, Ezekiel is warning Israel not to listen to any proposal by these prophets.

Instead of invaders destroying the wall daubed by the false prophets, the Lord warns those who apply whitewash with its fall by rain, hailstones and a storm. Then upon its complete destruction the Lord puts in the mouths of those passing by a question as to where now is the daubing (cf. vs. 12). Although vs. 11 speaks of three natural weather events happening pretty much on their own, vs. 13 attributes them to the Lord in his intent to destroy the wall, *kalah* implying a full end (cf. 11.13).

The Lord continues to address the false prophets, telling them that they will perish, *kalah* again as in the previous verse suggesting that both they and their creation...their daubing...will be wiped out. It seems, however, that the wall built by the people is fine; trouble emerges when the false prophets put their handiwork to it which corrupts everything. However, by now, the wall and whitewash are pretty much synonymous as a target of the Lord’s wrath, this being the third mention of *kalah*. In the final analysis such *kalah* of the wall, false prophets and the Lord combine to effect a truly lethal blow to any self-made plans at restoring Jerusalem, seeing that city far off from Babylon in a false vision of peace or *shalom* mentioned in vs. 16.

The conjunctive beginning vs. 17 indicates a shift of attention from the Lord concerning the false prophets to Ezekiel who had been privy to all this. Once more he finds himself at the center of attention which, if asked, he would rather not be. He is to set his face against

(*sum* as in 6.1 with the preposition ‘*el-*), literally as “to the daughters of your people,” this association making it all the more personal and therefore difficult by the permanence intimated by the verb *sum*. As for the daughters engaged in prophesying, they could be their wives, concubines or associates as recounted in vs. 18. And as for the verb *nava’* (cf. vs. 1), it’s done literally “upon” them, *hal-* which can be seen in conjunction with the ‘*el-* or “to” of vs. 18, “against them.”

In vs. 18 the Lord tells Ezekiel after he is to prophesy “to say” (‘*amar*) or to express his prophesy, ‘*amar* taken as a spelling out of what will be the fate of these daughters as false prophets. These have sewn magic bands upon all wrists, “all” suggesting every Israelite where he or she liked it or not. *Taphar* is the verb at hand and has three other biblical references, one of which is Gen 3.7: “And they (the first man and first woman) sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.” As for the magic bands, *kesatoth* is the noun meaning pillows. It has one other biblical reference in vs. 20, the nature of which is not specified but surely associated with black magic. The daughters also are engaged in fashioning veils to put over the heads of statues, *mispachoth* with one other biblical reference, vs. 1. Such practices have the intent of hunting down souls, *nephesh* found last in 7.19 but not noted there.

The idea laying behind what was just described seems intended to mesmerize unsuspecting victims and bring them away from worship of the Lord. That’s what vs. 19 calls the practice of profanation, *chalal* being the verb (cf. 7.22) which is done for a meager price, that is, barley and bread. And so by their dark arts the daughters put to death those who should remain alive and visa versa by propagating lies or *kazav* (cf. vs. 8). This and the remaining verses of the chapter concerning the daughters is reminiscent of the foolish woman in Proverbs Chapter Nine, the opposite of wisdom.

Despite the deceitful and seductive nature of the daughters just described, from vs. 20 onward we have the Lord stepping in where he takes matters into his own hands. He begins by tearing off those magic bands of vs. 18 which are associated with hunting souls. These bands might be used as a kind of bait to attract unwitting suspects like birds; the same applies to their veils, the same word in vs. 18 which the women put over the heads of statues. While such practices are abominable and the Lord is quick to take action, nevertheless he shows mercy by the now familiar words “you shall know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 9) that I am the Lord.” This is the fourth and final instance in the current chapter, *yadah* being extended constantly and close to anyone disposed to receive it. The real tragedy consists in this divine closeness not being accepted.

In vs. 22 the Lord says that the daughters of Israel have disheartened the righteous in a false manner, *ka’av* being the verb meaning to have pain or to afflict. “And for the house

of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt” [28.24]. This verse forms one extended sentence where the Lord speaks decisively against these deceitful women. He begins by saying that they have attempted to cause harm to a righteous heart (*lev* and *tsadyq*, cf. vs. 2 and 3.20), that is, by means of lies or *sheqer*. This, of course, contrasts sharply with the Lord saying that he hadn’t acted in such a fashion. “Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and brings forth lies” [Ps 7.14].

