

Expansions on the Book of Ezekiel

Introduction

This document follows the same pattern as other “expansion” texts posted on the Lectio Divina Homepage relative to books of the Bible. That is to say, it presents the Book of Ezekiel to be read in accord with the practice of *lectio divina* whose single purpose is to dispose the reader to being in God’s presence. The word “expansion” means that the text is fleshed out with a certain liberty while at the same time remaining consistent with the original Hebrew, a practice not unlike you’d find in a modern day yeshiva. There’s not attempt to provide information about the text nor its author; that can be garnered elsewhere from reliable sources. Besides, inserting such information can be a distraction from reading Ezekiel in the spirit of *lectio divina*.

One requirement for *lectio divina* as applied to the Book of Ezekiel is demanded, if you will. That consists in taking as much time as possible to ponder and to linger over a single word, phrase or sentence. In other words, the whole idea of a time limit or covering material is to be dismissed. Obviously this runs counter to the conventional way we read and process information. Adopting this slow-motion practice isn’t as easy as it seems, but even a small exposure to it makes you sensitive to the Book of Ezekiel as an aide to prayer. Apart from this approach, the text at hand has nothing to offer, really. As for reading it, anyone will discover quickly that it’s rather chopped up, not coherent as one would read a conventional text. That’s because the reflections are governed by the practice of *lectio divina*. A given section can stand alone or be connected with other, depending upon how one prays through the text, if you will.

All biblical excerpts are from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha or RSV** (New York, 1973). Also consulted is the **NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, MI, 1984). References to transliterated Hebrew words in the Book of Ezekiel are italicized. As the text proceeds, citations of a given word may become more frequent. They are noted with regard to their position within the text for easier reference as well as grouped together at the end of each chapter.

Along with this grouping of transliterated words at the end of each chapter are four types of references which help to give shape and guide us through the text, especially difficult sections as lamentations, curses and lengthy lists or the like. Also they are vital for showing how and when the Lord communicates both through and with his prophet Ezekiel. To identify them more clearly, all four are in bold within the biblical texts:

1) “**Son of man.**”

2) “***Davar* of the Lord**” (word, expression; same spelling for verb and noun).

Davar is left untranslated in order to communicate this important fact. Interestingly, “*davar* of the Lord” has no references from Chapter Thirty-Nine onward to the end or Chapter Forty-Eight.

3) “Thus says the Lord (God).” This phrase can be put in several various ways. However, the current one will be focused upon.

4) “Know (*yadah*) the Lord” or the like with regard to direct *yadah*, the verb implying intimate, personal knowledge.

Please keep in mind that Hebrew verbs come in different forms meaning that the next occurrence of a given verb with the same form is referred to even if a closer one of another form applies.

Also please note a few observations with regard to going through the Book of Ezekiel. Most of the time spent expanding upon the text was far from easy, let alone pleasurable. More specifically, you hit upon what seems an endless series of curses, laments and negative prophecies. By any standards their abundance makes for a challenging read. In fact it gets downright boring and tedious. You can only do so much with this which is why those section of the text—and they can be fairly extension at one swath—are rather condensed. In fact, you hit upon this quite early on after the famous divine chariot vision. It makes you wonder how the Lord can sustain his anger for so long and how long those on the receiving end can put up with it. Despite this difficulty you do hit upon nuggets of redeeming insight such as when the Lord laments that he’d stop all this woeful prophecy in exchange for Israel knowing him. You get the idea that while the Lord rants and raves, in the end he doesn’t want much from his people, just a simple acknowledgment from time to time. That’s both the glory and the tragedy of this text.

After some exposure to the Book of Ezekiel you start to rethink common elements of prayer or our relationship with God. Almost unconsciously we think of prayer as a practice where many a time we come up empty-handed. That is to say, we don’t feel his presence but are beset with a multitude of distractions and so forth. This can be discouraging as we go through the text with its endless condemnations of Israel. What makes this worse, if you will, is Israel being in exile in Babylon where you’d think at last the people would have awakened to their plight. But no. God keeps hammering them incessantly with reminders of their abominations, a word he’s keen to use.

All this can be depressing when reading the text superficially. However, the more we behold Israel’s infidelity chapter after unrelenting chapter the more she primes herself for being in God’s presence even if not conscious of the fact. It’s quite amazing how this is spread out before us. You come away with both a profound sense of personal unworthiness coupled with divine favor, a theme running relentlessly throughout the Book of Ezekiel, this favor being put in terms of knowing the Lord, *yadah* implying the most intimate way possible. It’s precisely for such a reason that this book can be of assistance for doing *lectio divina*.

Chapter One

1) In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2) On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), 3) the **word of the Lord** came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was upon him there. 4) As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north and a great cloud with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze. 5) And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the form of men, 6) but each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. 7) Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. 8) Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: 9) their wings touched one another; they went every one straight forward, without turning as they went. 10) As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back. 11) Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. 12) And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit would go they went without turning as they went. 13) In the midst of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14) And the living creatures darted to and fro like a flash of lightning. 15) Now as I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them. 16) As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of a chrysolite; and the four had the same likeness, their construction being as it were a wheel within a wheel. 17) When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went. 18) The four wheels had rims and they had spokes; and their rims were full of eyes round about. 19) And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. 20) Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21) When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 22) Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads. 23) And under the firmament their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each creature had two wings covering its body. 24) And when they went, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of a host; when they stood still, they let down their wings. 25) And there came a voice from above the firmament over their heads; when they stood still, they let down their wings. 26) And above the firmament over their heads there was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. 27) And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. 28) Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.

The first words of this book present us with a time frame which seems straight forward, the fact of Israel's exile being presumed.¹ We begin with the thirtieth year followed a specific day and month most likely referring to Ezekiel's age when he embarked upon active priestly service. This is in accord with Num 4.2-3: "Take a census of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi...from thirty years old up to fifty years old, all who can enter the service, to do the work in the tent of meeting." So right off the bat we're struck by a certain personal touch as well as inference as to Ezekiel's status within the Israelite community exiled in Babylon.

Mention of the number thirty gives further assurance. Give that we're about to embark on a series of prophetic utterances, the implication of Ezekiel's age assures us that we're in the hands of well trained person coming on the scene later in life, the age thirty today being equivalent to middle age. Also we're assured that Ezekiel has had a lengthy time to prepare for his ministry and has been vetted thoroughly. This process took on greater importance with Israel living in a foreign land with no prospect of immediate return. In this instance anyone invested with the priesthood had to be more careful in preserving the nation's identity and culture. Even more important, he was not to succumb to the temptation of worshiping alien gods nor did he encourage others in his charge to follow such abominable practices. And so from what we gather, Ezekiel is new to the job, and what he has to offer may be greeted with a certain skepticism. As for his family background, nothing is said; the same applies to any spouse or children.

The specific time frame and place (the river Chebar) coupled with the first person singular or Ezekiel himself being the narrator gives the sense that we've hit upon a person engaged in something important, recognizes us and invites us into his life. The Hebrew text conveys this by the untranslated conjunction *v-*, usually rendered as "and," indicative of close connection with an action that went before it. We will encounter this conjunctive many times, especially as it begins many a chapter and has several renditions.

Because reference to Ezekiel's age infers that he's a fully sanctioned priest among (*betok*) exiles in Babylon and ministering to them. *Betok* means not just being with them but in their very middle, that he isn't above his fellow Israelites by reason of being a priest. Thus we can rely upon him, an assurance that proves to be very important, for Ezekiel begins his book with one of the oddest visions in the Bible apart from Daniel and the revelation offered by St. John. All three prove to be more dramatic compared with other prophets. Actually, Ezekiel's takes the cake as far as prophetic imagery goes, and we have to admire his courage for making it public. It had been building up a long time beforehand while in Babylon, and with the passage of time, felt a burning need to get it out of him. Such is the nature of the divine word or *davar* which is more inclusive

1A brief note with regard to the outlay of the Book of Ezekiel when it comes to oracles. The introductory notes in the RSV read "the oracles of warning (chaps 1-24) are to be dated before the fall of Jerusalem. The oracles of hope (chaps 33-48) belong after the fall of Jerusalem. The oracles against the foreign nations (chaps 25-32) belong to the middle period of Ezekiel's ministry."

than anything rendered in English. *Davar* is a living thing...a part of God...that takes up residence inside oneself and must come out, else one becomes ill and ultimately perishes.

So we come across Ezekiel by the shore of the river Chebar along with a bunch of Israelites perhaps washing clothes or hauling water. Then again, this scene coincides with the sentiment found in Ps 137.1: “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.” If that weren’t bad enough, the captives demanded that the Israelites play songs as noted in vs. 3. With this most likely in mind, at once the heavens were opened but only for Ezekiel. The other Israelites went about their business as usual although they did notice something like a trance had fallen upon their priest. They figure it’s best to leave him alone. Perhaps the Lord was speaking with him, and that he’d have a message of deliverance from their exile. Although the vision takes some unpacking, the passage of time is irrelevant. In fact, it could have lasted just a few seconds.

Vs. 1 has Ezekiel saying “I saw visions” (of God), the verb being *ra’ah* from which is derived the latter, *mar’ah*, here the act of seeing and what is seen being as one. “The spirit...brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem” [8.3]. And so this opening verse to the Book of Ezekiel gets right down to business, the vision and the seeing of it being enabled by reason of the heavens being opened. Again, those with Ezekiel didn’t behold this although they saw that the expression on his face had changed considerably.

Vs. 2 continues with a different time frame, fifth day of the month with regard to the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s exile. Actually his captivity turned out quite well for the Israelites, he being one of Judah’s last kings. The ruler of Babylon treated him with great kindness as the last few verses of Second Kings recounts. As for Ezekiel, this signals better treatment for his fellow Israelites and ultimately the possibility of return to their homeland. Perhaps the prophet knew Jehoiachin; if so, their acquaintance would forebode well for Israel even though this is the only reference to him in the book at hand. So while Ezekiel’s account gets off to a good start, what is to follow is a different story.

Vs.3 says that the *davar* of the Lord comes to Ezekiel who clearly is designated as a priest or *kohen*, this word occurring next in 7.26: “but the law perishes from the priests.” The *davar* comes to him not unlike the we come into the text as discussed above. No one present with Ezekiel could detect this coming since it was destined for him alone. Although the river Chebar is mentioned in vs. 1, it appears again along with land of the Chaldeans which makes the place very specific. Immediately after this coming or at least concomitant with it, the Lord’s hand is upon Ezekiel. Use of the noun “hand” suggests something heavy as well as protective, a place from which Ezekiel couldn’t escape but was frozen in place. As for the onlookers, they were completely unaware of it while to him it was as if he had vanished from their sight without leaving a trace. Ezekiel realized it would be useless to explain his vision to them right now. The appropriate time will, of course, come later.

Vs. 1 begins with a first person account, switches to a second person account in vss. 2-3, and returns to the first person in vs. 4. Being pressed but not crushed by the divine hand, Ezekiel has nothing else to do but to look when he sees a stormy wind coming toward him from the north. However, he has no fear being under the protection of this divine hand. That enable his vision to kick into high gear and continue for the rest of Chapter One. North or *tsaphon* (cf. 8.3) suggests a certain wildness and obscurity in keeping with both its verbal root and the vehement terminology at hand. Also north is the traditional birthplace of Canaanite deities.

Actually Ezekiel was concealed and could only catch glimpses of the storm's approach through the Lord's fingers. The phrase "stormy wind" [vs. 4] consists of two nouns, *ruach* and *seharah* reading literally "wind of tempest." The first means spirit as well as wind and the second, a storm whose verbal root means to shake violently. "And a stormy wind broke out" [13.11]. *Seharah* is the means by which the prophet Elijah ascended into heaven, that incident being familiar to Ezekiel. "Now when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind" [2Kg 2.1]. Would the Lord do the same with him? And if so, what about Israel left captive in Babylon?

In addition to the powerful wind we have four more elements: great cloud, brightness, fire and bronze. First Ezekiel sees the storm and then beholds it, *hineh* more an explicative indicating astonishment. The first (*hanan*, cf. vs. 28) is reminiscent of the divine presence which followed Israel throughout the Sinai wilderness after having departed Egypt. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way" [Ex 13.21]. However, the cloud at hand is portrayed as having brightness about it, this description coming second in the Hebrew text and preceded literally by "fire catching (infolding) itself," the common verb *laqach* (to take) being used. There comes to mind the flaming sword "which turned every way" [Gen 3.24] guarding entrance to Eden after the man had been drive out, only the verb is *haphak* which means to turn.

Accompanying this cloud is a brightness surrounding it, *nogah* suggestive of splendor and found next in vs. 14: "living creatures...like a flash of lightning." *Savyv* or round about is also similar to the way *laqach* is translated here as well as *haphak*. Finally we have bronze or *chashmal* which has two other biblical references, both in Ezekiel (vs. 27 and 8.2), it being with *hayn* which means eye and thus intimating not so much sight but a sparkle or twinkle in the eye.

Note that vs. 5 has the phrase "from the midst" (*mitok*) which also is found in vs. 4 with regard to the fire flashing forth continually. Although the creatures at hand are called living, the word "likeness" or *demuth* is used. Such *demuth* are endowed with a certain capacity of life not unlike the idea behind an icon. Thus you might say they have something of a soul. *Demuth* also means appearance or pattern and is found numerous times in Chapter One, the next being vs. 10. So if these are likenesses, that means someone must have fashioned them based upon animals which exist upon earth. Also the frequency of *demuth* suggests that Ezekiel constantly is attempting to come to grips with

a vision that's totally beyond his comprehension. Again, the only two guides at his disposal are the ark of the Lord and Solomon's temple which is mentioned in the next paragraph.

Note that vs. 5 in the **RSV** uses the verb "came" with regard to likenesses, a verb not in the Hebrew text. The number four suggests that the vision of Ezekiel is square in shape with the form (*demuth*) of men, again reminiscent of the ark the Lord which Moses commanded to be fashioned, here more specifically pertaining to the cherubim which protect it (cf. Ex 25.19+). The same applies to Solomon's temple (cf. 1Kg 6.23+). All in all despite what can be difficult to comprehend, the vision at hand can be taken as the ark of the Lord coming to the Israelites in their captivity in Babylon. Once there, it will lead them out. As far as the Israelites are concerned, they don't care what form the Lord takes as long as he releases them and brings them back home.

