

Ezekiel

(CFM: Ezk. 1-3; 33-34; 36-37; 47)

The Book of Ezekiel presents the words of Ezekiel son of Buzi, a prophet and a priest, and one of the Jerusalemites exiled to Babylonia with King Jehoiachin in 597 BCE by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24.8-17). Like his older contemporary Jeremiah, Ezekiel lived through the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 and the early years of the Babylonian exile. **He presents some of the most theologically challenging and dynamic material among the prophets of the Bible, and some of the most difficult and bizarre passages.** His literary style is intricate, with striking imagery and extended metaphors. Many of his oracles are in prose, unlike the other classical prophets. Some of his visions border on the apocalyptic, and may be early examples of this type of literature. He wrestles with the problems posed by the tragedies of Jerusalem's destruction and the Babylonian exile: Why did God allow the Temple and Jerusalem to be destroyed? Why did God allow the people of Israel to be carried away into exile? What future is there for Israel?

The book of Ezekiel, like other biblical writings, attempts to justify the tragedy of the Babylonian exile by arguing that it was a divine punishment for the people's sin and by pointing to God's mercy in the future restoration. It contends that God intends to uphold the covenant with Israel for the sake of the sanctity of the divine name by restoring a remnant of the people to the land of Israel and placing a new Temple at its center. This new Temple is envisioned in detail at the end of the book. Indeed, the most famous chapter in Ezekiel (37), the prophecy concerning the valley of the dry bones, is part of that vision of restoration.

Ezekiel is both a priest and a prophet, and his writings are best understood as a combination of these aspects of his identity. As a priest of the House of Zadok (Zadok was appointed by Solomon as the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple [1 Kings 2.35], he calls upon his own background to make his case... Ezekiel is keenly aware of his role as a prophet-as a watchman for Israel whose task is to warn of impending danger. His religious experiences are prophetic, as are his visions, symbolic actions, and oracles. They draw heavily upon Temple imagery and priestly practice, but they are couched in prophetic forms of discourse. His vision of the divine throne chariot or Presence of God in Ezekiel 1 appears to him in Babylonia, but it is based upon the features of the Ark of the Covenant that was housed in the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple. His portrayal of Jerusalem's destruction in chapter 9 employs elements of priestly sacrifice at the altar, but it is the Temple itself that is destroyed...

Tradition maintains that Ezekiel begins with judgment and ends in consolation. Modern scholars generally follow this view by arguing that the book falls largely into three major parts: oracles of judgment against Jerusalem and Israel (chapters 1-24); oracles of judgment against the nations (chapters 25-32); oracles of restoration for Jerusalem and Israel at the center of the world (chapters 33-48)...

Insofar as the priests served in the Temple for twenty years, from the age of thirty to the age of fifty (see Num. 4.23, 39; but note Num. 8.23-26, which specifies active service for the Levites from the age of twenty-five to the age of fifty), **it would appear that the book is designed to portray Ezekiel's career in keeping with the period of active service for a priest.** This chronological ordering, where the progression of the oracles is connected to the progress of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, is unique among major prophetic books, which are not otherwise organized chronologically. This ordering,

however, compensates for many of the other strange features of the book, and makes it relatively easy to understand.¹

The Call of the Prophet Ezekiel (Ezk. 1.1-3.27)

1. Situating the history of Ezekiel's life (Ezk. 1.1-3).
 - a. "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity" (Ezk. 1.1-2).²
2. Ezekiel's Vision of God (Ezk. 1.4-28).
 - a. Do not be afraid of not knowing!³
 - b. The four living creatures and the chariot (1.4-14).⁴
 - i. "Four living ones" אַרְבַּע חַיִּוֹת (Ezk. 1.5). This could represent the Lady of the Temple.⁵

¹ *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1042-1044.

² This is the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin, 5 Tammuz, 593 BCE.

³ The Prophet Joseph Smith said: "I make this broad declaration, that whenever God gives a vision of an image, or beast, or figure of any kind, He always holds Himself responsible to give a revelation or interpretation of the meaning thereof, otherwise we are not responsible or accountable for our belief in it. Don't be afraid of being damned for not knowing the meaning of a vision or figure, if God has not given a revelation or interpretation of the subject." *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Deseret Book, 1993, p. 291.

⁴ A description of God's throne (Ezk. 1.26) shows living beings associated with it (Ezk. 1.4-14). The writer of Chronicles says that David had told Solomon of his plans for a golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings (1 Chron. 28.18); in other words, **the cherubim formed a chariot throne exactly as depicted in several Canaanite carvings of the period**. This was the throne of the Lord of which Hezekiah spoke: "O Lord of Hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim" (Isa. 37.16). 1 Kings says nothing about this chariot throne. One wonders why; it must have been a part of the cult, the place of the presence of Yahweh. Later texts had vivid descriptions of this throne at the center of the heavenly world. The account in 1 Kings also omits to mention the great curtain. In front of the *debir*, says the Chronicler, was a curtain, "the veil of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen," with cherubim worked upon it (2 Chron. 3.14). **Later writers said that it represented the material world and thus came between the worshipper and the presence of God. Both the throne and the curtain seem to have expressed important aspects of the theology of the royal cult, and yet the dominant strand of the Old Testament omits both**. One possible explanation for this silence is that the tradition represented by 1 Kings, that of the Deuteronomists, did not agree with those aspects of the temple represented by the veil and the throne. The role of the Deuteronomists in transmitting the accounts of Israel's history may be one of the reasons why so little is known of the ancient cult. Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem*, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008, p. 27-28, emphasis added.