Vs. 22 continues with the Lord saying that the daughters have encouraged those who are wicked, this being put literally as “strengthened the hands of the wicked,” *chazaq* (cf. 3.14). By doing so, they relinquish the chance for repentance and possibility of saving one’s life which is rendered literally as “not to turn from his evil way to life.” Failure results in the daughters no longer seeing their delusive visions and divinations as noted in vs. 9. Having said this, the Lord says curtly and decisively that he will deliver his people from the daughters...those who belong to Israel but no longer...*natsal* (cf. 7.19) meaning that he will snatch them away from their hands. Yet again he holds out the promise of *yadah* (cf. vs. 21) or knowing him which, given all the wickedness involved, is quite remarkable not only here but elsewhere in the Book of Ezekiel. If it weren’t for such saving words inserted at the right times and places, there would be no hope for Israel nor for anyone else involved.

“Son of man” references: 2

1) nava’, 2) lev, 3) naval, ruach, 4) shuhul, 6) na’am, yachal, chazah, shav’, kazav, 8) shav’, kazav, chazah, hineh, 9) machazeh, shav’, sod, katav, ketav, yadah, 10) tahah, shalom, 13) kalah, 14) kalah, 15) kalah, 16) shalom, 17) sum, 18) ‘amar, taphar, kesath, mispachoth, nephesh, 19) chalal, 21) yadah, 22) ka’av, lev, tsadyq, sheqer, chazaq, 23) natsal, yadah

Chapter Fourteen

1) Then came certain of the elders of Israel to me; and sat before me. 2) And the word of the Lord came to me: 3) "Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces; should I let myself be inquired of at all by them? 4) Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Any man of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and yet comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him myself because of the multitude of his idols 5) that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are all estranged from me through their idols. 6) "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7) For any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and

yet comes to a prophet to inquire for himself of me, I the Lord will answer him myself; 8) and I will set my face against that man, I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people; and you shall know that I am the Lord. 9) And if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10) And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike—11) that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me nor defile themselves any more with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, says the Lord God." 12) And the word of the Lord came to me: 13) "Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it and cut off from it man and beast, 14) even if these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God. 15) If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate so that no man may pass through because of the beasts; 16) even if these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; they alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate. 17) Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword go through the land; and I cut off from it man and beast; 18) though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered. 19) Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood to cut off from it man and beast; 20) even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. 21) "For thus says the Lord God: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four sore acts of judgment, sword, famine, evil beasts and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! 22) Yet if there should be left in it any survivors to lead out sons and daughters when they come forth to you, and you see their ways and their doings, you will be consoled for the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. 23) They will console you when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, says the Lord God."

The conjunctive *v-* opens this new chapter translated as “then” to show that the elders came to Ezekiel immediately after he had dealt with those who had practiced divinization. To his chagrin, these men are no better. By now he must have wondered privately whether there were any true worshipers of the Lord in Babylon. Has each and every Israelite simply transferred their abominations from one place to another? Surely Babylon with its multiplicity of gods was fertile ground for them to continue their wicked ways. As for the elders or representatives of the Israelites in Babylon, they not only came to him but sat before him, *lephanay*, literally as “to faces of me.” In other words, we have a confrontation for which Ezekiel must steel himself once again. So as soon as these elder took their places, much to Ezekiel’s relief, the *davar* of the Lord came to him. The shortness of vs. 2 is deliberate in order to make it clear that despite what amounts to the tediousness of dealing with abominable practices, the Lord remains in charge.

So while Ezekiel knew what was about to happen even before any elder opened his mouth, the divine *davar* came along, inserted itself into his life and told the prophet that these men have placed their idols within their hearts. Note two uses of “their” with respect to idols and hearts which makes the situation doubly wicked in the Lord’s eyes. A lot is crammed into these words. The verb is *halah* meaning to go up, to ascend followed by the preposition *hal-* or “upon” with respect to *lev* (cf. 13.22) or hearts—“upon their hearts”—a double upon, if you will. As for idols, the noun is *gilulyim* which applies to anything rolled and according to a footnote in the RSV, pertains to dung balls. It’s found thirty-nine times in Ezekiel compared with nine other biblical references according to a note concerning 8.10. And so the prophet is saying that the elders have taken dung balls into...upon...their hearts where they cause a stench for all who come into contact with them.