Thus we have *demuth* applied to four living creatures (identified in vs. 10) as well as to a human being. They are subdivided further in vs. 6 which continues as a part of vs. 5, that is, having four faces and four wings. Again, the notion of a square within a square, if you will. So this introduction of the importance of the number four is what Ezekiel is getting at in his vision. Actually it occurs thirteen times in Chapter One starting with the "four month" of vs. 1. Keep in mind that four equals both the four quadrants of north, south, east and west as well as the four elements comprising creation (earth, air, fire and water), it is a number with wide application. Along with association of the ark and Solomon's temple, the vision which Ezekiel is recounting can be taken as a movement of the divine into the human with the intent of divinizing the latter made all the more pertinent by reason of Israel being in exile.

Vs. 7 describes the legs of these four creatures with four faces and four wings. That is to say, their legs are straight or *yashar*, an adjective which also pertains to being righteous. "And under the firmament their wings were stretched out straight" [vs. 23]. In other words, there is no bending at the knee as for walking but forward advancement in almost goose-step fashion which shows both discipline and determination. These straight legs, if you will, rest upon soles which resemble those of a calf meaning that they are cloven. As Ps 29.6 infers, this gives them the ability to move swiftly. "He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox."

All in all, these legs from top to bottom sparkled not unlike bronze which is burnished, the verb *natsats* also meaning to glitter, this being the only occasion in the Bible. As for bronze, it's rendered by two words, *heyn* and *nechsheth*, which read literally as "eye of bronze." Not unlike *natsats* is the adjective *qalal* as burnished but with a deeper, richer glow and has one other biblical reference, Dan 10.6: "his (the man clothed in linen) arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze."

Vs. 8 speaks of what lays under the wings of these four creatures, namely, hands which are human with their faces and wings being introduced in the next verse as touching one another, *chavar* meaning to bind or to connect (cf. vs. 11). In this tightly bound union

the creatures went ahead neither veering to the left nor to the right. As for the direction, nothing is said since Ezekiel was too taken aback at the vision to really notice.

As for the likenesses of their faces or their *demuth* (cf. vs. 5), each creature had one of a man ('in front' as in the **RSV** isn't in the Hebrew), lion, ox and eagle, that is to say, right, left and back, the last not in the Hebrew text. Vs. 11 says that each creature had wings spread out above, *parad* also meaning to expand or to divide, this being the only reference in Ezekiel itself. "From these the coastland peoples spread" [Gen 10.5]. There are two other sets of wings, one touching those of its neighbors and the other covering their bodies.

Vs. 12 has these creatures functioning as one unit, the guiding principle being spirit or *ruach* (cf. vs. 12) which suffuses this vision but remains not visible. Again, they went straight forward and didn't turn which doesn't imply rigidity but fidelity to this *ruach*. Vs. 13 speaks of two images related to fire: 1) burning coals of fire, *gacheleth* which is found also in 10.2: "Fill your hands with burning coals from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city." 2) Torches which moved among the living creatures and from which issued flashes of lightning. These quick flashes made the four creatures dart back and forth, *ratsa'* being the only instance in the Bible.

In vs. 15 Ezekiel continues with the vision, the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now" which indicates a pause of sorts before he recounts looking at the living creatures with *hineh* or "behold" which isn't translated in the **RSV**. *Hineh* can represent that astonishment Ezekiel couldn't help but have as he continues describing the nature of his vision. Here it seems to give him a pause—a blinking of his eye, if you will—before he continues taking in this bizarre sight. Each creature had a wheel, '*ophan* being the first of six references in Chapter One followed by a good number in Chapter Ten. Immediately '*ophan* conjures up the image of a chariot, the most powerful and feared weapon of the day. Each of the four creatures has a wheel upon the earth (*ba'arets*, literally as 'in the earth') which is beside them. Instead of "each of the four of them" the Hebrew reads "of their faces."

Ezekiel next speaks of the appearance or *mar'eh* of these wheels, this word first found in vs. 5 with respect to the four creatures themselves. *Mar'eh* occurs some ten times in Chapter One indicating the existence of a difference between the vision in and by itself and Ezekiel's perception of it. Throughout it all, the prophet is fully conscious of the distinction. How could he not be? What he's beholding is unlike anything else seen by man except the physical representations of the ark and Solomon's temple. Those were images. What we have now is these images come alive.

The appearance of these four wheels were like the gleam of a chrysolite, a yellowish-green or brownish variety of olivine used as a gemstone. The Hebrew *tarshysh* also is the proper name for what's known as Tarshish, somewhere in the western Mediterranean and possibly Spain, the intended destination for the prophet Jonah. The word at hand is found five times in the Bible, the next reference being 10.9: "and the

appearance of the wheels was like sparkling chrysolite.” *Heyn* is a noun commonly translated as eye and is used for the adjective “sparkling,” reading literally as “the eye of chrysolite.”

With regard to the construction of each of the four wheels or ‘*ophan*, they are presented as “a wheel within (*betok*, cf. vs. 1) a wheel.” The image seems to be that of two wheels intersecting at right angles in order to move in all four (cardinal) directions, a symbol of full maneuverability of the divine within the temporal sphere. That’s why vs. 17 says the four creatures could move in any direction they pleased. Keep in mind, however, that it wasn’t up to these creatures to move on their own. Vs. 12 says that the *ruach* or spirit led the way after which and immediately so they proceeded.

Vs. 18 continues with the four wheels, that is, rim and spokes, the first term being *gav* which fundamentally means the back of anything and the second as *gavah* which the RSV says is “uncertain” but can refer to loftiness. “And their rims and their spokes and the wheels were full of eyes round about” [10.12]. Both seems to bear a connection between the wheels and creatures, the latter leading the way with the wheels going beside them. Vs. 19 spells out the motivating power more clearly referring to the spirit or *ruach* (cf. vs. 12) which resided in the wheels.

Vs. 22 shifts consideration of the all-important wheels to what was above the living creatures, a likeness (*demuth*, cf. vs. 9) of a firmament or *raqyah* (cf. vs. 23) which suggests something spread out. Immediately it’s reminiscent of Gen 1.6: “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” The firmament at hand, however, literally is as the eye (*heyn*, cf. vs. 16) of frost, *qerach* being the noun. “Thus I was; by day the head consumed me and the cold by night” [Gen 31.40]. The most accurate part of this description is that it intimates the cold of the night sky.

Vs. 23 speaks of what is below the living creatures, that is, two of the wings of the four creatures were stretched out straight with regard to each other, the adjective *yashar* being used as in vs. 7. *Yashar* doesn’t imply rigidity which can be fragile because of the movement involved; perhaps some of its alternate meaning can apply here and as noted regarding vs. 7, righteousness as reverence among all the creatures. The other two wings were used to cover the body chiefly out of veneration not unlike Isaiah’s vision in 6.2: “Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.”

Ezekiel is struck by the sound of these wings under the firmament which resembled many waters, *qol* also meaning voice and can imply a certain communication among the four creatures. Reference to water brings back the just noted *raqyah* as being “in the midst of the waters” [Gen 1.6], not unlike being present at the dawn of creation. In the verse at hand (24), the sound resembles thunder coming from the Almighty, or *Shady*. Once again reference is to the Lord leaving his temple as in 10.5: “like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.”

Also the *qol* at hand resemble's the tumult of a host, *hamulah* having one other biblical reference: "but with the roar of a great tempest he will set fire to it (olive tree), and its branches will be consumed" [Jer 11.16]. The *qol* of the creatures comes to an abrupt halt when they stand still and let down their wings. Although what Ezekiel was witnessing came to him, it's real mission over the river Chebar was for the benefit of Israel in captivity. Obviously he was eager to know its destination or whether he would have any communication with it. Although *qol* is noted in vs. 25 as coming from above the firmament, it doesn't speak with Ezekiel as of yet, thunder being a kind of introduction to what will follow shortly.

If the firmament weren't grand enough, vs. 26 speaks of a throne above it, *kise'* more as a seat covered with a canopy or hanging. "'On the firmament that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire in form resembling a throne" [10.1]. Note the use of two similar terms, appearance and likeness or *mar'eh* and *demuth* (cf. vss. 16 and 22 respectively).. What Ezekiel sees he attempts to compare with a sapphire or '*even-saphyr*, literally as "stone of sapphire," the latter also found in 10.1 just noted. Most likely the color of this precious stone is blue which would be in accord with the firmament, the two blending in together.

As for the noun *demuth*, vs. 26 has two other references: one with regard to a throne (second instance) and the other a human form or *mar'eh*. Although not specified, we can assume that this human form is upon the throne as would be the case of a king. Ezekiel covers his face if you will, not being quite sure if this is a genuine human being. If he were sure, chances are he'd mention it.

Vs. 27 has three references of *mar'eh* or appearance which again intimates the impreciseness of Ezekiel's vision which is proper to such an event and is similar to what's recounted at the beginning of Chapter Eight:

1) Loins or *matnym* which is associated with strength as well as sexual reproduction. "Below what appeared to be his loins it was fire" [8.2]. The phrase "gleaming bronze" is similar to "burnished bronze" in vs. 7 where both instance use the noun *heyn*, literally as "eye." However, the verse at hand has *chashmal* (cf. vs. 4) for bronze which is a highly polished and thus reflective whereas *nechsheth* in vs. 7 is not necessarily such.

2) Fire as "enclosed round about" which uses the noun *bayth* or house, literally, "house to it" followed by the noun *savyv* or round about (cf. vs. 4).

3) Note the two directions of upward and downward: the appearance of gleaming bronze with regard to the former and the appearance of fire enclosed round about with regard to the latter.

Vs. 28 describes the *nogah* or splendor in vs. 27 as a rainbow or *qesheth*, this noun also applicable to a weapon as in 39.3: "Then I will strike your bow from your left hand." However, its most famous association is the covenant the Lord made with Noah after the

flood: "I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth" [Gen 9.13]. Rain or *geshem* fits in well here, this word usually referring to a downpour and the flood of Genesis (cf. 7.12). Also cf. 13.11 of Ezekiel: "There will be a deluge of rain."

Chapter One concludes succinctly with Ezekiel saying that he had described the appearance (*mar'eh*, cf. vs. 27) of the Lord's glory or *kavod* which literally means heaviness because it weighed down the prophet as stated in vs. 3: "and the hand of the Lord was upon (i.e., it weighted him down) him there." The next reference to *kavod* is 3.12: "Then the Spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place (etc.)." Although the **RSV** uses the noun appearance, it's the same for this chapter's opening verse, "visions of God." Upon beholding this *mar'eh*, Ezekiel's immediate response was to fall down both out of fear and reverence. Note the distinction between him seeing it and hearing the Lord's voice or *qol* (cf. vs. 25). It seems that the *qol* had a more powerful effect than what he had seen, the faculty of hearing being more reliable and immediate. We can compare this instance with that of Moses and Isaiah, both of whom had been afraid to look at God (cf. Ex 3.6). Nevertheless, they listened to the Lord which seems a chief characteristic of prophets and holy people of the Bible even if they had experienced visions.

Son of man:0

Davar of the Lord:1

Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

1) betok, ra'ah, mar'eh, davar; 3) davar, kohen, 4) ruach, seharah, tsaphon, hineh, hanan, laqach, nogah, savyv, chashmal, hayn, 5) mitok, demuth, demuth, 7) yashar, natsats, heyn, nechsheth qalal, 9) chavar, demuth, 11) parad, 12) ruach, 13) gacheleth, 14) ratsa', 15) hineh, 'ophan, 16) mar'eh, tarshysh, heyn, 'ophan, betok, 18) gav, 19) ruach, 22) demuth, raqyah, heyn, qerach, 23) yashar, 24) qol, shady, hamulah, 25) qol, 26) kise', mar'eh, demuth, saphyr, 27) mar'eh, matnym, heyn, chashmal, bayth, savyv, nogah, 28) nogah, qesheth, geshem, kavod, mar'eh, qol.

Chapter Two

1) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you." 2) And when he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. 3) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, I send you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day. 4) The people also are impudent and stubborn: I send you to them; and you shall say to them, ` **Thus says the Lord** God.' 5) And whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house) they will know that there has been a prophet among them. 6) And you, **son of man**, be not afraid of them nor be afraid of their words though briars and thorns are with you and you sit upon scorpions; be not afraid of their words nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 7) And you shall speak my words to them whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house. 8) "But you, **son of man**, hear what I say to you;

be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." 9) And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and, lo, a written scroll was in it; 10) and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

This relatively short chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” It reveals a close continuity between the vision Ezekiel just beheld and the Lord addressing him which apparently comes from the midst of this vision. That would locate the Lord as surrounded by the likeness of four living creatures of vs. 5, tucked away as he was in the ark and in Solomon’s temple. Another way of comprehending all this is to make the transit from vision to listening. Despite the visual drama, the latter has more staying power and import for the role of a prophet and the divine *davar* or word as expression of which he is a conduit. Anyone can take in an unusual sight and not be affected by it in the long term. However, Israel’s history is replete with both not seeing and hearing what the Lord had communicated to her, that is, two modes of attention. Violation of the second...not listening to the divine *davar*...is more offensive to the Lord since it is part of him.

The Lord addresses Ezekiel as *ben-‘adam* or “son of man” which occurs a total of ninety-three times, this being the first instance.² The common view is to emphasize Ezekiel’s finite nature dependent upon God. It therefore differs from the same title given to Jesus some eighty times, that being used in the messianic sense. As for *‘adam*, it’s the word to designate the first man and can imply humanity as a whole. Ezekiel recognizes this and gladly accepts being called *ben-‘adam*. Besides, it’s comforting in that it makes him feel part of humanity as a whole, not just Israel, for the Lord’s concern extends across all generations. Ezekiel can lose his individuality within the larger mass of humanity and achieve a liberty he hasn’t experienced to this point in his life. This is all the more important by reason of being a captive in the confines of Babylon.

The Lord bids Ezekiel to stand on his feet, for the last verse of the previous chapter has him flat on his face when he hears the divine *qol* or voice speaking, *davar*. That *davar* was in the past, albeit very recently, whereas the current *davar* is right now which he proceeds to recount. Note that as typical with a prophet, we have the Lord speaking which he does from vs. 3 onward. This speaking is represented by the verb *‘amar* which connotes a bringing to light. This current *davar* differs from the former in that it can sink more easily into Ezekiel standing upright as opposed to being on the ground. At the precise time of this divine *davar* entered the prophet, the equally divine *ruach* or spirit (cf. 1.19) entered as well, the preposition *b-* (in) being used to emphasize this inward dwelling. It is this *ruach* which puts Ezekiel on his feet. Later he couldn’t but draw a parallel between himself and the dry bones of 37.10 when the *ruach* made them come alive.