⁵ Margaret Barker explains: "Ezekiel, who was a priest in the first temple and was deported to Babylon, described how the Lady left the temple. In his two visions of the chariot throne, the one as it left the temple and the other as it appeared to him on the banks of the River Chebar in Babylon, he described a male and female figure. **Most English versions of these chapters (Ezek.1 and 10) attempt to cope with the confusing Hebrew by smoothing over the evidence for what Ezekiel was actually describing. There are four (feminine) Living Ones in human form (Ezek.1.5), and they had four faces/presences, wings and hands. In the midst of the Living Ones was fire, and she/they were in the midst of a wheel within a wheel, and the rings were full of points of light/eyes. Wherever the Spirit went, the wheels went, because the Spirit of the Living One, (feminine singular) was in the wheels**

- ii. Four living creatures – possible guardians of the throne of God (Ezk. 1.5).⁶
- iii. “And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass” (Ezk. 1.7, KJV).⁷
- iv. They had the hands of a man... they four had their faces and their wings... their wings were joined one to another... they had the face of a man, and the face of a lion... the face of an ox... also the face of an eagle (Ezk. 1.8-10).⁸

(Ezek.1.20). Over the heads (plural) of the Living One (fem. singular) there was the likeness of the firmament, like the gleam of terrible ice/crystal, and above this there was a throne on which was a human form, the likeness of the glory of the LORD (Ezek.1.28). Immediately after this vision, Ezekiel was given a scroll and told to eat it (Ezek.3.1-2). **Since Ezekiel was describing the heavenly throne, this must have been how he imagined the Holy of holies; the throne, and beneath it the gleaming firmament, and beneath that, a fourfold fiery, female figure with wings and hands.** Ezekiel heard a sound *קְקוֹל־שָׁדַי* ‘like the voice of Shaddai’, **which must have been the name of the Living One** (Ezek.1.24; 10.5). There is a similar description in chapter 10, where he described the Glory leaving the temple: ‘As for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel’ (Ezek.10.10 AV); ‘All their body (singular body, plural suffix) was full of points of light’ (Ezek.10.12); ‘She is the Living One that I saw by the River Chebar (Ezek.10.15); **הִיא הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּנְהַר־כְּבָר** **‘She is the Living One** I saw beneath the God of Israel by the River Chebar’ (Ezek.10.20). One very obscure verse (Ezek.10.12) seems to say that all flesh, that is, all created things, were the points of light within the wheels. **This was the Lady as Ezekiel knew her, leaving the temple.** We are accustomed to translating the plural form *elohim* as God, singular; it is likely that the Living One was also described in singular and plural forms. What Ezekiel saw was a wheel within a wheel, (or a ring within a ring), and those rings were full of points of light. **In the midst of the rings was a fourfold fiery female figure, the Living One, with hands and wings.** Overhead was the firmament, gleaming like ice, and above this, the heavenly throne. Ezekiel was then given a scroll. The Living One whom Ezekiel saw leaving the temple must have been the Queen of Heaven, Wisdom. **It is remarkable how many details of Ezekiel’s vision appear in the ikon of the Holy Wisdom.** Margaret Barker, [Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?](#), 2001, p. 6, emphasis added.

⁶ Besides praising God, these living creatures may have another important function. In other apocalyptic literature such creatures, called cherubim, act as guardians of the throne of God and at times as guides. Cherubs are always associated with God but more especially in two capacities: as his steeds or chariots, as in Ezekiel 1, and as guardian figures keeping safe the way of God, as here in Revelation. They seem to work with the Seer particularly in the capacity as guides. At specific points they open up portions of the vision for him to view. Richard Draper, [Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator](#), Deseret Book, 1991, p.49.

⁷ This verse has many difficulties and contains evidence that the text has been edited. Zimmerli, [Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24](#), Fortress Press, 1988, p. 83. The LXX of this verse “καὶ τὰ σκέλη αὐτῶν ὀρθὰ καὶ **πτερῶται** οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν καὶ **σπινθήρες** ὡς ἔξαστράπτων χαλκός καὶ ἑλαφραὶ αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν” can be read as “And their legs were straight, even their **winged** feet **sparkled** flashing out like lightning bronze and light as their wings” (Ezk. 1.7, my translation).

⁸ As the vision proceeds, it becomes progressively difficult to sort out visually what these creatures and the moving composite they make up look like. **Two and a half millennia of exegetes have labored in vain to work out all the details.** A certain bewilderment may well have been Ezekiel’s intention. There are abundant repetitions of phrases through the passage, some of them probably quite deliberate in order to create an incantatory effect, although at least a couple of them seem to be the product of scribal inadvertence. Alter, p. 1054, emphasis added. If we compare these magnificent beings with those described in the Book of Revelation, we find some provocative parallels. Ezekiel’s description of “living creatures... lifted up from the earth... (with) wheels... lifted up” (Ezekiel 1:19) is similar to John’s description of a “sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle...” (Revelation 4:6-7) From Joseph Smith we learn that the beasts are literal creatures but that they also describe

- c. The four wheels (1.15-21).
 - i. "A wheel in the midst of a wheel" (Ezk. 1.16).⁹
- d. The colorful *raqia*/firmament (Ezk. 1.22-28).
 - i. The Kavod of God (Ezk. 1.28).¹⁰
 - ii. "The conception underlying the description of God and his place of habitation, as it had crystallized in Israelite Priestly theology, **is patently an anthropomorphic one**... within the inner recesses of the tabernacle, removed