Furthermore, the elders have set up their iniquity or *havon* (cf. 9.9) as a stumbling block, *mikshul* (cf. 3.20). Not only this, but they have placed it deliberately “opposite their faces” or right smack in front of them, an act of defiance against the Lord. No small wonder that Ezekiel asks the Lord whether they should question him, *darash* being the verb which fundamentally means to dread or to inquire. Just like the verse at hand, 20.1 reads “Certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord and sat before me.”

In vs. 4 (it continues as one extended sentence into vs. 5) the Lord bids Ezekiel first to speak and then say to these elders, that is, *davar* followed by ‘*amar*. In other words, he wants to make sure this *davar* sinks into them. Both are followed by a second ‘*amar*, “Thus says the Lord.” The object of this address is each and every member of Israel who bears that *gilulyim*...idol-as-dung...within his heart and sets a stumbling block or *mikshul* of iniquity (*havon*) before his face. All three words are noted in vs. 4. The verb *sum* (cf. 13.17) as to set with regard to the stumbling block suggests planning ahead to set it up almost as a monument of shame not just for Ezekiel to behold but for everyone else.

What was just described is done out of a certain deliberate spite, that is, with the intent of going to a prophet. Such a person may be allied with the Lord and affiliated with Ezekiel though “prophet” could be applied loosely to someone faithful to the Lord. Chances are he is in a leadership or counseling role among the Israelites in exile in Babylon, not one of the elders who approached Ezekiel. Much to the surprise of the one with the idol-as-dung and stumbling block set up in his heart, the Lord will step into the prophet’s place and answer him, *hanah* (cf. vs. 7) which has the preposition *l-*, “answer to” him.” What rouses the Lord to take such direct action is that the multitude of idols or *gilulyim*, given their association with dung (and supposedly that’s human), was especially offensive.

Vs. 5 shows the Lord’s real intent, that is, to lay hold of the hearts (*lev*, cf. vs. 3) belonging to the house of Israel, house (*bayth*) here as noted in 10.3 implying a domestic element,

something homey. The verb *taphas* means not just grasping but taking possession of. “So the sword is given to be polished, that it may be handled” [21.11]. The verse at hand reads literally as “to grasp the house of Israel in their hearts” making the former the direct object of *taphas* with the latter as the real aim. Thus the Lord is attempting to come to grips with the nation of Israel in its Babylonian exile because it has become estranged, *nazar* meaning to separate or to abstain. Once again the disgusting smell, if you will, of the idols or *gilulym* is what the Lord wishes to get rid of. “Tell Aaron and his sons to keep away from the holy things of the people of Israel which they dedicate to me so that they may not profane my holy name” [Lev 2.2].

Vs. 6 continues with the Lord speaking through Ezekiel as he has been doing thus far. When the prophet hears the Lord sometimes speaking in an extended fashion, he doesn’t memorize these words...these *davar*...because they are inserted within him, giving them a life of their own. For the premier example of this extended speaking, refer to Moses on Mount Sinai, Chapters twenty-five through thirty-one. So when those hear Ezekiel as in the verse at hand, they receive the extended *davar* in the same fashion as he did, hence the meaning of “Thus says the Lord.”

Vs. 6 contains three appeals to the house of Israel: repent, turn away from idols and turn away from abominations where the verb *shuv* is used in each instance. The second has the combined preposition *mehal* or literally “from upon” with respect to *gilulym* and the third concerns *tohevah* (cf. 12.16).

In vs. 7 the Lord addresses two categories of people living together, namely, the house (domicile, if you will) of Israel and strangers sojourning within this house. *Ger* means stranger or foreigner whose verbal root *gur* is used here, both being found in 47.22: “You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you.” Despite the difference between both groups, they are one in the negative sense of inserting these idols/dung into their hearts and a stumbling block of iniquity first mentioned in vs. 3. Although both may approach a prophet as noted in vs. 4 and possibly with the intent to deceive him and therefore those associated with him, the Lord himself will answer in his place, something the two hadn’t anticipated.