²At the end of each chapter the number of references to this phrase will be inserted.

And so this *davar* opens up Ezekiel to receive more *davar* which otherwise wouldn't have been possible. So the sequence of *davar*, if you will, begins in 1.28 with Ezekiel on his face, transitions to him standing followed by the *ruach* and the prophet now hearing this *davar*. While the vision of Chapter One is quite overwhelming, it pales in comparison to the force of *davar* which is invisible. Ezekiel knew instinctively that any *davar* from the Lord wouldn't concern the recent vision, that being a kind of dramatic introduction; one could almost say it was for show.

The conjunctive *v-* opening vs. 3 along with '*amar* to speak (that is, the Lord doing so) fleshes out the *davar* of vs. 1, "I will speak with you." It introduces Ezekiel to his new vocation where the Lord sends him as "son of man" to his fellow Israelites who are captive in Babylon. The text reads literally "to the nations" (*goy*) which could insinuate the Babylonians as well. The Lord adds insult to injury, not showing any pity for Israel's plight, calling these nations rebels which here is an adjective, "nations rebelling" or *marad*. "I will purge out the rebels from among you and those who transgress against me" [20.38].

Marad is used again in rapid succession with a double prong attack to make sure Ezekiel doesn't fall into any complacency in and among his people, this still happening by the river Chebar. In other words, certainly they didn't look nor behave like rebels to him, at least from external appearance. The first prong rests upon Israel's *marad* that had brought them to Babylon in the first place, lest both Ezekiel and the people forget it. The second prong is that their fathers transgressed against the Lord, *pashah* implying a falling or breaking away made all the worse by the added preposition *b-*, literally as "in me." "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me" [18.31]. The worst part about this *pashah* is that it continues "to this very day," a genuine slap in the Lord's face by the people on whom he had expended so much energy. Interestingly with regard to *hetsem*, it's the same as "bone" by reason of indicating firmness.

Vs. 4 continues what to Ezekiel seems to be a divine tirade that he finds all the more astonishing. Is this the Lord who has come to me in such dramatic form to rescue his people? Or did he come to put a final seal of approval upon Babylon for being his agent to keep Israel under wraps? Just a glance of their own divinities was enough to strike fear into anyone, and awareness of this may have played a part.

Now the Lord calls the people impudent and stubborn; he doesn't even use "people" which suggest a certain kinship or belonging as is true with the other prophets. Rather he calls them literally "sons of impudent (*qasheh*) faces and stubborn (*chazaq*) hearts." Talk about going from bad to worse. The former implies something hard and rough whereas the latter, something strong in the sense of being mighty. Both are found in 3.7: "Because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart." In other words, the face represents what's outside and the heart (*lev*), what's inside. Because both are the same, it shows that Israel is rebellious through and through.

Almost in the same breath as saying this, in the second half of vs. 4 the Lord says—and he seems to be sliding this in obliquely—that he’s sending Ezekiel to them. This must have puzzled and confused the prophet thoroughly, keeping in mind that he’s still with his fellow Israelites by the river Chebar which is a rather amicable scene typical of his relationship with his fellow exiles. If they are so bad as the Lord says, thinks Ezekiel, where had I been all this time? The Lord isn’t so much interested in what Ezekiel feels or thinks. He’s focused upon sending him on his mission. To begin that mission Ezekiel is to say “Thus says the Lord God,” the verb *amar* being used, not *davar*, that is, to bring into light. To Ezekiel all this seemed rather vague and fuzzy. Was he to cease his communication with the Lord there at the river and simply start blurting out to his companions that they were impudent rebellious?

In vs. 5 the Lord reassures Ezekiel that once he starts speaking in the Lord’s name, the people will realize they are rebellious, the noun *mery* being used which reads literally “house of rebellion.” That image conjures up something stronger and more conspiratorial than the simple adjective and occurs in the next consecutive four verses. So when Ezekiel speaks, the Israelites will either hear or refuse. There’s no other choice. *Chadal* is the latter and implies ceasing or leaving off, that once Israel had been inclined to listen but fell off from it. Still, some awareness of Israel’s divine calling remained with them. They will know automatically that once Ezekiel has spoken, he had been a prophet among (*betok*, cf. 1.16) them just as he had been *betok* his fellow Israelites by the river Chebar (cf. vs. 1).

The Lord seeks to reassure Ezekiel in light of what must have come to him as a surprising revelation concerning Israel’s true character in her exile, that even in Babylon the people had not shown the slightest change of heart. He compares the former to briars and thorns, *saravym* and *salonym* being the only use of these words in the Bible. As for their words (*davar*), they can be more fearful that the former since memory of them tends to stick around. To compound the situation, the Lord equates Israel with scorpions or *haqgrav* as in Dt 8.15 which Ezekiel must have thought of as an appropriate analogy: “Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water.”

Once again the Lord takes pains to say that Ezekiel isn’t to fear the people’s words which reads literally as “faces.” Thus we have three difficulties requiring divine assistance: the people in and by themselves, their words and finally their faces, the last which has the verb *chatat* alternately as to break, to be confounded. The other reference in Ezekiel is 3.9: “nor be dismayed at their looks.” The only defense against this formidable threefold threat is that Ezekiel is to go among them seemingly without defense and simply “speak my words to them,” i.e., to *davar* his *davar* to this rebellious house. Calling Israel such is quite dramatic and occurs five times in a short chapter as the one at hand. So while it may be short, the message is potent and sets the tone for Ezekiel’s mission.

In vs. 8 the Lord again calls Ezekiel “son of man,” telling him to be attentive so that he be not like Israel, a rebellious (*mery*, cf. vs. 5) house, due to what appears an overwhelming challenge. To prevent this, Ezekiel is to eat not just a scroll (*megilah*, cf. 3.1)) but one which has words written on it. Apparently the Lord unrolled this scroll which must have been considerably long and containing writing not just upon the unrolled part but on the reverse side, something never you associate with a scroll. Such words consisted of lamentation, mourning and woe (*qynah*, ‘*avel* 6.26 and ‘*oy*. As for the first, cf. 19.1: “And you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel.” As for the second, cf. Jer 6.26: “Make mourning as for an son.” As for the third, it’s the only biblical reference.

Son of man: 3

Davar of the Lord: 0

Thus says the Lord: 1

Know the Lord: 0

1) ruach, 3) goy, marad, pashah, hetsem, 4) qasheh, chazaq, lev, ‘amar, 5) mery, chadal, betok, 6) saravym, salonym, haqrav, chatat, 8) mery, megilah, 9) megilah, 10) qynah, ‘avel, ‘oy.

Chapter Three

1) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." 2) So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it." Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. 4) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, go, get you to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them. 5) For you are not sent to a people of foreign speech and a hard language but to the house of Israel—6) not to many peoples of foreign speech and a hard language whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to such, they would listen to you. 7) But the house of Israel will not listen to you; for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart. 8) Behold, I have made your face hard against their faces and your forehead hard against their foreheads. 9) Like adamant harder than flint have I made your forehead; fear them not nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house." 10) Moreover he said to me, "**Son of man**, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears. 11) And go, get you to the exiles, to your people, and say to them, ` **Thus says the Lord God**'; whether they hear or refuse to hear." 12) Then the Spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the Lord arose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake; 13) it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another and the sound of the wheels beside them that sounded like a great earthquake. 14) The Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the Lord being strong upon me; 15) and I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who dwelt by the river Chebar. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days. 16) And at the end of seven days the **word of the Lord** came to me: 17) "**Son of man**, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 18) If I say to the wicked, `You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way in order to save his life, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his

blood I will require at your hand. 19) But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you will have saved your life. 20) Again, if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand. 21) Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and you will have saved your life." 22) And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said to me, "Arise, go forth into the plain, and there I will speak with you." 23) So I arose and went forth into the plain; and, lo, the glory of the Lord stood there like the glory which I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. 24) But the Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet; and he spoke with me and said to me, "Go, shut yourself within your house. 25) And you, O **son of man**, behold, cords will be placed upon you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people; 26) and I will make your tongue cleave to the roof of your mouth so that you shall be dumb and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house. 27) But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, `Thus says the Lord God'; he that will hear, let him hear; and he that will refuse to hear, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

Chapters Two and Three pretty much form a single unit, the two being joined by the conjunctive *v-*, "and." The Lord bids Ezekiel to eat the scroll which is rendered literally as "what you find (*matsa*) before you." The way it's put suggests a certain puzzlement over the request as well as the scroll written on two sides which doesn't seem to be a traditional way of preserving a text, the outside being exposed. Then Ezekiel is told to go and speak (*davar*) to the house of Israel in captivity. In a sense, he had no choice but to eat the scroll which tasted sweet as honey. Compare with John's experience in Rev 10.9: "It (the scroll) was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter." Ezekiel had tasted the bitterness, if you will, before eating the scroll by the dismaying words of Chapter Two where the Lord had scolded Israel through and through. If the scroll had turned bitter, most likely he wouldn't have the strength nor courage to carry out the Lord's mission. And so the scroll with words on both sides ratified the divine character of *davar*, making it much easier to communicate with the Israelites. Furthermore, Ezekiel has the good fortune of the Lord speaking with him for a considerable length of time, that is, through vs. 12.

Vs. 4 begins literally with the Lord saying "go enter," the two common verbs *bo*' and *halak* In other words, Ezekiel is get a move-on at once as "son of man" and literally is "to speak in words of me" (*davar* the divine *davar*) fortified by consumption of the scroll. As noted earlier, all this emphasis upon *davar* supercedes the dramatic chariot vision of vs. 1, the primacy of hearing over sight. Already Ezekiel was familiar with the ark of Moses and temple of Solomon, the chariot simply being a re-presentation of both.

With this in mind, the Lord reminds Ezekiel in vs. 5 that he isn't dispatched to a people of foreign speech and a hard language, the two adjectives being *hameq* and *kaved* found together in the next verse. The former more specifically means deep, and the two together means their language is unlike anything spoken in Babylon where there were a multitude of peoples and hence languages. A reference to *hameq*: "For the inward mind

and heart of a man are deep” [Ps 64.6]! A reference to the *kaved* suggests that which is heavy or grievous as in Ps 38.4: “They weigh like a burden too heavy for me.” And to Israel’s credit, it appears that she maintained her own language while in exile in Babylon among so many various peoples and cultures. Despite the thorough condemnation by the Lord, this seemed to be her only redeeming factor. At the same time the Lord throws in some disconcerting information: any foreigner would be more receptive to the divine *davar* than the Israelites.

In vs. 7 the Lord continues his invective against the Israelites, that they won’t listen to Ezekiel no matter what simply because they are unwilling to do so, *ya’av* meaning to desire, to long for. The only other biblical reference to this verb is Ps 119.131: “With open mouth I pant because I long for your commandments.” What prevents this *ya’av* is a hard (*chazaq*, cf. 2.4) forehead and a stubborn heart as noted in 2.4 completely resistant to any divine influence whether outside or inside. However, the Lord has a plan to counter this harder-than-brick-wall attitude. In vs. 8 he’ll reciprocate to protect Ezekiel by making his face and forehead hard against theirs, *chazaq* being the adjective (cf. vs. 7). Also to re-enforce him, if you will, in vs. 9 the Lord makes his forehead even stronger, like adamant or diamond, *shamyr* also meaning a thorn by reason of its sharpness. “With a point of diamond it (Judah’s sin) is engraved on the tablet of their heart and on the horns of their altars” [Jer 17.1]. So with all this talk about hardness thrown about, the Israelites still can terrify Ezekiel or anyone else attempting to convert them by reason of the look on their faces. Against them the Lord tells him not to be dismayed, *chatat* (cf. 2.6).

Vs. 10 juxtaposes “son of man” with the Lord’s *davar*, that he will *davar* to the exiles, a reminder that despite being chosen, Ezekiel nevertheless is part and parcel of Israel and essentially no better than they except for his calling. Ezekiel is to take the divine *davar* in his heart or *lev* (cf. 2.4). Apparently he is to hold them there for a while so that they may combine with the scroll’s *davar* written on both sides though *davar* isn’t explicitly mentioned there (cf. vs. 1). At the same time Ezekiel is to hear these *davar* with his ears, this word used deliberately so that he will not fail to listen as did his fellow countrymen which got them into such a predicament. As for their rebellious situation, the text hasn’t given a precise answer. It’s presumed among the people and eventually got them exiled. Not only that, they haven’t demonstrated any repentance nor willingness to return to the Lord, all the while wondering what got them to Babylon in the first place, as though they didn’t deserve it.

Ezekiel’s contact with the Lord thus far is teaching him that he’s basically in the same situation and perhaps unwilling to face the truth as everyone else. It was compounded by the fact that he was trained and later ordained as a priest. Previous to his vision, did he speak publically about Israel’s exile and what got them there? Apparently not. Soon, however, the Israelites will be confronting this familiar face but with a different message, one they’d rather not hear, the next time they meet for worship. In fact many might consider him an agent of the Babylonians attempting to formulate unrest among

their captives, this being an excuse to move in and do away with the Israelites once and for all.

Vs. 11 is the last verse of this extended attempt by the Lord to encourage Ezekiel with the simple command to go to the exiles as in vs. 4. It reads the same here with the verbs, *bo'* and *halak*, literally as “go enter.” Once Ezekiel comes to the exiles, he is to say simply “Thus says (*amar*) the Lord” and is to do it regardless of whether they listen or not, *chadal* being translated as “refuse” with the same connotation as in 2.5. Despite the harsh condemnation of the Israelites, the Lord does call them “your people” which hopefully will soften an otherwise difficult situation.

As with virtually every divine communication, long or short, direct or through the medium of an angel, it breaks off just as suddenly as it began. Such is the case with Ezekiel who had received an ear-full of information, most of which he hadn't been aware of or perhaps had been unwilling to acknowledge. Vs. 12 signals a return to Ezekiel recounting his experience beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which shows this sudden break-off and a swift move to the next phase of his mission. Now it's the Spirit's (*Ruach*, cf. 2.1) turn which, compared with the Lord, doesn't speak but takes action. He (actually 'she') lifts up the prophet, *nasa'* being the verb found next in vs. 14.