"heaven, the paradise of God, the happiness of man... (and) represent the glory of the classes of beings in their destined order or sphere of creation, in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity" (D&C 77:2-3). Ezekiel lists the similar creatures in Ezekiel 1:10. **These four creatures find a similar counterpart in the lower portion of facsimile 2 as well.** The number of them could also be significant as there were two cherubim sewn into the veil of the temple as well as two cherubim on the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. **These beings could represent the guardians of the throne of God.**

⁹ The wheel in the midst of the wheel... sounds a lot like Plato's circle of the same and the circle of the diverse... Ezekiel's vision... is a very good example among similar visions in the scriptures... (where) we can see both "whirling, turning, rolling, helical" movement(s)... and see that it all takes place within the context of the ancient geocentric matrix of the sacred cosmos of ancient scripture. Frederick Huchel, *The Cosmic Ring Dance of the Angels: An Early Christian Rite of the Temple*, Frithurex Press, p. 91.

¹⁰ Ezk. 1.28 reads, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory (*kavod* כְּבוֹד) of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake." **The Nature of the Kavod:** Knowledge of the underlying imagery of the concept of *kavod*, which is embedded in Priestly tradition, is provided by Ezekiel whose ideology and divine imagery is grounded on Priestly doctrine. **In Ezekiel 1, the *kavod* is described as an envelope of fire and brightness conveyed on a chariot.** From afar, the apparition is like a blazing fire upon a great cloud swept by a storm wind (1:4). It is this radiance and brightness of the *kavod* which made Moses' face radiant after he spoke with God (Ex. 34:29–35). This characteristic feature of God, i.e., His being surrounded by an aureole or nimbus, is salient in the description of gods in Mesopotamia. The terms denoting the halo of the gods in Mesopotamia, *pulhu-melammu*, actually correspond to the Hebrew *kavod-yir'ah* and indeed refer to the flame and fire enveloping the Godhead. Like the Tabernacle and Temple in Israel, the Mesopotamian shrines and chapels were clad with the *melammu*, i.e., the divine splendor. The *kavod* is said to cover (cf. Hab. 3:3, *ksh*) and fill (Num. 14:21; Isa. 6:3, *ml'*) heaven and earth. The same idea occurs in connection with the *pulhu-melammu* in Akkadian expressed by the verbs *katāmu* and *malû* which are identical with the Hebrew *ksh* and *ml'*. The Akkadian *pulhu-melammu* is often employed in connection with overwhelming the enemy and terrifying him. This is in fact expressed in Isaiah 2 where on the "day of the Lord" God appears in "terror" and "majestic glory" (*paḥad* YHWH *ve-hadar ge'ono*) a pair of concepts which can now be better understood on the basis of the Mesopotamian parallels.

The correspondence of *pulhu-melammu* to *kavod-yir'ah* may be discerned in some other biblical descriptions. The Mesopotamian god imparts his *melammu* to the king who is the god's representative and thus endows him with divine power. **When the god rejects the king and deprives him of the *melammu*, the king no longer continues to reign by divine grace.** Reflections of these beliefs may also be discerned in biblical literature. **Though the Priestly document describes only Moses as being endowed with the divine radiance, biblical wisdom and psalmodic literature describe man in general, in contexts in which he is likened to a king, as being endowed with the divine kavod and splendor:** "Thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with *kavod* and splendor" (Ps. 8:6). **If man becomes unworthy then God deprives him of the divine *kavod*:** "He has stripped me of my *kavod* and taken the crown from my head" (Job 19:9). Divine Presence, The Nature of the Kavod, [The Jewish Virtual Library](#), accessed 10.3.2022.

and veiled from the human eye, sits the Deity enthroned between the two cherubim, and at his feet rests the ark, his footstool.”¹¹

3. Ezekiel’s Prophetic Call (Ezk. 2.1-10).
4. His Commission (Ezk. 3.1-27).
 - a. Ezekiel is told to eat the book (Ezk. 3.1-3). Compare this to Revelation 10.1-11.¹²

Prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezk. 4.1-24.27)

1. Symbolic Prophecies of Ezekiel (Ezk. 4.1-5.17).
 - a. The Tile – A sign of the siege of Jerusalem (Ezk. 4.1-3).
 - b. The prophet bears the guilt of Israel and Judah symbolized by his posture (Ezk. 4.4-8).
 - c. The Scarcity of Food (Ezk. 4.9-11).
 - d. The Divine Shaving (Ezk. 5.1-4a).
 - e. The Commission to Preach to the House of Israel (Ezk. 5.4b-17).
2. Prophecies Through Sermons (Ezk. 6.1-7.27).
 - a. Death upon the Mountains of Israel (Ezk. 6.1-14).
 - b. The Bitter Day and the End (Ezk. 7.1-27).
3. Prophecies Through Visions (Ezk. 8.1-11.25).
 - a. Abominations in Jerusalem (Ezk. 8.1-18).
 - i. Ezekiel sees the women weeping for Tammuz (Ezk. 8.14).
 - b. A Vision of the Destruction of the Inhabitants of Jerusalem (Ezk. 9.1-11).
 - c. A Vision of the Burning of Jerusalem (Ezk. 10.1-22).
 - i. He is with you in your Exile: An analysis of Ezk. 10.18-19 and 11.23-25.¹³

¹¹ Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992, 191.