Vs. 8 flows from the previous verse as one sentence, the two being joined by the conjunctive *v-*. It shows the immediate action taken by the Lord where he will set his face against “that man,” the phrase referring to the two categories of Israelite and foreigner, the two being as one. The text reading bluntly and literally as “I will give my face in (*b-*) that man.” Also the Lord will make this man a sign and byword or ‘*oth* and *mashal* (cf. 4.3 and 12.22 respectively) after which he will cut him off, *karath* being the verb found next in vs. 13. This cutting off gets to the root of the problem, namely, that the man (again, singular) will be removed from the midst (*min* prefaced to *betok*, cf. 12.24) not of the

people of Israel but from “my people.” Despite this eradication in the literal sense of the word, we have the familiar and comforting refrain that the Lord is doing it that his people may know or *yadah* (cf. 13.23) him.

The conjunctive opening vs. 9 intimates that the Lord is quick to deal with any prophet who had been deceived, *patah* meaning to be open and subject to persuasion. “O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived” [Jer 20.7]. In fact the Lord himself is responsible for this. Part of the reason may be that such a person may have started off with good intentions but later came under the spell of those tied up with idols and have a stumbling block in their hearts. Also he was subject to the numerous exotic deities in Babylon who fostered any abominable practice by the Israelites. Thus the Lord had to put a stop to all this and do so at once. Not only will the Lord destroy him (*shamad* connoting to lay waste), he will do so from the midst of his people, the preposition *min* prefaced to *betok*. In other words, he will suffer the same fate as those described in vs. 8. As for the verb, cf. 25.7: “I will destroy you. Then you will know that I am the Lord.” As for the Lord’s hand, it’s reach extends a long way: from the Lord to *betok* or the midst of the people just mentioned. As for the deception involved, it pertains to the prophet *davar* a *davar*, speaking a word which ultimately turns out to be a lie which is in conformity with those who had influenced him.

Vs. 10 uses the third person plural, “they” referring to both the prophet and the one who has approached him with the intent of deceiving him as well as a larger plot to do the same to Israel in its exile in Babylon. A single punishment or *havon* (cf. vs. 4) is meted out to both, the person influencing the prophet described as an inquirer by the verb *darash* (cf. vs. 3). Vs. 11 continues as an extended sentence, that is, that the house...the domicile...of Israel no longer goes astray from the Lord, *tahah* (cf. 13.10). Similarly, this house no longer can defile itself with their personal transgression, the verb *tame’* (cf. 9.7) with the noun *peshah*, the latter connoting a falling or breaking away. “None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him” [18.22]. Again, this is followed by the reassuring words of the Lord who says that he will be their God, the verb *na’am* (cf. 13.6) which can be taken more as an affirmation.

Vs. 12 again has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel, the conjunctive *v-* showing the close connection between the last intervention and the current utterance and addressing the prophet as “son of man.” Actually vss. 12-20 center upon three notables from Israel’s history, Noah, Daniel and Job though most likely Job is not a historical character. With regard to Daniel, a footnote in the NIV says, “another Daniel may be referred to.” Regardless, all three are within the context of the question of righteousness or *tsedaqah* (cf. 3.20). As for Noah, he had built the ark and was instrumental in repopulating the earth, human and otherwise, after the great flood. As for Daniel...let’s take the biblical

one...he had been taken captive in Babylon and had a whole series of prophetic visions with respect to the end of times. By reason of this, he was particularly dear to the current generation of exiles in Babylon. Finally Job was renowned for patient endurance of calamities. In the end, his fortunes were restored more abundantly than before, this coming after an extended monologue by the Lord as to his sovereignty. That's something the Israelites could learn from given the almost incessant bombardment by the Lord as to their abominations.