It should be noted that the Hebrew order of vs. 12 differs, for after mention of this Spirit or *Ruach* (cf. 1.28) Ezekiel heard behind him the sound of a great earthquake, *rahash* which occurs in the next verse and after that, 12.18: “Son of man, eat your bread with quaking.” There's no indication that Ezekiel attempted to look behind him; perhaps the Spirit prevented him so he could only conjecture as to what he was hearing. With regard to the Lord's glory (*kavod*, cf. 1.28), no verb is associated with it. Actually the words in the original which read as “blessed be the glory of the Lord,” *kavod* essentially meaning heaviness. Then there follows the phrase “from its place” or *maqom* which implies a habitation which seems to lack a precise location. However, we can trace “glory” back to the throne upon which sat a human likeness, all this presented from 1.22 onward. As for *maqom*, it appears next in 6.13: “wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols.”

The sound (*qol*, cf. 1.28) of a great earthquake is the *qol* of the living creatures' wings in vs. 13. Note the absence of any comparison such as “like.” In other words, *qol* = earthquake and wings, no difference, if you will, between them. Interestingly, this earthquake-voice comes from the wings of the four creatures touching each other, *nashaq* also meaning to arrange, to arm as well as to kiss. “Righteousness and peace will kiss each other” [Ps 95.10]. Each creature has two wings, so multiply this eight-fold, and no wonder the *qol* resembles an earthquake. It isn't short term but prolonged, again the long, slow rumbling of the earth shaking beneath. To compound this *qol*, vs. 13 adds the one of the wheels (*ophan*, cf. 1.16).

In vs. 12 the Spirit lifted up Ezekiel, the same *Ruach* which continuing this lifting (*nasa'*). The first is a partial lifting above the ground and away from the river Chebar. Ezekiel's companions saw him no more nor do we have indication of their reaction as with Elijah who was whisked away publically in a whirlwind (cf. 2Kg 2.1). Given the Lord's harsh words about Israel, those who had been with Ezekiel might have been too caught up in their wickedness to even notice. If they did, chances are they'd be glad to be rid of him.

The *nasa'* at hand is of a different order than in vs. 12; the Spirit "took me away" (*laqach*, cf. 1.4). It removed Ezekiel completely away lest he be contaminated by those with him. In fact, he may have not even known of their inherent wickedness until this point. That's why vs. 14 continues with Ezekiel going (*halak*) on his own, if you will, or in conjunction with the Spirit taking him away with some bitterness or *mar* which is an adjective. "And wail aloud over you and cry bitterly" [27.30]. His reaction is amplified by his spirit (*ruach*) being literally "in bitterness" or *chemah* which fundamentally means wrath. "Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them" [5.13]. No small wonder that this same verse continues with the Lord's hand being strong upon Ezekiel, *chazaq* (cf. vs. 8) compared with the lighter imposition of 1.3: "and the hand of the Lord was upon me."

Vs. 15 continues with Ezekiel saying that he came to the exiles at Tel-abib. Compare with vss. 12 and 14 where the Spirit had lifted him up. However, the prophet making it to Tel-abib on his own power would be in line with vs. 14, "I went in bitterness." As for the lifting up, going and coming, it was effected all in a moment's notice, the sense of time having been suspended. Tel-abib is the only actual place mentioned where the Israelites were in exile within the Babylonian empire. Keeping in mind that this place refers to ancient antediluvian mounds or remnants of places after Noah's flood, we see that the Israelites now alive aren't any better than their forefathers, that is, those before the flood. This keeps in line with 2.3: "They and their fathers have transgressed against me to this very day."

Once Ezekiel is at Tel-abib the river Chebar is mentioned again meaning that the distance from where he had been taken up and deposited was relatively short. The RSV has a footnote giving an alternate put literally: "Chebar, and to where they dwelt" plus "Chebar, and I sat where they sat." Regardless, Ezekiel is among these exiles for seven days, most likely a different group than from those he had been snatched. However, he was close enough to the first group meaning that he could have garnered information about how they reacted to him being snatched from their midst. Nothing is said implying that as noticed above, they were too caught up in their wickedness to notice.

Shamam is the verb for overwhelmed which also means to be astonished as well as to be laid waste."And look at one another in dismay" [4.8]. The sense of this verb is amplified by *betok* or "among them"...in their very center...just like the *betok* in 1.1: "I was among the exiles by the river Chebar." While this sounds depressing in that he couldn't escape the wickedness of his fellow Israelites, it shows that at last Ezekiel realized their

depravity which the Lord had been trying to hammer into him all the while. As for being with these people, nothing is said. Perhaps Ezekiel, as was the case in 1.1, was keeping quiet and simply behaving like his compatriots.

From vs. 16 the Lord is speaking pretty much right on through Chapter Seven, that is, after Ezekiel said he had been at Tel-abib for seven days. This can't help but be reminiscent of the six days of creation followed by another day when the Lord had rested. Surely he was aware of the significance of this time span. We have no information of what transpired during that time, whether Ezekiel interacted with the exiles, but presumably he did not. Instead, he may have spent the time observing his compatriots and waiting for the *davar* of the Lord which did come to him as expected. Given his knowledge of the exiles' wickedness, Ezekiel couldn't help but wonder what this new *davar* would say; more or less the same as earlier, he presumed.

In vs. 17 the Lord's *davar* tells Ezekiel that he has been designated as a watchman over the house of Israel in Babylon, *tsaphah* being the verb which means to shine, to be bright as well as to observe accurately. "And the people of the land take a man from among them and make him their watchman" [33.2]. Being in such a position implies vision... keeping an eye-out...but here involves hearing. More specifically, Ezekiel is to listen (not to see) for potential *davar*, "whenever" being the conjunctive *v-*. So as soon as the prophet hears a *davar* (from the Lord's mouth for emphasis), he is to give Israel a warning from the Lord, *zahar* being the verb fundamentally as to enlighten. "Then if anyone who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning...his blood shall be upon his own head" [33.4]. Once Ezekiel heard this, he wasn't surprised, for it was in line with what the Lord had been saying right from the beginning.

Beginning in vs. 18 and going through vs. 21 the Lord presents Ezekiel with a series of most likely scenarios he will encounter, both preparing and warning him of the consequences. First the Lord details his warning to the wicked or *rashah*, an adjective which connotes unrighteousness and used with the noun *reshah*. Actually the Lord is putting Ezekiel on the line with a threat. It consists of a *davar* which he is to speak about the immediate death of the wicked. If he fails in this *davar*, it will recoil upon his own head. The stakes are very high, and the Lord wishes Ezekiel to be aware of it.

Havon is the noun for iniquity which implies perversity and occurs in the next verse. Failure to save the people (the common verb to keep alive being used which differs from the **RSV** to save) means that the Lord will require or *baqash* their blood at the hand of Ezekiel, this verb also meaning to strive after. "And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land" [22.30]. What will happen to Ezekiel as a result of this relentless *baqash* isn't spelled out nor does it have to. In effect it is sufficient warning and will compel him be an unwilling agent responsible for putting this person to death, something he'd prefer to avoid.

Vs. 19 counters this threat with personal overtones by saying that if Ezekiel warns (*zahar*, cf. vs. 18) the wicked and doesn't turn (*shuv*) from his wickedness as well as his

wicked way—*rashah* occurring three times—he will be off the hook. Such is the vital role of *davar*. As for communicating it, Ezekiel must cultivate a sharp sense of hearing and maintain awareness of *davar*, this getting back to the essence of vs. 17. At the same time the Lord has not intention of making him feel constantly on the edge but to bring home the seriousness of the situation, that Israel has strayed from him.

The first word of vs. 20 in the **RSV** is “again” which is the conjunctive *v-* where the Lord speaks of the case of a righteous man turning from his righteousness, *tsadyq/tsedaqah*. The adjective is found in the next verse whereas the noun in 14.14: “They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness.” This turning or *shuv* (cf. vs. 19) results in iniquity or *havel* which also applies to perversity. “Withholds his hand from iniquity” [18.8]. It seems that the Lord is out to get such a person by laying a stumbling block or *mikshul* as well as to test Ezekiel’s ability to listen as mentioned in the last paragraph. “For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity” [7.19]. If Ezekiel fails to warn him, that is, if he isn’t listening to the Lord and isn’t quick enough to *davar* with this unfortunate person, both will share the same miserable fate. Vs. 20 counters this with the reverse, namely, that both will live by reason of Ezekiel’s warning. Thus *davar* and *zahar* (to warn) are one and the same, applicable to both parties.

Vs. 22 opens with a conjunctive, this time perfectly expressing Ezekiel’s mood who said that the Lord’s hand was upon him there meaning Tel-abib...not just upon him but given the previous verses, pressing heavily upon him. Now the Lord bids Ezekiel to arise (*qum*, cf. next verse), this suggesting he had a hard time getting up from being almost squished by the divine hand pressing him down. He is to go to the plain which the Hebrew has as valley, *bighah* (cf. next verse) also suggestive of a wide area and not entirely unlike the **RSV**’s plain. It is on this plain/valley that the Lord will *davar* with his prophet, the prospect filling him with some dread after what had just happened and as he made his way there.

Upon coming to the plain which remains unspecified in vs. 23, Ezekiel encounters the glory of the Lord standing there, identical to the one he beheld by the river Chebar. “*Kavod* of the Lord” is mentioned in 1.28 or after Ezekiel describes in detail his vision, so it can be taken as fairly identical with *mar’ah* or the vision mentioned in the first verse. Note that this *kavod* simply took up its position (*hamad*) as in 8.11: “And before them stood seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel.” This *hamad* suggests that the divine *kavod* didn’t assume a stormy wind as in 1.4, that it was present as a huge square block on wheels. To Ezekiel this was more intimidating than at Chebar, for anything moving, however formidable, means that it’s passing by without remaining in a given place.

Compared with 1.28 when Ezekiel fell on his face, in vs. 24 the Spirit (*Ruach*, cf. 2.2 with capitol ‘R’) enters him, sets him on his feet and speaks (*davar*) with him. That means any *davar* is consistent with what went before, that it comes from within, not without. Contrary to what he had expected, Ezekiel is to shut himself up within his

house and not interact with his fellow Israelites. Not only this, in vs. 25 the Spirit says that he'll be found with cords or *havoth*. "And behold, I will put cords upon you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other" [4.8]. No information is given as to how these cords will be placed around Ezekiel, but the prospect and unspecified amount of times must have seemed a dreadful prospect.

Just as bad or if not worse than being confined physically, in vs. 26 has the Lord making Ezekiel's tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, that is, making him dumb and unable to reprove the people. *'Alam* is the verb for the former meaning to be bound and is not unlike the physical cords binding the prophet. "So my mouth was opened, and I was no longer dumb" [33.22]. *Yakach* is the verb for the latter also as to argue or reprove. "And lay a snare for him who proves in the gate" [Is 29.21]. This verse concludes with what's obvious to Ezekiel, namely, that Israel is a rebellious house. However, he must have thought to himself, "Does the Lord have to go this far?"

Chapter Three concludes with hope of physical freedom for Ezekiel, whereas in vs. 27 the Lord says that when he *davar* with him, the prophet will speak (*'amar*) to the Israelites. So for some indefinite time Ezekiel remains bound up in his house longing to be set free while knowing that his fellow Israelites don't show any prospect of changing their ways. Nevertheless, the Lord holds out hope for the people: some will listen and some will refuse, *chadal* which as in vs. 11 implies to cease or to leave off. That is to say, some may listen at first but then change their minds. As to the number of the two categories, nothing is said which leaves Ezekiel hanging in suspense but thinking to himself that the number who listen to the Lord will be a tiny minority.

Son of man: 6

Davar of the Lord: 1

Thus says the Lord: 2

Know the Lord: 0

1) matsa', 4) bo', halak, 5) hameq, kaved, 7) ya'av, qasheh, chazaq, 8) chazaq, 9) shamy, chatat, 10) lev, 11) bo', halak, chadal, 12) ruach, nasa', kavod, rahash, maqom, qol, 13) qol, nashaq, 'ophan, 14) ruach, nasa', laqach, mar, ruach, chemah, chazaq, 15, shamam, betok, 17) tsaphah, zahar, 18) rashah, reshah, zahar, havon, baqash, 19) zahar, shuv, rashah, 20) tsadyq, tsedaqah, shuv, havel, mikshul, 23) qum, biqhah, hamad, 24) ruach, 25) havoth, 26) 'alam, yakach, 27) chadal.

Chapter Four

1) "And you, O **son of man**, take a brick and lay it before you and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem; 2) and put siege works against it and build a siege wall against it and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it and plant battering rams against it round about. 3) And take an iron plate and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; and set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel. 4) "Then lie upon your left side, and I will lay the punishment of the house of Israel upon you; for the number of the days that you lie upon it you shall bear their

punishment. 5) For I assign to you a number of days, three hundred and ninety days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment; so long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel. 6) And when you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time but on your right side and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, a day for each year. 7) And you shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared; and you shall prophesy against the city. 8) And, behold, I will put cords upon you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other till you have completed the days of your siege. 9) "And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt, and put them into a single vessel and make bread of them. During the number of days that you lie upon your side, three hundred and ninety days, you shall eat it. 10) And the food which you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; once a day you shall eat it. 11) And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin; once a day you shall drink. 12) And you shall eat it as a barley cake, baking it in their sight on human dung." 13) And the Lord said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations to which I will drive them." 14) Then I said, "Ah Lord God! behold, I have never defiled myself; from my youth up till now I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts nor has foul flesh come into my mouth." 15) Then he said to me, "See, I will let you have cow's dung instead of human dung on which you may prepare your bread." 16) Moreover he said to me, "**Son of man**, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. 17) I will do this that they may lack bread and water and look at one another in dismay and waste away under their punishment.

This new chapter begins with the familiar conjunctive *v-* or “and” which shows the close connection of what had transpired and the Lord’s new task for Ezekiel. By now he dreads the prospect of being approached by the Lord, being virtually entombed within his own house and unable to move. Then to his relief Ezekiel heard the Lord telling him to get outside meaning that he was free from his bonds. However, as the chapter at hand progresses, Ezekiel must have had second thoughts as will be discovered shortly.

The Lord begins with the familiar “son of man” which occurs just one other time in this chapter (cf. vs. 16). Ezekiel is about to do some rather bizarre things which are symbolic of the coming siege of Jerusalem. At first this may seem puzzling to the reader since we’re dealing with the Israelites now in exile in Babylon. This is due to the fact that the oracles contained in Chapter One through Chapter Twenty-Four are dated before the fall of Jerusalem. While helpful to know this, the main point for Ezekiel as well as the Lord is that the Israelites in Babylon seem clueless as to why they had been banished there. At least many were alive, no small accomplishment, and learned to prosper. Naturally this led quickly to forgetfulness of their native land.