¹² In every instance, the reaction of these individuals having these experiences is one of obedience. They “eat their mission up” so to speak. This is a great message for the youth of the Church in the Latter-days. Yes we are surrounded with forces of darkness. Yes we do have reasons to want to slacken our pace; but by “eating the book” we not only find that there is sweetness to the work, but we also find the power and strength to withstand the bitterness. Whether we want to face it or not, this world has its share of bitterness. Choosing to the live life without the gospel will not make the bitterness go away, but we will lose the Spirit if we leave the straight and narrow path. Asking questions to this end will bring about a great discussion in the classroom. “When have you felt the sweetness of your calling? What happened? How did serving the Lord change you personally?” While some of these questions can be advanced for some seminary students depending on age and experience, many youth have experience in tasting the sweetness of the gospel in their lives. Mike Day, [Ezekiel’s Vision: Ezekiel 1-3](#).

¹³ This vision draws on ancient Near Eastern traditions in which gods abandon their cities in anger, leaving them to their destruction by another god. The primary difference is that Yahweh, rather than another god, brings the

- d. A Vision of the Wicked Princes and the *Kavod*/Glory Leaving Jerusalem (Ezk. 11.1-25).
 - i. There is hope: Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come... I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. (Ezekiel 11.16-17)
 - ii. “And the glory (כבוד) of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.¹⁴ Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity.” (Ezk. 11.23-24).
- 4. God’s Judgment portrayed through Signs and Parables (Ezk. 12.1-24.27).
 - a. Ezekiel’s Symbolic Act concerning the Exile (Ezk. 12.1-7).
 - i. Therefore, mortal, get yourself gear for exile, and go into exile by day before their eyes. Go into exile from your home to another place before their very eyes; perhaps they will take note, even though they are a rebellious breed. Carry out your gear as gear for. exile by day before their very eyes; and go out again in the evening before their eyes, as one who goes out into exile” (Ezk. 12.3-4 JPS trans).
 - b. Ezekiel’s Explanation for the Symbolic Action (Ezk. 12.8-16).
 - c. A Sign of Trembling (Ezk. 12.17-28).
 - d. An Oracle concerning False Prophets (Ezk. 13.1-23).¹⁵

destruction himself. Moreover, ***Yahweh does not retire to the heavens or remain with those left behind in Judah.*** In Ezekiel, those left behind are guilty. ***Instead, Yahweh moves east with the exiles who have been spared.*** The end of the book relates a further vision of the restored Temple (Ezek. 43). In this vision, Ezekiel sees the *kavod*, returning from the east: And there, coming from the east with a roar like the roar of mighty waters, was the Presence of the god of Israel, and the earth was lit up by his Presence... the Presence of Jehovah entered the Temple by the gate that faced eastward. A spirit carried me into the inner court, and lo, the presence of Yahweh filled the Temple. (43:2, 4-5) ***Just as the divine presence went eastward with the exiles in Ezekiel 8, so it will return with the exiles at the time of reestablishment of Israel in her home. What is significant here is the idea that Yahweh is not linked to a particular place, but to a particular people. Yahweh is with his people even in exile.*** Christine Hayes, [Introduction to the Bible](#), Yale University Press, 2012, p. 301, emphasis added. Compare this idea with the description of God in Mosiah 24.11-25.

¹⁴ Rabbinic tradition identifies the hill east of the city as the Mount of Olives, and claims that the divine Presence remained there for three and a half years hoping that Israel would repent (*Lam. Rab. 25*). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1062

¹⁵ Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel condemns prophets who announce well-being for the people of Israel (Jer. chapters 27-28; cf. 23.9-40; 29.20-28). 2: Ezekiel charges that they prophesy out of their own imagination rather than speaking the word of God. He compares them to jackals (lit. "foxes"), animals associated with ruins. Instead of helping to prevent the destruction, the prophets preside over it. *Ibid.*, p. 1064.

- e. A Message against False Prophets and Diviners (Ezk. 14.1-11).¹⁶
- f. An Oracle concerning Individual Righteousness (Ezk. 14.12-23).¹⁷
- g. The Parable of the Useless Vine (Ezk. 15.1-8).
- h. The Allegory of Jerusalem as the Adulterous Wife of Jehovah (Ezk. 16.1-63).
 - i. Her youth (Ezk. 16.1-4).
 - ii. Her sins (Ezk. 16.15-34).
 - iii. Her condemnation (Ezk. 16.35-52).
 - iv. Her restoration (Ezk. 16.53-63).
- i. The Allegory of the Eagles, the Vine, and the Cedar (Ezk. 17.1-24).
- j. Israel is Punished for Her Own Sins (Ezk. 18.1-32).¹⁸
 - i. "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" (Ezk. 18.23).¹⁹
- k. Lamenting for the Princes of Israel (Ezk. 19.1-14).
 - i. "What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions" (Ezk. 19.2).
 - ii. "He was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt" (Ezk. 19.4).²⁰

¹⁶ Here and in the following section, Ezekiel uses the form of case law, familiar from ancient Near Eastern and biblical law collections, to frame his address. As a priest, he would have been especially familiar with this type of law (see 7.26; 22.26; Jer. 18.18). Divination is prohibited in the Bible because it is associated with idolatry and apostasy (Deut. 13.2-6; Isa. 2.6-9). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1065.

¹⁷ **Ezekiel claims that individual people are responsible for their own moral actions and that the wicked will not be saved because of the few among them who are righteous.** Abraham (Gen. 18) argued with God to save Sodom if there could be found in it the minimum number of righteous people; Ezekiel argues that Jerusalem could not be saved even for the three most righteous. *Ibid.*, p. 1066, emphasis added.