So in light of these three prophetic figures...and surely Ezekiel could identify with each of them in different ways, the following four theoretical settings (theoretical yet with direct practical results) may be taken as follows:

1) Vs. 13 speaks of a land (*'erets*, cf. 7.2)—not the land which implies Israel—but all nations under heaven which recognize the Lord, *'erets* itself connoting this. Because such a land/people has a certain awareness of divine sovereignty as opposed to a multitude of gods, it knows when its members sin and therefore act faithlessly, the verbs being *chata'* and *mahal*. As for the former, cf. 28.16: "In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned." As for the latter, it's used with a noun of the same spelling and reads literally as "to offend offense." Another reference to the verb is 20.27: "In this again your fathers blasphemed me by dealing treacherously with me." As for the noun, cf. 15.8: "And I will make the land desolate because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord."

Also with respect to this land/people the Lord can cause a famine affecting man and beast.

So as vs. 14 posits, if Noah, Daniel and Job were present in this *'erets*, *betok* (cf. vs. 9) or in its midst, they'd be powerless to deliver it and lucky to escape with their own lives, *natsal* (cf. 13.23) being the verb meaning to snatch and used with *nephesh* (cf. 13.18) which often translates as soul. As for these three men, we can substitute or run in parallel with them what they represent, a new creation, prophecy of end times and patience. The righteousness or *tsedaqah* noted a few paragraphs above which belongs to them would be instrumental in this *natsal* or snatching.

2) Vs. 15 mentions wild beasts, *rah* (cf. 11.2) being the adjective which fundamentally means evil yet given the context not far off the mark, these passing through the *'erets* and making it desolate or *shakal* or to be bereaved, childless. It's found in 5.17 but not noted there. If Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst (*betok*, cf. vs. 14), they would be unable to effect a snatching or *natsal* (cf. vs. 14) with respect to sons and daughters. Such beasts, being "evil," would make the land desolate, *shemamah* being a noun (cf. 12.20).

3) In vs. 17 the Lord would bring a sword upon (*hal-*) the land which then would go through it, *b-* or literally “in the land” to cut off (*karath*, cf. vs. 8) from it man and beast. Again, Noah, Daniel and Job wouldn’t be able to effect a *natsal* with regard to sons and daughters. Only the three would be delivered, *natsal*.

4) Finally in vs. 19 we have a pestilence or *dever* (cf. 6.11) which is of the same verbal root as *davar*. It’s coupled with divine wrath or *chemah* (cf. 9.8) accompanied by blood meaning bloodshed. Noah, Daniel and Job would be helpless to effect *natsal* with regard to son and daughter, being only to *natsal* their own lives (*nephesh*, cf. vs. 14). As for mention of son and daughter, only #1 with respect to vss. 13 and 14 lack their mention.

After using three notables from Israel’s history as examples, in vs. 21 the Lord speaks (“Thus says the Lord” mentioned last in vs. 6) with a rhetorical question regarding the just detailed four sore acts of judgment, *shephatym* (cf. 5.10) modified by *rah* or evil (cf. vs. 15). This verse is applicable to Jerusalem concerning survivors or *palyt* (cf. 6.9), those who have escaped from the destruction wrought there. Once brought to Babylon and having joined the exiles already there (this implies a twofold destruction of Jerusalem), those already in exile will be consoled for the evil God has brought upon the capitol city. *Nacham* is the verb which, given its alternate meaning of to lament or to groan, is apt in this context. “When Pharaoh sees them, he will comfort himself for all his multitude” [32.31].

The *nacham* given by the Lord to the survivors will be transferred to those in Babylon once they see their ways and doings (*derek* (cf. 11.21) and *halylah*, the latter suggesting an accomplishment and is found next in 20.43 along with *derek*: “And there you remember your ways and all the doings with which you have polluted yourselves.” And so Chapter Fourteen concludes with the Lord saying that he has brought calamity upon Jerusalem as depicted within the modes of life represented by the three notables of Noah, Daniel and Job, men who were barely able to save themselves compared with that city’s inhabitants.

With regard to the plural “you” in vs. 23, reference is made to those already in exile in Babylon who will be consoled. So when they see the wickedness of those brought to Babylon from Jerusalem, they will know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 8) that the Lord had acted justly and not without cause, *chinam* (cf. 6.10) which also means in vain. As for those already in Babylon, they can’t help but have a certain dread that the multiplicity of gods there will foster their inclinations to abominable practices. Nevertheless, throughout all this both are Israelites and to both is held out the ultimate possibility of knowing...*yadah*...the Lord.