And so we return to the text where Ezekiel is to take a sun-dried brick (they were all over the place in the ancient world) and use it as a model to portray on it the city of Jerusalem, *chaqah* meaning to carve or to paint. “She (Oholah the harlot) saw men portrayed upon the way, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion” [23.14]. Actually Ezekiel must have had severe reservations about doing this because it reminded his fellow exiles of what they had been through not long ago. In fact, to them it was a reminder of a hopeless situation with no prospect of return.

The dried brick must have been fairly large for Ezekiel to make the model requested by the Lord. Besides, he wanted others to see it. The next step is to scratch siege works upon it or *matsor* which also means a tower and connotes distress and found in the next verse. Included are a siege way and mound as well as camps and battering rams. Then in vs. 3 Ezekiel is to take an iron plate, perhaps a form used to make the brick, and place it between him and the city depicted on this brick. Finally he is to set his face toward this model which represents a siege, it being a sign or *'oth* for Israel, this noun also referring to a portent. "I will make him (worshiper of idols) a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people" [14.8].

Vs. 4 moves from bad to worse as far as what Ezekiel must do now. The Lord bids him to lay down on his left side, presumably with this model and the iron plate squarely in front of him. The punishment or *havon* (cf. 3.18) due to Israel, so familiar to the prophet, is now placed upon him. This part of the text reads literally as "you place the depravity of the house of Israel on it." It's up to Ezekiel to take this *havon* and place it upon himself as he's on his left side, pressed down. He is to bear this *havon* for three hundred and ninety days to which the RSV has a tongue-in-cheek footnote, "The actual performance of this command seems most unlikely." In other words, this period of time little over a year as we know it is to equal Israel's punishment. As Ezekiel was listening to this command and wondering if he should take it literally, he must have wondered about laying on his right side for the same length of time, if not longer!

Vs. 6 bears out Ezekiel's fear of having to lay on his right side, this time bearing the *havon* of the house of Judah. After three hundred and ninety days forty was very short. Still, Ezekiel must have shifted position to keep in front of him that dried brick as a model for Jerusalem. In this way he could continue starring at it which vs. 7 says, only now with bared arm and ready to prophesy, *navy*' fundamentally meaning to bubble up or to pour forth. Actually this is the very first time he's asked to prophesy, the next time being in 6.2: "Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them."

Vs. 8 begins with *hineh* or behold (cf. 1.15) in order to get Ezekiel's attention to something he'd rather not hear. That is to say, the Lord is going to put cords upon him as in 3.25 effectively tying him down to the ground so he can't move first for three hundred and ninety days followed by forty days. That mean's he will be forced to stare day and night at the outline of besieged Jerusalem sketched on the brick. Right away that will draw everyone's attention with people coming by him constantly and thinking him to be some kind of fool to put up with such a fate. Due to their rebellious nature drilled home we've encountered thus far, they wouldn't know it was from the Lord even if the Lord himself came down and informed them.

In vs. 9 Ezekiel is told to take a mixture of six grains and mix them together, a sign of scarcity due to the siege of Jerusalem, the mode of which he is gazing at for so long. However, he is bound by cords in one place, so either he gets a supply for that period time or makes arrangements for someone to bring it to him. The next few verses detail

the way Ezekiel is to prepare this siege food, if you will, along with a supply of water. What's particularly revolting to any passerby is that he is to cook it on human dung (cf. vs. 12), for all wood in Jerusalem had been consumed. Furthermore, this is a sign that the Israelites will be eating bread which is unclean in the extreme (*tame'*). "Those who are far from you will mock you, you infamous (i.e., unclean) one, full of tumult" [22.5]. They are destined to eat this polluted bread among nations to which the Lord will scatter them as in the case now in Babylon.

In vs. 14 Ezekiel has had enough of being bullied around by the Lord which makes the conjunctive *v-* "then" beginning this verse all the more important. It's followed first by a simple heart-felt "ah" or '*ahah* addressed directly to the Lord after obediently listening to all that he has put him through. Next comes *hineh* or behold, showing that it's connected directly with *v-* and '*ahah* (then, ah and behold), Ezekiel pretty much expressing the three once. He takes pride in not having defiled himself, *tame'* being the verb as in 5.11: "Because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations."

Upon reflection, if you will, the Lord hearkens to Ezekiel's objection and gives permission for him to use cow dung to prepare his exile-like diet of bread described in vs. 9. Such bread originally had been hoarded by those in Jerusalem but latter turns out to be a luxury because the Lord deprived the inhabitants of it. This is put in terms of breaking the staff of bread, *mateh* meaning support and more directly, survival. "When I bring more and more famine upon you and break your staff of bread" [5.16]. Also note that *mateh* refers to tribe, so with this alternative in mind, it can imply breaking the twelve tribes of Israel. Furthermore, the Lord will force the inhabitants to eat bread that's weighed out and in fearfulness as well as to drink water that's measured and in dismay. *De'agah* means fear and *shimamon* means dismay or astonishment, both being found in 12.19: "They shall eat their bread with fearfulness and drink water in dismay." The former has one reference in the previous verse and the latter is the only other biblical use.

Chapter Four concludes with Lord repeating himself, namely, that he will bring to effect what he just said, *chaser* meaning to diminish, to suffer want. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" [Ps 23.1]. In this dreadful situation the inhabitants of besieged Jerusalem will look at each other in dismay, *maqaq* meaning to pine away or to melt. "But you shall pine away in your iniquities and groan to one another" [24.23]. And so the Jerusalemites will do this under their punishment, *havon* (cf. vs. 6). Once the invaders have breached the walls, they will find no resistance and hence take over the city with ease.

Son of man: 2

Davar of the Lord: 0

"Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

1) chaqah, 2) matsor, 3) ‘oth, 4) havon, 6) havon, 7) navy’, 8) hineh, 13, tame’, 14) hineh, tame’, 15) mateh, 16) de’agah, shimamon, 17) chaser, maqaq, havon.

Chapter Five

1) "And you, O **son of man**, take a sharp sword; use it as a barber's razor and pass it over your head and your beard; then take balances for weighing and divide the hair. 2) A third part you shall burn in the fire in the midst of the city when the days of the siege are completed; and a third part you shall take and strike with the sword round about the city; and a third part you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them. 3) And you shall take from these a small number and bind them in the skirts of your robe. 4) And of these again you shall take some and cast them into the fire and burn them in the fire; from there a fire will come forth into all the house of Israel. 5) **Thus says the Lord God:** This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the center of the nations with countries round about her. 6) And she has wickedly rebelled against my ordinances more than the nations and against my statutes more than the countries round about her by rejecting my ordinances and not walking in my statutes. 7) Therefore **thus says the Lord God:** Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are round about you and have not walked in my statutes or kept my ordinances but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are round about you; 8) therefore **thus says the Lord God:** Behold, I, even I, am against you; and I will execute judgments in the midst of you in the sight of the nations. 9) And because of all your abominations I will do with you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. 10) Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in the midst of you, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to all the winds. 11) Wherefore, as I live, says the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will cut you down; my eye will not spare, and I will have no pity. 12) A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in the midst of you; a third part shall fall by the sword round about you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds and will unsheathe the sword after them. 13) "Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself; and **they shall know** that I, the Lord, have spoken in my jealousy when I spend my fury upon them. 14) Moreover I will make you a desolation and an object of reproach among the nations round about you and in the sight of all that pass by. 15) You shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations round about you when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury and with furious chastisements— I, the Lord, have spoken—16) when I loose against you my deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will loose to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and break your staff of bread. 17) I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will rob you of your children; pestilence and blood shall pass through you; and I will bring the sword upon you. I, the Lord, have spoken."

Chapter Five begins typically with the conjunctive *v-* as “and” to show the continuity between what had just happened and its immediate connection to what is about to transpire. While this has been pointed out already, it’s important to be reminded of each time at the beginning of a new chapter. As soon as the Lord bade Ezekiel to describe the siege of Jerusalem in symbolic fashion, he continues with it here. As for the phrase “son of man,” only one reference is noted.

Ezekiel is to use a sharp sword much like the razor of a barber, *tahar* having the same meaning: “I will draw forth my sword out of its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked” [21.3]. These words beginning a rather lengthy description of what the prophet must do after he had shaved his head and beard. For example, in vs. 2 he is to burn a third of it in the midst of Jerusalem, *betok* (cf. 3.15) suggestive of its very center once the siege is over. This implies that the enemy which remains unidentified but ends up to be Babylon has devastated the city after either having killed or led off its inhabitants. Thus the only ones around to see Ezekiel doing this is the occasional survivor as well as enemy troops. They figure better to leave this idiot alone. Once he has tossed this third of his hair into the air, Ezekiel is to run after it with his sword, again, a dangerous gesture given the circumstances. Obviously he has to rely upon being taken as a fool so as not to be killed on the spot.

Having completed this, in vs. 4 Ezekiel is to take a few strands of hair and bind them in the skirts of his robe while others are to be burned in what most likely is a fire that’s already consuming Jerusalem after which it spreads to the entire house of Israel. So while a conflagration gets under way from a fire already lit by the besiegers, the Lord will proclaim in vs. 5 with some disgust that such is Jerusalem. She is to be compared to her former glory or before such a tragedy had overtaken her. At that time the Lord had set her in the center (*betok*, cf. vs. 2) of nations, that is to say, with all the other nations around her.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* (and) which re-enforces the pervasive sense of evil behavior by Israel in all that has been said earlier. Ezekiel still has a hard time swallowing this and understandably so. Granted that Israel had offended the Lord and needs to be punished...but to go on as he does for the rest of this chapter and beyond? Israel has rebelled wickedly against the Lord which is rendered literally as “rebellious (against) my judgments,” the verb being *marah* and the noun *mishpat*. A reference to the first is 20.8: “But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me.” As for the second, refer to vs. 7 as “statutes.” Also added is the noun *rishhah* or wickedness prefaced with the preposition *l-*, “to wickedness.” “The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father” [18.20]. As for *mishpat*, it’s found a second time in vs. 6 which Israel has rejected, *ma’as*. “They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my ordinances” [20.13].

Such an incurable rebellious attitude compels the Lord to speak for a second time (“Thus says the Lord God”) directly to Israel. In vs. 7 he calls this nation more turbulent than those around her, *haman* suggestive of noise or a rage and the only use of this verb in the Bible. The picture presented here is not unlike a wheel whose center or spoke is swirling around uncontrollably and having an effect on the outer rim section. This prompts the Lord to say in vs. 8 that he is against Israel rendered literally as “behold me upon you.” The effect of this stance is passing not just judgment (*mishpat*, cf. vs. 6) but one that is in your midst, *betok* (cf. vs. 5). So we have this *betok* and *savyv* or round about (cf. vs. 7) with respect to nations, vs. 8 putting it as in their sight or eyes.

Vs. 9 brings the whole tragic situation to a new unheard of level, namely, cannibalism. It is a direct result of Israel's abominations, forcing the Lord to go this route. *Tohevah* is the noun referring to impurity when it comes to matters of religion and occurs next in vs. 11. The verse at hand brings the severity at hand close to home when it reads literally "I will do in (*b-*) you (etc.). The situation at hand is virtually inescapable, namely, that fathers will not only eat their sons but will do so in plain sight of everyone, "in the midst of you" (*betok*, cf. vs. 5). If such cannibalism starts *betok* Jerusalem, no doubt it will spread quickly to include not just the city but the entire nation of Israel.

The second part of vs. 10 has the Lord executing judgment, the plural noun *shephatym* (cf. vs. 15) translated as "judgements" meaning not just one but a whole series of them. Should there be any survivor...and chances are there will be hardly any...the Lord will scatter them to the wind, *zarah* being the verb found in vs. 2 but not noted there.

Vs. 11 opens with the ominous "As I live" so as not to allow Israel off the hook despite what the Lord had just uttered. Note two opposite words, defiled and sanctuary, *tame'* (cf. 4.14) and *miqdash*, the latter being derived from a verbal root meaning to be holy in the sense of to set apart. Thus we could say that in light of anything holy, that which is *tame'* is mixed kind of mumbo-jumbo like without any order. As for *miqdash*, cf. 9.6: "And begin at my sanctuary." Allied with *tame'* against *miqdash*, if you will, are detestable things and abominations, *shiquts* and *tohevah* (cf. vs. 9), the former usually associated with idol worship. For both, cf. 7.20: "And they made their abominable images and their detestable things of it.

Because of this double insult against the Lord borne out by Israel's actions, the Lord will cut her down, *garah* which also means to withhold or to be taken away. "I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted portion [16.27]. The same applies to the Lord's benevolent glance: he will neither spare nor have pity, *chus* and *chamal*. Actually the meaning of the two as presented here are better reversed. Both are found in cf. 7.4: "And my eye will not spare you nor will I have pity."

Vs. 12 has Israel divided into three parts, each to meet a dreadful fate:

1) One of pestilence or *dever* which derives from the verbal root *davar* (to speak in the sense of give expression; cf. vs. 17) and famine or *rahav* (cf. vs. 16) which is in the midst or *betok* (cf. vs. 10) of you. *Betok* occurs with regular frequency intimating that what the Lord is bringing upon Israel is inescapable.

2) The second third is to fall by the sword round about which infers that *betok* just noted.

3) The last third the Lord will scatter or *zarah* (cf. vs. 10) to the winds after which the Lord will send his sword.

Vs. 13 speaks of divine anger and fury, '*aph* and *chemah*. The former also means nostrils and heavy breathing associated with it (cf. vs. 15) whereas the latter (cf. 3.15) connotes something that burns. The verb associated with '*aph* is *kalah* which suggests

bringing to an end whereas the one associated with *chemah* is *nuach* or to rest. References are as follows respectively: “When it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it” and “So will I satisfy my fury on you” [13.14 16.42]. Despite the strong words, ultimately the Lord wishes the Israelites to know (*yadah*, cf. 2.5 but not noted there) that it is he who has spoken (*davar*), the former meaning intimate knowledge.

The remaining five verses of Chapter Five present a pretty much rapid-fire list of woes that will befall Israel and are outlined as follows:

Vs. 14: desolation and object of reproach: these are literally “in (b-) the nations” around Jerusalem.

Vs. 15: reproach, taunt, warning, horror, fury and furious chastisements: these are spoken (*davar*) by the Lord.