¹⁸ The prophet disputes the view that Israel's punishment is due to the sins of past generations. **Instead, each individual is responsible for his or her own actions.** Contrast the Decalogue (Exod. 20.5; Deut. 5.9), which indicates that God visits "the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me" (Exod. 34.7). The opposing view is quoted as a proverb, "Parents eat sour grapes and their children's teeth are blunted." Jeremiah takes up the same proverb to argue for individual moral responsibility in the future (see Jer. 31.29-30), but for Ezekiel this principle of individual responsibility is already currently operative. **It allows the individuals in exile to free themselves from the guilt that is ultimately responsible for the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem.** *Ibid.*, p. 1073, emphasis added.

¹⁹ This verse illustrates the character of God. He desires nothing but the happiness of man. Elder James E. Talmage addressed this issue in 1930 when he said, "Hell is no place to which a vindictive judge sends prisoners to suffer and to be punished principally for his glory; but it is a place prepared for the teaching, the disciplining of those who failed to learn here upon the earth what they should have learned." His full address can be read [here](#).

²⁰ **The lion symbolizes the tribe of Judah and the, royal House of David** (Gen. 49.8-12). A lioness was your mother refers to Judah or all Israel. Note the identification of Israel or Jerusalem as the bride of God in Hosea 1-3; Zeph. 3.14-20; Jer. 2-3; Isa. 49-54; 66. **The first cub who is brought with hooks to the land of Egypt is King Jehoahaz son**

- iii. Another whelp went down among the lions and learned to catch prey, and devoured men (Ezk. 19.5-6).²¹
 - iv. The next whelp is carried off to Babylon in chains (Ezk. 19.9).²²
 - v. The Imagery of the vine “plucked up in fury” and “hurled to the ground,” broken apart and dried up, planted in the desert, and left without a mighty rod (Ezk. 19.10-14).
- l. Israel’s Unfaithfulness (Ezk. 20.1-31).
 - m. A Promise of Future Restoration (Ezk. 20.32-44).
 - n. The Forest Fire (Ezk. 20.45-49).
 - o. The Sword (Ezk. 21.1-32).
 - i. A Prophecy against the Negev (Ezk. 21.1-5).
 - ii. The first oracle of God’s sword (Ezk. 21.6-12).
 - iii. The second oracle (Ezk. 21.13-22).
 - iv. The third oracle (Ezk. 21.23-37).
 - p. The Smelting Furnace of Judgment (Ezk. 22.1-31).
 - i. A Litany of Sins in Jerusalem (Ezk. 22.1-12).
 - i. Bloodshed (Ezk. 22.2-6).
 - ii. Base men shedding blood (Ezk. 22.9).
 - iii. Uncovering their father’s nakedness (Ezk. 22.10).
 - iv. Incest (Ezk. 22.11).
 - v. Bribery (Ezk. 22.12).
 - ii. God’s Judgment (Ezk. 22.13-22).
 - iii. An Oracle condemning the leadership of Jerusalem (Ezk. 22.23-31).
 - q. The Parable of two Sisters – Aholah and Aholibah (Ezk. 23.1-49).
 - i. Their identification (Ezk. 23.1-4).

of Josiah, who was exiled to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco after Josiah's death (2 Kings 23.31-34; 2 Chron. 36.1-4). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1075.

²¹ The second cub who learned to hunt prey ... devoured men would be [King Jehoiakim](#) (609-598 BCE) son of Josiah, whom Pharaoh Neco placed on the throne after exiling Jehoahaz. Jeremiah condemns Jehoiakim for his injustice (Jer. 21.11-22.19). *Ibid.*, p. 1076.

²² This third whelp refers to King Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim (also known as [Coniah or Jeconiah](#)), who was exiled to Babylon following Jehoiakim's failed revolt and death (2 Kings 24.8-17; 2 Chron. 36.9-10).

- r. אהלה Aholah/Oholah and אהליבה Aholibah/Oholibah (Ezk. 23.4).²³
 - i. Their infidelity (Ezk. 23.5-21).²⁴
 - ii. Their punishment (Ezk. 23.22-49).
- s. The Parable of the Boiling Pot (Ezk. 24.1-14).
- t. The Death of Ezekiel's Wife (Ezk. 24.15-27).²⁵

Oracles Against the Nations: Ezekiel 25.1-32.32

1. Ammon (Ezk. 25.1-7).
2. Moab (Ezk. 25.8-11).
3. Edom (Ezk. 25.12-14).
4. Philistia (Ezk. 25.15-17).
5. Tyre (Ezk. 26.1-28.19).²⁶
 - a. The overthrow of the *nagid of Tyre* (Ezk. 26.1-21).²⁷

²³ Oholah, "her tent," refers to Samaria (From the word for tent *ohel* אֹהֶל). The name Oholah alludes to the presence of God, who dwells in a tent (according to the exodus and wilderness traditions; see 2 Sam. 7.6). Oholibah, "my tent is in her," refers to Jerusalem and the presence of the Temple (Rashi, Radak). *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1084.

²⁴ Oholah's or Samaria's relations with the officers of Assyria presuppose its earlier alliance with Assyria under the Jehu dynasty, specifically, Menahem (2 Kings 15.17-22), and Hoshea (2 Kings 17.1-6). Ezekiel portrays this alliance as harlotry, and argues that it led to Israel's destruction (in 722 BCE). Ezekiel charges that Oholibah, Jerusalem, was even worse than her sister in pursuing both the Assyrians and the Chaldeans or Babylonians (Jer. 3 .6-10, 11). King Ahaz of Judah requested Assyrian assistance against Israel in the Syro-Ephraimitic War (2 Kings 16), and Hezekiah later made an alliance with Babylonia against Assyria (2 Kings 20.11-19; Isa. 39). The reference to relations with Egypt may recall Solomon's early alliance with Egypt (1 Kings 3.1) and Jehoiakim's support from Pharaoh Neco before he turned to Babylonia (2 Kings 23.31-24.7). *Ibid.*, p. 1084.