“Son of man” references: 2

3) halah, lev, gilulyim, havon, mikshul, darash, 4) ‘amar, ilulyim, mikshul, havon, sum, hanah, 5) lev, bayth, taphas, nazar, gilulyim, 6) shuv, gilulyim, tohevah, 7) ger, gur, 8) ‘oth, mashal, karath, betok, yadah, 9) patah, shamad, betok, 10) havon, darash, 11) tahah, tame’, peshah, na’am, 13) ‘erets, chata’, mahal, 14) betok, natsal, nephesh, tsedaqah, 15) rah, shakal, 16) betok, natsal, shemamah, 17) karath, natsal, 19) dever, chemah, 20) nephesh, 21) shephatym, rah, palyt, 22) nacham, 23) derek, halylah, yadah, chinam

Chapter Fifteen

1) And the word of the Lord came to me: 2) "Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest? 3) Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do men take a peg from it to hang any vessel on? 4) Lo, it is given to the fire for fuel; when the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? 5) Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing; how much less when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything! 6) Therefore thus says the Lord God: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7) And I will set my face against them; though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them; and you will know that I am the Lord, when I set my face against them. 8) And I will make the land desolate because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord God."

The conjunctive *v-* begins this shortest chapter in the Book of Ezekiel¹, “*davar* of the Lord” having occurred last in 14.12. As in other instances, the verb “came” is lacking; instead the verb “to be” (“was”) is preferred. Chapter Fifteen comprises an allegory of a vine or *gephen* which automatically means wine and is found next in vs. 6. Actually *gephen* is used with *hets* or wood, and in the first of four rhetorical sentences to Ezekiel it’s compared to *hets* of the forest. With regard to this *hets*, the RSV notes that “vines are common figures but the reference to the wood is unique.”

Vs. 6 gets to the heart of the matter as introduced by “Thus says (‘*amar*) the Lord God” implying that while the rhetorical questions are addressed to Ezekiel, the Lord passes him over, if you will, in his eagerness to the heart of the matter. Already he has rummaged through the forest and picked out a particular wood of the vine, an interesting statement because we don’t associate vines as growing in such wild places. We tend to think of them as being cultivated with great care, and the vines at hand seem to have grown wild or never had been cultivated. If the latter, that means their wine is bitter, this getting closer to what’s bothering the Lord.

1 Compare with the chapter right after it (Chapter Sixteen), the longest in the Book of Ezekiel, comprised of sixty-three verses. Among those verses the phrase “son of man” occurs only once.

As Ezekiel is listening to the Lord expound upon what appears to be an uncultivated vine, right away he intuitively where he's going with this. It becomes crystal clear when the Lord says he will give up (*natan*, cf. 7.8) the inhabitants of Jerusalem as fuel for fire or '*aklah* which derives from a verbal root meaning to eat. "You shall be fuel for the fire" [21.32].

And so while Jerusalem is set ablaze, vs. 7 doesn't say outright that the Lord will watch though this is implicit. What is said, though, is that he will set his face against them, the verb *natan* (to give) with his face directed literally "in (*b-*) them." Then and only then the second person plural or "you" will know (*yadah*, cf. 14.23) that "I am the Lord." Such knowing is conditioned compared to other examples of knowing, that is, by setting his face (*b-*) in them. The "you" seems to be both the inhabitants of Jerusalem as well as other Israelites. Note that the verb in this second act of setting is *sum* (to set as to place) compared with *natan* (to give) in vs. 7. In other words, it's a more permanent, unchanging type of setting.

This chapter concludes with an extension of the divine devastation wrought against Jerusalem, that is, by making the land ('*erets*, cf. 14.13) desolate, *shemamah* (cf. 14.16) being a noun. Because the Lord is addressing Ezekiel, quickly he realizes that such burning of the capitol and desolation of the land is a result of the Israelites' faithlessness. This is expressed literally as "they offend an offense," the verb being *mahal* from which the noun of the same spelling is derived. This is expressed as in 14.13.

"Son of man" references: 1

1) *gephen*, *hets*, 6) *natan*, '*aklah*, 7) *natan*, *yadah*, *sum*, 8) '*erets*, *mahal*