Vs. 16: famine and destruction presented as arrows.

Vs. 17: famine, wild beasts, pestilence, blood and sword: as spoken (*davar*) by the Lord.

Thus all come transmitted by the spoken expression or *davar* of the Lord and are uttered against Israel in Babylon which makes the situation all the more painful to bear.

Son of man: 1

Davar of the Lord: 0

Thus says the Lord: 3

Know the Lord: 1

1) tahar, 2) betok, 5) betok, 6) marah, mishpat, rishhah, ma’as, 7) hamon, savyv, 8) mishpat, 9) tohevah 10) betok, shephatym, zarah, 11) tame’, miqdash, shiquts, tohevah, garah, chus, chamal, 12) dever, rahav, betok, zarah, 13) ‘aph, chemah, kalah, nuach, yadah.

Chapter Six

1) The **word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "**Son of man**, set your face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them 3) and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the **word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God** to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. 4) Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense altars shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain before your idols. 5) And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. 6) Wherever you dwell your cities shall be waste and your high places ruined so that your altars will be waste and ruined, your idols broken and destroyed, your incense altars cut down and your works wiped out. 7) And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and you shall **know that I am the Lord**. 8) "Yet I will leave some of you alive. When you have among the nations some who escape the sword, and when you are scattered through the countries, 9) then those of you who escape will remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, when I have broken their wanton heart which has departed from me and blinded their eyes which turn wantonly after their idols; and

they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations. 10) And they shall **know that I am the Lord**; I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them." 11) **Thus says the Lord God**: "Clap your hands and stamp your foot and say, Alas! because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel; for they shall fall by the sword, by famine and by pestilence. 12) He that is far off shall die of pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that is left and is preserved shall die of famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them. 13) And you shall **know that I am the Lord** when their slain lie among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, on all the mountain tops, under every green tree and under every leafy oak wherever they offered pleasing odor to all their idols. 14) And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land desolate and waste, throughout all their habitations, from the wilderness to Riblah. Then they will **know that I am the Lord**."

Although not in the English, this chapter opens with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as "and." It shows the continuity of what the Lord had spoken in Chapter Five with little or no interval between that and the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel, the last instance of this phrase ('the word of the Lord') found in 3.16. Being aware of this conjunctive with regard to the continuous outpouring of divine contempt makes you wonder how anyone can stand up against it.

Ezekiel is to set his face, *sum* being the verb found last in 5.5 but not noted there. *Sum* intimates permanence, that he is to keep attention focused upon the mountains, the ones most likely surrounding Jerusalem, and won't be able to move. This will enable Ezekiel to prophesy against them, *navy*' being the verb (cf. 4.7). And so the mountains which are insentient will be aroused by this *navy*' along with hills, ravines and valleys. Their message is one of rage for the Israelites. That is, they call out in unison as they have her surrounded as in a vice squeezing in ever so tightly. Their lament consists in having been used for abominable practices. All the while they were powerless to do something about this but now given the ability to respond, they do with considerable force.

Vs. 3 continues with the Lord bringing a sword upon these physical boundaries which, because of the wickedness demonstrated repeatedly by the Lord, long to set themselves free from the high places built by Israel or *bamah* (cf. vs. 6), this term also applied to a fortress or castle. Chances are some were such to protect against any assault by those devoted to the Lord. In fact, such *bamah* weighed down the surrounding landscape so much that you could hear it groan under the weight of such abominable practices. Not only will these be destroyed but altars along with those for offering incense. The verb *shamam* (cf. 3.15) applies to the first, this verb connoting astonishment as well as laying waste. *Shavar* (cf. vs. 6) applies to the second meaning to break into pieces. When the Lord says that he will cast down the slain before these altars, he has in mind chiefly those officiating at ceremonies for such idols, *gilulym* (cf. vs. 6) also meaning logs or blocks which is indicative of their constitution.

Vs. 5 continues with this destruction of idol worshipers, much to the relief of the surrounding hills and valleys. That is to say, the Lord lays the dead Israelites (and this seems to intimate the entire nation) before such blocks of wood, if you will. The idea is

that both are pretty much the same. The next step is to have the bones of virtually all Israel scattered around the altars. This thorough-going destruction applies to wherever any Israelite happens to dwell as noted in vs. 6. Another mention of *betok* ('in the midst,' cf. 5.12) is found in vs. 7 where Israel's slain shall fall. Despite the continued account of divine vengeance, the ultimate goal is for Israel to know (*yadah*, cf. 5.13) the Lord, to once again share in intimacy with him. If they grasped this, their sorry plight would come to an end at once.³

In vs. 8 the Lord decides to leave some of the Israelites alive, *yatar* suggestive of having made a choice beforehand, the reason for which isn't given but intimated as from 12.16: "But I will let a few of them escape from the sword...that they may confess all their abominations among the nations where they go." Also the means by which such people are released from death isn't given although later on when admitting such abominations, some may have wished they had been slain instead of facing the consequences of their behavior. Also news of their apostasy will reach all nations far and wide.

Vs. 9 (part of the previous verse) begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" which speaks of a remnant that has escaped, *palyt* being a noun which also intimates deliverance. "And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains like dove...all of them mourning" [7.16]. Within those nations to which the Israelite remnant has been scattered they will remember (*zakar*, cf. 3.20 but not noted there) the Lord implying that some in those places will recognize the Lord. How could not anyone be impressed by a group of people proclaiming openly their abomination? That is to say, the Israelites became loathsome in their own sight, *qut*. "And you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed" [20.43].

The extended sentence comprising vss. 8 and 9 continues with the Lord saying that Israel has turned away from him, *sur* also meaning to withdraw and used with the preposition *min* and *hal* combined, "from upon." "And my jealousy shall depart from you" [16.42]. That is to say, they allowed their eyes (the RSV verb 'blinded' isn't in the Hebrew) to have become wanton in their lust for idols, the verb *zanah* and the noun *gilulyim* (cf. vs. 4). Eyes are mentioned here a second time, the other noun meaning literally "face" with regard to abominations or *tohevah* (cf. 5.11). Then as a kind of after-thought in vs. 10...an important one at that...the Lord says that Israel is to go through all this in order to know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 7) he is sovereign. Also he didn't bring such a threat of evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 9 but not noted there) in vain, *chinam*. For the second, see 14.23: "And you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it."

Vs. 11 has the Lord addressing what could be the peoples among who Israel had been scattered. Because of her abominations (*tohevah*, cf. vs. 9), they are to make loud

³"That I am the Lord." This phrase occurs sixty times in Ezekiel: 6.7, 10, 13, 14; 7.4, 9, 27; 11.10, 12, 15, 16, 20; 13.9, 14, 21, 23; 14.8; 15.7; 16.62; 20.5, 7, 26, 38, 42, 44; 22.16; 23.44, 24.24, 27; 25.5, 7, 11, 17; 26.6; 28.22,23, 24, 26; 29.6,9, 16; 30.8, 19, 25, 26; 32.15; 33.29; 34.27; 35.4, 9; 36.11, 23, 38; 37.6, 13; 38.23; 39.6, 7, 22, 28.

demonstration by clapping their hands and stamping their feet. Such practice will make Israel is to fall by three ways: sword, famine and pestilence (*dever*, cf. 5.12). He continues in the next verse with mixing up these three ways so that no one can escape, that is if an Israelite escapes the sword, another affliction will do him in. Nevertheless, the peculiar strain of knowing the Lord is inserted in vs. 13, that special form of *yadah* as applied to his sovereignty. If this applies to Israel, surely the nations in which all this is transpiring can't help but be affected.

The final *yadah* relative to this strange combination is in vs. 14 when the Lord will ruin the land, *shemamah* and *mshamah* (cf. 5.15 but not noted there). As for the former, cf. 7.27: "And the hands of the people of the land are palsied by terror."

Son of man: 1

Davar of the Lord: 2

Thus says the Lord: 2

Know the Lord: 4

1) sum, 2) navy', 3) bamah, 4) shamam, shavar, gilulyim, 7) betok, yadah, 8) yatar, 9) palyt, zakar, qut, shavar, zanah, lev, sur, zanah, gilulyim, tohevah, 10) yadah, rah, chinam, 11) tohevah, dever, 13) yadah, 14) yadah, shemamah, mshamah

Chapter Seven

1) **The word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "And you, **O son of man, thus says the Lord** God to the land of Israel: An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. 3) Now the end is upon you, and I will let loose my anger upon you and will judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations. 4) And my eye will not spare you nor will I have pity; but I will punish you for your ways while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will **know that I am the Lord**. 5) "**Thus says the Lord** God: Disaster after disaster! Behold, it comes. 6) An end has come, the end has come; it has awakened against you. Behold, it comes. 7) Your doom has come to you, O inhabitant of the land; the time has come, the day is near, a day of tumult and not of joyful shouting upon the mountains. 8) Now I will soon pour out my wrath upon you and spend my anger against you and judge you according to your ways; and I will punish you for all your abominations. 9) And my eye will not spare nor will I have pity; I will punish you according to your ways while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will **know that I am the Lord** who smites. 10) "Behold, the day! Behold, it comes! Your doom has come, injustice has blossomed, pride has budded. 11) Violence has grown up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain nor their abundance nor their wealth; neither shall there be preeminence among them. 12) The time has come, the day draws near. Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller mourn, for wrath is upon all their multitude. 13) For the seller shall not return to what he has sold while they live. For wrath is upon all their multitude; it shall not turn back; and because of his iniquity, none can maintain his life. 14) "They have blown the trumpet and made all ready; but none goes to battle, for my wrath is upon all their multitude. 15) The sword is without, pestilence and famine are within; he that is in the field dies by the sword; and him that is in the city famine and pestilence devour. 16) And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, every one over his iniquity. 17) All hands are feeble, and all knees weak as water. 18) They gird

themselves with sackcloth, and horror covers them; shame is upon all faces and baldness on all their heads. 19) They cast their silver into the streets, and their gold is like an unclean thing; their silver and gold are not able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord; they cannot satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity. 20) Their beautiful ornament they used for vainglory, and they made their abominable images and their detestable things of it; therefore I will make it an unclean thing to them. 21) And I will give it into the hands of foreigners for a prey and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall profane it. 22) I will turn my face from them that they may profane my precious place; robbers shall enter and profane it 23) and make a desolation. "Because the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence, 24) I will bring the worst of the nations to take possession of their houses; I will put an end to their proud might, and their holy places shall be profaned. 25) When anguish comes, they will seek peace, but there shall be none. 26) Disaster comes upon disaster, rumor follows rumor; they seek a vision from the prophet, but the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders. 27) The king mourns, the prince is wrapped in despair, and the hands of the people of the land are palsied by terror. According to their way I will do to them, and according to their own judgments I will judge them; and they shall **know that I am the Lord.**"

A new chapter with the familiar conjunctive *v-* as “and” but not translated as in the RSV. It’s function, of course, is to show the close...seamless...connection between what had just transpired and what is about to transpire. As for the *davar* of the Lord, it is a continued expression of his dire intent toward Israel which has become all too familiar and punctuated by those not infrequent references to him wanting Israel to know (*yadah*) him. The operation of this *davar* is demonstrated further by vs. 2 beginning with the same conjunctive...the *davar* from the Lord to Ezekiel and then on to the “land (*‘adamah*) of Israel.” *‘Adamah* more generally pertains to the earth or ground compared with *‘erets* which often refers to a nation. “And I will give you the land of Israel” [11.17].

Vs. 2 has the short exclamation “An end!” or *qets* (cf. next verse) which implies an extremity beyond which one cannot go. This is made all the more dramatic in reference to the land, *‘erets* (cf. 6.14 but not noted there) and as just noted, infers the nation of Israel. More specifically, the text speaks of four corners which represent the cardinal directions of north, south, east and west. *Kanaph* is the noun here which also means wing as well as a covering. The last reference is 5.3 as skirt, another meaning: “And you shall take from these a small number and bind them in the skirts of your robe.” Without knowing the details which soon will be spelled out, Ezekiel realized what this *qets* involved, and it isn’t good.

Vs. 3 says that this *qets* is “upon (*hal-*) you,” that is, Israel, and consists of the Lord letting loose his anger (*‘aph*, cf. 5.13) upon her, the preposition being *b-*, literally as “in you.” Following it comes judgment and punishment, two verbs being *shaphat* (cf. vs. 8) and *natan hal*, the second translated literally as “give upon” and occurs twice in this verse. Actually this giving-upon comes across as more dramatic than the translation. To the former belong Israel’s ways or *derek* (cf. 3.19 but not noted there) and to latter, *tohevah* (cf. 6.11) or abominations.

‘*Aph* as anger in vs. 3 suggests an intense breathing forth whereas in vs. 4 we have the Lord’s eye or his sight upon Israel which won’t spare Israel, *chamal* (cf. 5.11). As for the second use of *natan hal* and *tohevah*, this verse says they are in Israel’s midst or *betok* (cf. 6.7). It’s followed yet again by the Lord wishing that Israel know (*yadah*, cf. 6.14) him. Such knowledge, if followed through, would result in immediate and total suspension of divine wrath. Even though chances are Israel won’t follow through on it, it does reveal the constancy of the Lord ready to jump in and be of assistance.

The now familiar pattern of threat followed by an invitation to know the Lord continues in vs. 5 where the Lord cries out twice “disaster” or *rah* (cf. 6.10) which is the common noun for evil. Without describing this evil the Lord adds immediately that it is coming, this prefaced with the dramatic flourish of *hineh*, behold (cf. 4.14). On the other hand in vs. 6 the Lord repeats that the end or *qets* (cf. vs. 3) has come, almost with glee, and that it as a kind of living entity which at last has awakened against Israel and has come upon her. The verb is *quts* which also means to be wary as well as to fear and by the way, is not the verbal root of *qets*. “I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me” [Ps 3.5].

In addition to this end Israel’s doom (and they seem to be pretty much the same thing) has come, *tsephyrah* which the RSV calls “uncertain.” There are two other biblical references, vs. 10 and Is 28.5, the latter being cited here: “And a diadem of beauty to the remnant of his people.” This noun also refers to a circuit, so this notion may suggest a return of doom to Israel. What follows certainly bears out this insight.