²⁵ The death of Ezekiel's wife symbolizes the destruction of Jerusalem, and in his treatment of it, Ezekiel makes it a radical symbolic action. The chapter seems to suggest that regular rituals of mourning are insufficient for the cataclysmic destruction of the Temple. *Ibid.*, p. 1088.

²⁶ Tyre, the preeminent maritime power of the ancient world, joined Judah in revolt against Babylonia (Jer. 27.3). The Phoenician city of Tyre was an island until its conquest in 332 BCE by Alexander the Great, who built an earthen corridor through the water to assault the city by land. Shortly after his conquest of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years. Although he was not able to conquer the city, it finally submitted to him. The large number of oracles about Tyre reflects its economic significance at this time. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1091.

²⁷ The oracle against the prince uses the word *nāgīd*, the conspicuous or prominent one, but elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures this word was used only for a Hebrew king, prince, temple official or high priest. This is the only example of its being used of a foreign ruler (Ezek.28.2). See F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, [A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament](#), Hendrickson Publishers, 2020, p.617–8.

- i. “They shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses” (Ezk. 26.12).²⁸
- ii. “I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon, thou shalt be built no more” (Ezk. 26.14).²⁹
- b. The lamentation of Tyre (Ezk. 27.1-36).
- c. The fall of the leader of Tyre (Ezk. 28.1-19). A story of temple imagery encoded within the text.³⁰
 - i. This is addressed “to the Prince of Tyre” לְנִגִּיד צָר (Ezk. 28.2).³¹

²⁸ This vivid depiction of Nebuchadrezzar’s army swarming through the streets of Tyre and destroying everything in sight was not realized historically. The Babylonian siege of Tyre went on for a very long time—according to Josephus, for thirteen years—but the city was never taken. Robert Alter, [The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary](#), Vol. 2, W.W. Norton & Co., 2018, p. 1128.

²⁹ Alter translates Ezekiel 26.14 as “And I will turn you into bare rock, a place for spreading fishnets she shall be. She shall not be built again” Robert Alter, p. 1129.

³⁰ One of the responses to this crisis (Adam, the first sacral king, being cast out of Eden, and losing his glory in the Genesis story) was Ezekiel’s twin oracles that now appear as oracles against Tyre. They were originally prompted by the expulsion of the sacral kings from the temple, Adam driven from Eden. The Eden stories encoded the story of the temple and its priesthood. The problems of Ezekiel 28 are well known and are not our concern today; suffice it to say that in second-temple Hebrew script, Tyre and Zion look very similar (Tyre צָר, Zion צִיּוֹן) and there was good reason to obscure the original object of Ezekiel’s condemnations. **The LXX of Ezekiel 28.13 has the cherub dressed in all the precious stones of the high-priest’s breastplate (Exod.28.17-20), but the Hebrew text here is shorter and the list is not complete. It is therefore less obvious in the Hebrew text that Ezekiel was describing an angel high priest in Zion, thrown from the holy mountain, the garden of Eden.** The text is full of difficulties such as a confusion of masculine and feminine forms, but these need not concern us here either, beyond observing that the original Adam was both male-and-female when set in the Eden temple. The difficulties are unlikely to have been in the original text, and so who would have wanted to introduce them and obscure the identity of the high priestly cherub? The cherub had been created full of wisdom, said Ezekiel, doubtless the source of Philo’s saying that cherub meant ‘full knowledge’ (Moses 2.97; Q Exod. 2.62). **The cherub was punished for corrupting Wisdom, and the description of the cherub’s destruction could well have been dawning on priestly memories of how Josiah destroyed the great tree.**

I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God...
 I cast you to the ground...
 I brought forth fire from the midst of you, it consumed you,
 And I turned you to ashes upon the earth
 in the sight of all who saw you (Ezek.28.16, 17, 18).

The Genesis Eden story, our main concern, is another reaction to the crisis, explaining why Adam the high priest was expelled from Eden. Whoever wrote this story knew more about Adam than is included in that text... The story of Adam and Eden has far more detail in texts that are assumed to be later, and it is also assumed that these details were the product of a later imagination. They are more likely to have been memories, preserved outside the canonical texts, that Adam wore garments of light and the LORD was enthroned by the tree of life. Margaret Barker, [Wisdom and the Other Tree: A Temple Theology Reading of the Genesis Eden](#), 2012, p. 4-5, emphasis added.

³¹ The Lxx uses ἀρχων *archōn*, ruler, in each case. The oracle against the prince uses the word *nāgîd*, the conspicuous or prominent one, **but elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures this word was used only for a Hebrew king, prince, temple official or high priest.** This is the only example of its being used of a foreign ruler (Ezek.28.2).

- ii. “You have said, I am God, for I sit in the seat of Elohim in the midst of the seas” (Ezk. 28.2).³²
- iii. Temple tradition portrayed **God’s throne as surrounded by the seas** (see Rev. 4.6; 15.2).³³
- iv. This prince has great wisdom, whereby he has increased in riches (Ezk. 28.5).
- v. “They shall bring thee down to the pit” (Ezk. 28.8), “thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers” (Ezk. 28.10).
- vi. Every precious stone was thy covering (Ezk. 28.13).³⁴

There is therefore a suspicion that the original oracle was not about a foreign ruler, especially as his punishment was to die the death of the uncircumcised, v.10. For a foreign ruler, this would have been his expected fate. Margaret Barker, *The Mother of the Lord: Volume 1: The Lady in the Temple*, T&T Clark, 2012, p. 343.

³² וַתֹּאמֶר אֵל אֲנִי מוֹשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים יֹשֵׁבִי בְּלֵב יַמִּים “And you have said, El am I, for I sit in the seat of Elohim in the midst of the seas” (my translation of this bit of Ezk. 28.2). Margaret Barker has this to say about the image of Eden as being “in the midst of the seas”: This ancient image of the sea does not appear in the Genesis account of Eden, but it is implicit in Ezekiel’s. He had spoken of the prince of Tyre (i.e. the patron angel of the city who ‘was’ the king) who became proud: ‘You said “I am a god. I sit in the seat of the gods in the heart of the seas ...”’ (Ezek. 28.2). ***The seat of the gods in the heart of the seas’ was the throne in the mountain garden of Eden*** from which he was expelled and thrown down to earth. Isaiah had described those who were worthy to dwell in the heights and see the king in his beauty (Isa. 33.16-17); those who walked in righteousness would see the LORD in his majesty, in a place of broad streams and rivers where no ship would sail (Isa. 33.21). ***In other words, he would see the throne in the midst of the sea.*** Psalm 24 is similar, but without mentioning the sea; whoever has clean hands and a pure heart will be able to ascend the hill of the LORD and stand in his holy place. ***The holy place was the garden of the LORD established in the midst of waters.*** Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, T&T Clark, 2000, p. 260-261, emphasis added. In another of her works, Barker addresses the image of the sea as it surrounds the holy mountain: “A tradition attributed to Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya’ir, who lived in the second century AD describes the temple thus: ‘The house of the holy of holies was made to correspond to the highest heaven. ***The outer Holy House was made to correspond to the earth, and the courtyard was made to correspond to the sea...***’ (Quoted in Patai, *Man and Temple*, p. 108). The interpreters of the Pentateuch said, ‘The court surrounds the temple just as the sea surrounds the world’ (*Numbers Rabbah* XIII.19). ***The Babylonian Talmud remembers that the white and blue marble of the temple walls looked like the waves of the sea*** (b. Sukkah 51b). All these are later texts, written after the temple had been destroyed, *but Josephus, who knew the temple, also said that the outer courtyard represented the sea.* He said that the tabernacle on which it was modelled, was divided into three parts: ‘and giving up two of them to the priests, as a place approachable and open to all, Moses signifies the earth and the sea since these too are accessible to all; but the third portion he reserved for God alone because heaven also is inaccessible to men (*Antiquities*, III, p. 181). Barker, *The Gate of Heaven*, p. 65, emphasis added. Later in this text she explains further, “Around Eden was the primeval sea whence monsters rose who lacked human form because they lacked the image of God. ***The sea was the unformed chaos of mortality from which, according to Genesis 1, the Spirit of God drew forth the stable creation...*** ‘The ruler separated the watery substance to one region and the dry substance to another region. And from the (one) matter he created a dwelling place for himself. He called it heaven. And from the (other) matter the ruler created a footstool He called it earth’ (*On the Origin of the World* CG II 5 101). *Could this have been the memory of an older belief that the divine presence passed from the heavens, through the veil of the temple and out onto the watery chaos which surrounded the sanctuary?*” Ibid., p. 102.

³³ In a Jewish story told at that time, Adam was driven out of the garden, and the archangel Michael had to freeze the waters around Paradise so that he could walk over. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, p. 345. See: [Life of Adam and Eve 29.3-4](#).

³⁴ The possibility that the proud prince of Ezekiel’s first oracle against ‘Tyre’ was the sacral king in Zion, is strengthened by the second oracle (Ezek.28.12-19), addressed to the king of ‘Tyre’. S/he was a male-female

- vii. “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth/guardeth” (Ezk. 28.14).³⁵
 - viii. “Thou wast in the holy mountain of God... in the midst of the stones of fire” (Ezk. 28.14).
 - ix. “I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire” (Ezk. 28.16).
 - x. “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty... I will cast thee to the ground... I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth” (Ezk. 28.17-18).
 - xi. Margaret Barker sees this vision of the corrupt prince of Tyre as the corruption of the cosmic king. This is a reversal of the original Adam.³⁶
5. Sidon (Ezk. 28.20-26).
 6. Egypt (Ezk. 29.1-32.32).

heavenly being in the garden of Eden, **a cherub dressed, according to the LXX of this passage, in the 12 jewels of the Jerusalem high priest, exactly as set out in Exodus 28.17-20**. In the Hebrew, the text is different and shorter, omitting some of the high priest’s jewels, which raises the question: did the translator of the LXX, produced in Egypt, preserve the original form of this text, or did s/he introduce the alien idea of **the king of Tyre as a heavenly figure who was identical to the Jerusalem high priest**? Or is the present Hebrew text the work of the correcting scribes, who removed an unflattering reference to the high priesthood that furthermore linked it to a female figure? Ben Sira knew that Wisdom herself had ministered in the holy tabernacle, and it was later said that the jewelled figure was Eve on her wedding day. Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, p. 347, emphasis added.