In vs. 7 the Lord addresses the singular inhabitant (*yoshev*) of the land which suggests he’s dealing with Israel as a whole. Also both the day and time has arrived, the two basically being the same along the lines of a *kairos* event where time and space are subsumed under direct divine intervention. Note, though, that time has come whereas the day is near, the latter being a more specific focus within the former. Such a day consists in tumult or *mehumah*, not a joyful shout or *hed*. As for the former, cf. 22.5: “You infamous one, full of tumult.” The latter is the only use of this noun in the Bible and seems to refer to an echo.

Next in vs. 7 time as presented as having come and the day as being near whereas the next two verses (8 and 9) speak of now or *hatah*. This now-ness is when the Lord will do the following to Israel, however it is conditioned by not being quite yet present but literally “from near” or *miqarov*:

- Pour out wrath or *chemah* (cf. 5.13) which suggests heart.
- Spend anger or ‘*aph* (cf. vs. 3) with the verb *kalah* (cf. 5.13).
- Judge according to ways or the verb *shaphat* (cf. vs. 3).
- Punish for abominations or the verb *natan* with the preposition *hal* as in vs. 3 and the noun *tohevah*.
- Will not spare or *chus* (cf. 5.11).

-Show no pity or *chamal* (cf. vs. 3).

-Punish according to ways with abominations in her midst: again, the verb and preposition *natan hal* with regard to *tohevah* (cf. vs. 8).

Vs. 9 ends with the now familiar knowing (*yadah*, cf. 6.14) the Lord but along with this comes a smiting or *nakah* (cf. 6.11 but not noted there).

Vs. 10 opens with *hineh* (cf. vs. 5) or behold which is used twice and continues the Lord's preference for a certain dramatic flourish. Equivalent with this day is doom or *tsephyrach* as in vs. 7 and which as noted there, the **RSV** dubs as "uncertain."

Accompanying this doom are injustice and pride or *mateh* (cf. 4.14) and *zadon*. The former literally means rod and the latter, a kind of swelling. "I know your presumption and the evil of your heart" [1Sam 17.28]. Two verbs pertaining to putting forth buds are used, *tsuts* and *parach* with references accordingly: "And may men blossom forth from the cities like the grass of the field" [Ps 72.16]! "And I will let the souls that you hunt go free like birds" [13.20]. In this verse *parach* also means to fly as in the act of breaking forth.

Vs. 11 contains the noun *mateh* (cf. vs. 10) or rod, indicative of the stiffness and hardness of violence, *chamas* also meaning oppression. "Because the land is full of blood crimes and the city is full of violence" [vs. 23]. Note that it grows up...*qum* (cf. 3.23) meaning to arise...as though it swells up suddenly and in full bloom. And associated with this rod is wickedness or *reshah* (cf. 3.19) which also pertain to unrighteousness.

The second half of vs. 11 speaks of none remaining, that is, the Israelites, along with their abundance, wealth and preeminence: *hamon* implies a multitude as in the next verse; the second is missing in the Hebrew and *nuah* being the only use of this word in the Bible which the **RSV** labels as "obscure."

Vs. 12 again speaks of time which has come and the day as drawing near, similar to vs. 7. Associated with both is the inability to transact business because divine wrath or *charon* (cf. vs. 14) is upon them, this noun also meaning heat or burning. Vs. 13 continues speak of the inability to carry out business functions because wrath is upon the Israelites. This is put in terms of their multitude, the noun *chazon* being used with translates literally as vision in vs. 13. "They seek a vision from the prophet, but the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders" [vs. 26].

Vss. 14 through 22 continue with a list of woes, many to be recounted, and thus are listed accordingly:

-Blown the trumpet for war but no one goes because of divine wrath or *charon* (cf. vs. 12) which is literally "to ('el-) the multitude."

-Sword is without whereas pestilence and famine are within (Jerusalem, most likely).

-Any survivor will resemble doves mourning upon mountains because of Israel's iniquity, *havon* (cf. 4.17).

-Hands are feeble and knees are weak.

-Despite putting on sackcloth as for mourning, horror is their cover, *palatsuth* connoting trembling. This noun has three other biblical references such as Ps 55.5: "Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me." Also shame or *busah* is upon (literally 'to' or 'el-) their faces. This noun has three other biblical references, one being Ps 89.45: "You have cut short the days of his youth; you have covered him with shame."

-Silver and gold cannot deliver in the day of the Lord's wrath. The verb is *natsal* (cf. 3.21 but not noted there) meaning to snatch, and the noun is *hevrah* which connotes an outpouring by reason of the verbal root meaning to pass or to cross. "I will blow upon you with the fire of my wrath" [21.31].

-Beautiful ornament is for vainglory which has become abominable images. *G'on* = *tohevah* (cf. vs. 9) and *shiquts* (cf. 5.11).

-The beautiful ornament which has become abominable images the Lord will give to foreigners as a prey and to the wicked as spoil. Thus both will profane it, *chalal*. "And I shall be profaned through you in the sight of the nations" [22.16].

-When the Lord turns his face from Israel, others will profane his precious place. *Chalal* is the verb as in the last verse and *tsaphan* the verb as participle meaning secret place. "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is kept in store" [Hos 13.12]. *Chalal* is used a second time in vs. 22 with regard to robbers.

-Desolation or *ratoq* which translates as chain, the only use of this noun in the Bible.

-Land full of bloody crimes and city full of violence, *mishpat* (cf. 5.8; literally, judgement of bloods) and *chamas* (cf. vs. 11).

-Worst of nations will possess Israel's houses, end taking delight in being mighty and profane holy places. The verb *nachal* is used for "profane" meaning to inherit. "And I shall be profaned through you in the sight of the nations" [22.16].

-Anguish will cause Israel to seek peace or *shalom*. "Because, yea, because they have misled my people saying 'Peace' when there is no peace" [13.10].

-Both disaster and ruin will cause Israel to seek a vision from the prophet, *chazon* (cf. vs. 13). Also the law perishes from the priest and counsel from the elders, *torah* and *hetsah*. Cf. 22.26 and 11.2 respectively: "Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things." "These are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city."

-King mourns, prince wrapped in despair and people's hands palsied by terror. "According" is used twice, first as the preposition *min-* or literally "from" and secondly as *b-* or literally as "in." The first concerns the way of the people and the second, their personal judgments (*mishpat*, cf. vs. 23).

-Despite this long list of condemnations, etc., the Lord closes this chapter with the now familiar refrain of knowing (*yadah*, cf. vs. 9) him which would dissolve them all at once.

Son of man: 1

Davar of the Lord: 1

Thus says the Lord: 2

Know the Lord: 3

2) 'adamah, qets, 'erets, kanaph, 3) 'aph, chamal, shaphat, derek, tohevah, 4) betok, yadah, 5) hineh, rah, 6) qets, quts, 7) tsephyrah, mehumah, hed, 8) natan, chemah, 'aph, shaphat, 9) tohevah, chus, chamal, tohevah, yadah, nakah, 10) hineh, tsephyrah, match, zadon, tsuts, parach, 11) match, chamas, qum, reshah, hamon, nuah, charon, 12) charon, 13) chazon, 14) charon, 16) havon, 18) palatsuth, bushah, 19) natsal, hevrah, 20) ga'on, tohevah, shiquts, 21) chalal, 22) chalal, tsaphan, 23) ratoq, mishpat, chamas, 24) nachal, 25) shalom, 26) chazon, torah, hetsah, 27) mishpat, yadah

Chapter Eight

1) In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. 2) Then I beheld, and, lo, a form that had the appearance of a man; below what appeared to be his loins it was fire and above his loins it was like the appearance of brightness like gleaming bronze. 3) He put forth the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north where was the seat of the image of jealousy which provokes to jealousy. 4) And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there like the vision that I saw in the plain. 5) Then he said to me, "**Son of man**, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and behold, north of the altar gate in the entrance was this image of jealousy. 6) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations." 7) And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, there was a hole in the wall. 8) Then said he to me, "**Son of man**, dig in the wall"; and when I dug in the wall, lo, there was a door. 9) And he said to me, "Go in and see the vile abominations that they are committing here." 10) So I went in and saw; and there portrayed upon the wall round about were all kinds of creeping things and loathsome beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel. 11) And before them stood seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, with Ja-azaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the smoke of the cloud of incense went up. 12) Then he said to me, "**Son of man**, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, every man in his room of pictures? For they say, 'The Lord does not see us, the Lord has forsaken the land.'" 13) He said also to me, "You will see still greater abominations which they commit." 14) Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the Lord; and behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15) Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O **son of man**? You will see still greater abominations than these." 16) And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord; and behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord between the porch and the altar were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east worshipping the sun toward the east. 17) Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O **son of man**? Is it too slight a thing for the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here, that they should fill the land with violence and provoke me further to anger? Lo, they put the branch to their nose. 18) Therefore I will deal in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

Although the **RSV** doesn't mention it, this new chapter kicks off with the conjunctive *v-* as "and." It serves to bridge the tirade by the Lord against Israel while at the same time he still held out hope (*yadah* as to know him), this within a specific time of Ezekiel's new vision. Use of the conjunctive throughout this chapter assumes special significance in that it shows the rapidity with which the Lord brings Ezekiel throughout the temple and surrounding area, almost dream-like, but unfortunately very real since it deals with that sacred place's desecration.

"Sixth year" seems to be related to the number of years of Israel's exile in Babylon which opens this chapter with a tense scene where Ezekiel and elders of Judah are sitting in the prophet's house. The words "before me" suggest that the elders were attentively listening to Ezekiel who was about to disclose some prophecy by the Lord that would lead eventually to Israel's return from their Babylonian exile. In other words, this was far from a mere social visit. Then as unexpectedly as earlier the Lord's hand fell upon Ezekiel, *naphal* being the verb implying suddenness and a certain violence (cf. 6.12 but not noted there). Actually it was something the elders expected and awaited with great eagerness what the prophet would relate to them.

In light of what was just presented, the conjunctive *v-* opening vs. 2 can't seem to bring us to the next step quickly enough to see what is about to happen. We can't but have in mind the earlier vision and how it might stack up against the one at hand, both instances having a substantial number of witnesses present. So while a discussion was in progress, Ezekiel first beholds and then lo, the common verb *ra'ah* (to see, cf. 1.1) followed by *hineh* (cf. 7.10) which conveys a sudden exclamation. *Hineh* occurs five times in Chapter Eight, appropriate for such an experience as this vision.

So when Ezekiel beholds something, he recognizes it a nanosecond later. In the meantime, the elders of Judah detected a distinct change in Ezekiel's comportment and at once associated it with reports they've heard about him during the chariot vision by the river. At that time no one had a clue as to what was transpiring. While the elders longed for a sign as to release from Israel's Babylonian bondage, the torrent of woes about to follow would sober everyone very quickly. So in this tense situation all they could do was to sit tight and wait.

As for the first vision, Ezekiel saw the heavens opened which was followed by the word or *davar* of the Lord coming to him. In the instance at hand, there is no mention of the divine *davar*, let alone throughout Chapter Eight. It's as though the Lord wanted to communicate through a vision alone so as not to disturb the elders present with him. Moving on with the object of behold-lo, it pertains to a form or *demuth* in the appearance of a man, *mar'eh*, two fairly similar words. The former is a pattern, appearance or likeness which resembles something whereas the latter pertains more to that which is seen and thus is clearly visible. In Chapter One *demuth* occurs ten times whereas *mar'eh* occurs fifteen times. As for Chapter Eight, the former occurs just once and the latter four times. And again, both are not in reference to the all important *davar* or word of God, word as expression.

In vs. 2 the RSV has a footnote with regard to *mar'eh* as “fire” (*'esh*) instead of “man,” this we could tie in with both the overall brightness of the first and now the second vision. So if we spread out the sequence, if you will, first we get *demuth* leading to *mar'eh* leading to *'esh* or form->appearance->fire, this succession perceived almost at once and dependent upon Ezekiel's beholding and subsequent expression of seeing-lo, *ra'ah->hineh*.

The second half of vs. 2 contains the noun *mar'eh* used twice, the first as a verb and the second as a noun (‘what appeared’ and ‘appearance’). Ezekiel sees the loins of this man (i.e., fire) which has the *mar'eh* of two characteristics:

1) Brightness or *zohar* which has one other biblical reference: “And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament” [Dan 12.3].

2) Bronze which is rendered by two words, *heyn* or eye and *chashmal* which applies to anything polished, the latter having two other biblical references, both in Ezekiel (vs. 27 and 8.2).

In vs. 3 this man (again, who is as fire) extended the form of a hand, the noun being *tavnyth* which fundamentally means a structure as well as image or exemplar. Compare with *demuth* of vs. 2. “So I went in and saw; and there, portrayed upon the wall round about were all kinds of creeping things” [vs. 10]. Thus another word pertaining to form or shape is thrown into the mix, all attempting to describe the nature of that fire or *'esh* mentioned in vs. 2. Once extended, this hand/fire grasped Ezekiel by one lock of hair after which the Spirit or *Ruach* (cf. 4.24) took over, if you will, and continued lifting him between earth and heaven. Once in this in-between realm, the Spirit brought Ezekiel not physically to Jerusalem but in the vision of God, *mar'eh* (cf. vs. 2). So here we have the prophet suspended between two realms while not being in either one which can be taken as a description of this *mar'eh* which here is in the plural.

Although Ezekiel is suspended in this in between realm—indeed a strange sight suspended by a lock of hair by the Spirit—he could see with perfect clarity and detail much like an eagle. Now in vs. 3 Ezekiel zooms in upon the gateway's entrance to the inner court of the temple. Note two words for this entrance, *petach* (cf. vs. 7) which means a door and *shahar* as gate (cf. vs. 5), as though there were a double entrance for protection. As for the inner court, it's comprised of the adjective *penymy* and the participle *panah*, inner and to look in the sense of to turn. For a reference to both, cf. 11.1: “The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the Lord which faces east.” And so the sense is that this inner court is something that turns inward, that being the very center of the temple or holy of holies.

This inner court faces north, the location of the seat of the image of jealousy. North or *tsaphon* generally is considered representative of what is hidden or obscure as well as cold and dark and hence is a perfect direction for this image of jealousy. *Semel* is the noun for image which derives from a verbal root meaning to be like and is yet another term pertaining to the idea of a form. It has four other biblical references, the other in

vs. 5 of Ezekiel. Another is Dt 4.16: “Beware lest you act corruptly by making a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female.”

In the verse at hand, *moshav* as seat can be a throne and is found last in 6.16 as habitation but not noted there. Upon this throne (as well as dwelling place) is the image of jealousy (*qin’ah*: cf. 5.13 but not noted there) which presents a fearful sight mirroring the spirit of those who had set it up. Note that in this self-absorbed situation the image provokes a sentiment identical to itself, the verb being *qana’* which is the root of the noun. “And all the trees of Eden envied it” [21.9]. And so this statue is more than an inanimate object; it’s something alive with one goal in mind, to make everyone like itself.

To Ezekiel’s surprise as intimated by *hineh* (cf. vs. 2), he found the Lord’s glory or *kavod* (cf. 3.12) present right in there with the image of jealousy. Obviously the two are aware of each other, sizing each other up and waiting to see what will happen next. Essentially this was the same vision (*mar’eh*, cf. vs. 3) had when Ezekiel was in the plain as recounted in 3.22 after which the Spirit had entered him. In that verse he makes reference to 1.28, the glory of the Lord at the River Chebar. Thus three instances of glory...*kavod*...are tied in with each other.

Vs. 5 takes away Ezekiel’s attention fixed upon the Lord’s glory to the direction of the north, *derek* (cf. 7.3) meaning way or road and implying a direct connection between him and the end to which *derek* lay. That, in turn, leads to the image of jealousy north of the altar gate. Next the (vs. 6) Lord makes known to the prophet activity transpiring there, namely, abominations or *tohevah* (cf. 7.2). Not just a few Israelites but the entire nation is present committing these foul deeds with the specific intent to drive out the Lord from his sanctuary. If that weren’t bad enough, the Lord says that he will show Ezekiel even greater abominations. While the language used is as though he were present, in actuality Ezekiel remains suspended between earth and heaven, held there by the Spirit.

In vs. 7 the Lord brings—again through that eagle-like vision from above—to the door of the temple’s court, *chatser* also applicable to a village. “And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord” [vs. 16]. Here he peeps through a hole in the wall after which he dug through it and came across a door where the Lord bids him to enter and see not just the abominations (*tohevah*) but ones which are described as vile or *rah* (cf. 7.5), this being in accord with the “greater abominations” promised him in vs. 6.

Although Ezekiel broke through a wall—and this certainly caused considerable noise—he didn’t rouse suspicion by those committing such abominations. They didn’t bother to turn and see him because they were too engaged in their feverish, demon-like activity. If by chance they did see him, immediately they’d rush at him as one man. What Ezekiel saw and beheld (*hineh* again) were images upon the wall described as creeping things, loathsome beasts and every idol belonging to the house of Israel, “house” here implying that the dwelling places of each Israelite mirrored this abomination. *Remesh* is the noun

for creeping things, usually applicable to reptiles. “And all creeping things that creep on the ground” [38.20]. As for the beasts, they are loathsome or *sheqets* being a noun. “If anyone touches an unclean thing...or any unclean abomination...that person shall be cut off from his people” [Lev 7.21]. As for idols, the noun is *gilulym* (cf. 6.9), this term appearing thirty-eight times in the Book of Ezekiel.

In vs. 11 standing before the creeping things, loathsome beast and Israel’s idols are seventy elders of Israel with Jaazaniah among them, *betok* (cf. 7.4) indicating that he is in their very midst as the center of a circle. A footnote to the NIV says that is not the same Jaazaniah as in 11.1; the name means “The Lord hears” which is ironical, given the situation. He is hearing, of course, but in a wholly different fashion. Each of the seventy elders were offering incense to the three abominations, the cloud produced making the atmosphere all the more frightening to behold.

In vs. 12 the Lord asks Ezekiel somewhat rhetorically if he can see what is transpiring in the darkness or *choshek*, this noun also meaning misery or adversity. “All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you and put darkness upon your land, says the Lord” [32.8]. Synonymous with this darkness...adversity...are seventy rooms full of pictures, one room for each elder. *Cheder* refers to an inner apartment as in Sg 1.4: “The king has brought me into his chambers.” As for the pictures, they comprise the three abominations just mentioned, the noun being *maskyth*. “You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no graven image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to them” [Lev 26.]. That reference continues with the Lord commanding Israel to revere his sanctuary, the action at hand being a flagrant violation.

Apparently each of the seventy elders are saying to each other as well as to themselves that they are performing these deeds because the Lord has forsaken the land, *hazav*. “The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see” [9.9]. And so the *choshek* or darkness which serves to conceal from the Lord what’s going on in these chambers turns out to be symbolic of despair. It’s a clear indication that the elders are doing something which they would rather not do but find themselves in a situation where they must continue with it and suffer the consequences.

Vs. 13 repeats pretty much what the Lord said in vs. 6, that Ezekiel will see greater abominations which to him must have been inconceivable. At this juncture the prophet is grateful for being suspended between heaven and earth, sufficiently distant and therefore uncontaminated from what he must behold.

Vs. 13 has the Lord bringing Ezekiel to the north gate of the Lord’s house or temple, this time to behold women weeping for Tammuz, this being the only biblical reference to the Babylonian fertility god. Supposedly this god dies seasonally at the height of summer. Then almost by being repetitious the Lord tells Ezekiel that he will see even greater abominations.

The next abomination on this tour of horrors, if you will, is the inner court of the temple, *chatser* (cf. vs. 7) along with the adjective *penymy* (cf. vs. 3). There between the porch and the altar are twenty-five men with their backs to the temple and their faces eastward worshipping the sun. Again the Lord asks a rhetorical question of Ezekiel followed by saying it's too light a thing for Judah to commit such an abomination (*tohevah*, cf. vs. 9) and fill the land with violence or *chamas* (cf. 7.23). Then the Lord makes the observation of how these men put a branch to their nose, the **RSV** having a footnote saying that this is a ceremonial gesture.

This strange drama reaches a climax in the last verse of Chapter Eight where the Lord vows revenge: show wrath (*chemah*, cf. 7.8), will not spare (*chus*, cf. 7.9), show no pity (*chamal*, cf. 7.9) and will not hear the Israelites even if they cry to him with a loud (*gadol* also means great) voice made all the more pitiful by reason of doing this in the Lord's ear. At this point Ezekiel certainly hoped that the Lord wouldn't show him greater abominations as had been the case several times earlier.

Son of man: 6

Davar of the Lord: 0

Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

1) naphal, 2) ra'ah, hineh, demuth, mar'eh, zohar, chashmal, 3) tavnyth, ruach, mar'eh, petach, shahar, penymy, panah, tsaphon, semel, moshav, qin'ah, qana', 4) hineh, kavod, mar'eh, 5) derek, 6) tohevah, 7) chatser, 9) tohevah, rah, 10) remesh, sheqesh, gilulym, 11) betok, 12) choshek, cheder, maskyth, hazav, 16) chatser, penymy, 17) tohevah, chamas, 18) chemah, chus, chamal, gadol

Chapter Nine

1) Then he cried in my ears with a loud voice saying, "Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand." 2) And lo, six men came from the direction of the upper gate which faces north, every man with his weapon for slaughter in his hand, and with them was a man clothed in linen with a writing case at his side. And they went in and stood beside the bronze altar. 3) Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherubim on which it rested to the threshold of the house; and he called to the man clothed in linen who had the writing case at his side. 4) And the Lord said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." 5) And to the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him and smite; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity; 6) slay old men outright, young men and maidens, little children and women, but touch no one upon whom is the mark. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were before the house. 7) Then he said to them, "Defile the house and fill the courts with the slain. Go forth." So they went forth and smote in the city. 8) And while they were smiting, and I was left alone, I fell upon my face and cried, "Ah Lord God! will you destroy all that

remains of Israel in the outpouring of your wrath upon Jerusalem?" 9) Then he said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of blood and the city full of injustice; for they say, 'The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see.' 10) As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will requite their deeds upon their heads." 11) And lo, the man clothed in linen with the writing case at his side brought back word saying, "I have done as you have commanded me."

A short but quite frightful chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-* (then) which shows the immediate connection with the last verse of the last chapter: "I will deal in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity." The sense of the opening verse is intensified by the Lord speaking in Ezekiel's ears, *qara'* intimating a calling out with a voice that's not only loud but literally "great" (*gadol*, cf. 8.18). Although not noted, 9.18 uses this verse with regard to Israel crying out to the Lord. Given the circumstances, it's as though the two instances of *qara'* cancel each other out. The possibility for any dialogue no longer exists. In a way, this puts the Lord in a predicament he has to resolve, and it must be causing Ezekiel considerable anxiety as to how he will do it.

The Lord is addressing executioners, *pequdah* meaning a person in charge or having oversight. "They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple" [44.11]. Apparently this office includes more than an executioner commonly understood and refers to those who govern Jerusalem. The *qara'* of the Lord through the medium of Ezekiel reaches out to these men (the number isn't given) who are to draw near or *qarav*. "The days are at hand, and the fulfilment of every vision" [12.23]. When they do this *qarav* which in this instance could involve Ezekiel but only as spectator, they come with weapons in their hands, *mashchyth* (cf. 5.16 but not noted there) which reads literally as "weapons for destruction."

Vs. 2 begins with *hineh* (cf. 8.4) or "lo" which signifies the astonishment by these executioners as well as Ezekiel upon seeing six men coming from the upper gate area. The verse says specifically "from the north," intimating that they having been in that area associated with abominable practices. These men come with weapons as well, *kely* being a general term applicable to any kind of instrument. Accompanying them is a man who stands out by reason of being clothed in linen and a writing case, *qeseth* having two other biblical references, vss. 3 and 11. Once these executioners have assembled—six men and the scribe—they stand by the bronze altar (cf. Ex 27.1-5) situated in the courtyard which is by the gate to the tabernacle. Were they to wait for Ezekiel, a priest, to offer sacrifice there? Nobody knew for certain, but just the fact that they were ordered to come armed gives a definite sense of foreboding. Furthermore, they were fully aware of the abominations that had taken place and figured it was their duty to rectify the situation.

Vs. 3 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now" which is in accord with the other conjunctives here and is indicative of the rapidity of events. The glory or *kavod* (cf. 8.4) of the Lord is described as having gone up from the cherubim on which it rested, that is,

the temple's threshold. This is the first instance where these angelic-like creatures are mentioned in Ezekiel, having been fashioned to protect the ark of the Lord which is described in Chapter Twenty-Five (etc.) in Exodus. Their first biblical appearance is at the entrance to the Garden of Eden to prevent the man from returning there (cf. Gen 3.24). In the verse at hand, the divine *kavod* is on the threshold...that is, between the holy of holies and outer court, presented as already having gotten there. It's as though this *kavod* with a mind of its own is trying to decide whether to remain in the holy of holies or abandon it altogether. Thus we're presented with a moment, albeit brief, of high tension. Finally it's relieved or about to be relieved when this *kavod* summons the man clothed in linen.

In vs. 4 this scribe whose name isn't given but remains anonymous is to pass through Jerusalem or literally, *betok* (cf. 8.11) or in the very center of Jerusalem and mark the foreheads of certain person fretting over the abominations they have witnessed there. *Tav* is the noun for mark, usually in the form of a cross placed on animals to identify to whom they belong. It has two other biblical references, vs. 6 and Job 31.35, the latter being cited here: "Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!" *Tav* resembled the seal of Rev 7.3: "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

In the verse at hand it is easy to pick out such persons because they are moaning and groaning over the abominations (*tohevah*, cf. 8.17] their fellow Israelites are committing. In fact, it seems their number is minuscule. The two verbs are very similar in sound, *'anach* and *'anaq*, the latter having three other biblical references. As for these references, they are respectively as follows: "Why do you sigh" [21.7]? "Sigh, but not aloud" [24.17]. As for those so marked, they could tell something was about to happen even though the scribe marked them out and passed on as quickly as possible from one man to the next. Each one who had been sealed didn't dare speak to his neighbor because none of them didn't quite grasp what was going on. However, everyone had a clear intimation it wasn't for the good.

In vs. 5 the Lord speaks once again to the scribe having him say to the "others" in his hearing, literally as "in my ears," that is, Ezekiel as noted in vs. 1. The recently assembled executioners and six men are to follow after the scribe who stands out by reason of his linen garment. They are to slay those who don't have the mark on their foreheads which must have been the bulk of the city's population. Obviously it was a terrible assignment, putting to death their friends, neighbors and even family members including little children and women. This was not unlike the Levites whom Moses bade to slay those fellow Israelites who had worshiped the golden calf fashioned by Aaron (cf. Ex 32.27+). In sum, they are not to spare anyone nor show pity, *chus* and *chamal*, as in 8.18. The beginning point of this slaughter is significant, that is, the Lord's sanctuary or *miqdash* (cf. 5.11). After all, it was in this *miqdash* that the worst abominations were taking place, and the elders responsible for them were first to be put to death.

Ironically in vs. 7 the Lord bids those carrying out his command to defile (*tame'*, cf. 5.11) the house or temple...the irony consisting in the fact that they had done this already and will pay for it with their own bodies piled up inside. From the temple the executioners fanned out through the city and followed the pattern of the Levites, putting to death their very own. Ezekiel was left behind and fell upon his face crying to the Lord. He asks whether every inhabitant will be slain, knowing that those so marked will be spared. *Shachath* is the verb in vs. 8 for destroy and also means to act wickedly and is the direct result of divine wrath, *chemah* (cf. 8.18) upon Jerusalem.

Without the slightest pangs of regret the Lord responds unequivocally that he is doing the right thing. That is to say, in vs. 9 that the guilt or *havon* (cf. 7.16) both Israel and Judah is not just great but exceedingly so, *me'od*. The city is full of injustice, *muteh* being the only noun in the Bible. The Lord then quotes Israel saying with incredible presumption that he has forsaken them and does not see. No small wonder that this steels the resolve of the Lord against them, bringing down upon their heads a wrath they have never experienced.

Chapter Nine concludes with a simple statement by the anonymous scribe clothed in linen—and by this time his garment must have been stained thoroughly with blood—that he has completed what the Lord had commanded. Nothing is said of those who actually carried out the slaughter. Their only consolation was that they had obeyed the Lord just as the Levites had done.

Son of man: 0

Davar of the Lord: 0

Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

1) *qara'*, *qarav*, *mashchyth*, 2) *hineh*, *kely*, *qeseth*, 3) *kavod*, 4) *betok*, *tav*, *tohevah*, *'anach*, *'anaq*, 5) *chus*, *chamal*, *miqdash*, 7) *tame'*, 8) *shachath*, *chemah*, 9) *havon*, *me'od*, *muteh*

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 cherubim’s 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 *qol* (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 *qol*. This harkens back to the vision of the throne chariot in 1.24, *qol* 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: 0

Davar of the Lord: 0

Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 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