³⁵ Ezk. 28.14 starts out: אַתָּה כְּרֹב מִמְּשַׁח הַסּוּכָה “You are the cherub, stretched out/with outstretched wings/anointed (מִמְּשַׁח) that guards/protects” (My translation). Ezekiel’s original oracle about the cherub set in the mountain garden of Eden is likely to have addressed the cherub, ‘Thou art the anointed cherub ...’ (Ezek.28.14, AV). The cherub was set as ‘an anointed guardian’ [thus RSV]; ‘the anointed one that covereth’ [thus AV]; ‘stretched out and protecting’ *extensus et protegens* [Jerome]; but there are no equivalent words in the LXX. The Hebrew words are מִמְּשַׁח הַסּוּכָה *mimšāh. hasōkēk*, and the consonants *mmšh* were considered by RSV and AV to mean ‘anointed’, reading as a *pu’al* participle. Jerome’s translation implies another meaning for *mmšh*, ‘stretched out’, which is mentioned in the Gospel of Philip: ‘Messiah has two meanings, both ‘the Christ’ and ‘the measured.’ Now *mšh* does mean ‘measure’ in Aramaic, and this wordplay may be what Philo knew when he said that the Logos was the seal and the ‘pre-measurer’. Such a ‘stretched out’ cherub would have been like the cherubim who stretched out their wings from wall to wall across the holy of holies (1 Kgs 6.27). Since Ezekiel’s cherub was the guardian, *hasōkēk*, and the seal of the pattern/proportion, we should expect an active role, the measurer, rather than the measured, and thus read *mmšh* as *pi’el* rather than *pu’al*. Consistency would then require that the guardian cherub was not the anointed but the anointer, the one who poured out the oil which conferred ‘most holiness’ to whatever it touched. Margaret Barker, *Mother of the Lord*, p. 353.

³⁶ Ezekiel described the corrupted cherub as a corruption of the original Adam. Each characteristic of the glorious Adam was reversed or destroyed. The cherub was created as the seal; but because of corruption, the seal was loosened/defiled from the mountain of the *’elohîm* (Ezek.28.16, translating literally). **The original Adam was created to fill the earth with knowledge or with glory; the cherub was created full of wisdom but s/he became filled with violence. The original Adam was created to be great, but the cherub’s greatness had become greatness in trade and in iniquities (Ezek.28.12, 18). Instead of consecrating the holy places, the cherub had defiled them (Ezek.28.18). Instead of being glorious, from the root *pā’ar*, glorify, [later read as from *pārāh*, be fruitful], the cherub would become *’ēper*, ash. And whereas Wisdom had proclaimed: ‘I was brought forth’, *hōlaltî* (Prov.8.24, 25, a form of *hwl* that looks like *hll*); the cherub would have said an almost identical word, ‘I was profaned/destroyed’, *hullaltî*. *Mother of the Lord*, p. 354, emphasis added.**

- a. The great dragon (Ezk. 29.3).³⁷

Prophecies of the Restoration of the House of Israel: Ezekiel 33.1-39.29

1. Ezekiel's appointment as a Watchman (Ezk. 33.1-33).
2. Israel's Shepherds (Ezk. 34.1-31).
 - a. Shepherds that feed themselves (Ezk. 34.1-10).³⁸
 - b. "My servant David" the "one shepherd" shall feed them (Ezk. 34.11-31).
 - i. "I will be their God" and "my servant David a prince among the" (Ezk. 34.24).
 - ii. Fertility blessings (Ezk. 34.26-27).
 - iii. "I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger" (Ezk. 34.29).³⁹
3. The Rebirth of the Nation (Ezk. 35.1-36.38).
 - a. The Destruction of Edom (Ezk. 35.1-15).⁴⁰
 - b. The New Covenant with Israel (Ezk. 36.1-38).
 - i. "I will take you from the heathen... I will sprinkle clean water upon you... ye shall be clean... a new heart also will I give you... I will put my spirit within you... and ye shall dwell in the land (Ezk. 36.24-28).
4. The Valley of Dry Bones and the Reuniting of Judah and Joseph (Ezk. 37).

³⁷ Mighty monster, lit. "the great dragon." Egypt is compared to a dragon in Isa. 11.15, which employs the imagery of the seven headed Leviathan (Lothan) of Canaanite mythology, and in Isa. 30.7 to the sea dragon Rahab (see also Isa. 51.9-10; Job 9.13; 26.12-13; Ps. 89.9-10). The Nile river forms the natural "backbone" of Egypt and serves as the source of Egypt's life. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1098.

³⁸ "There aren't many places in which a leader can use a person who is struggling for worthiness. Unfortunately, it seems that those few situations in which we could use them—to offer prayers, to make brief responses, to bear testimony—are almost invariably reserved for the active: for the stake presidency, for the high council, for the bishopric, for the patriarch, for the auxiliary leaders. Indeed, we sometimes go to great lengths to import speakers and participants—to the loss of our hungry ones. At a ward sacrament meeting I attended recently a sister had been invited to sing whose husband was not active in the Church. He was, however, at the meeting. The bishop wanted a very special program for this occasion. His first announcement was: "Brother X, my first counselor, will give the opening prayer." His second counselor gave the closing prayer. How unfortunate, I thought. The three men in the bishopric struggle with such concern over the spiritually sick, then take the very medicine that would make those people well—activity, participation—and consume it themselves in front of the needy!" Boyd K. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled*, 16.

³⁹ וְהָקִמְתִּי לָהֶם מִטֵּעַ לְשֵׁם "And I will raise up to them a plant to the name" (Ezk. 34.29a, my translation).

⁴⁰ Ezekiel delivers contrasting oracles to Mount Seir, which personifies Edom, concerning judgment against Edom (see Isa 34; Jer. 49.7-22; Obadiah) and to the mountains of Israel concerning the restoration of Israel. The restoration here, as elsewhere in prophetic literature, envisions the restoration of both kingdoms, Israel and Judah. The oracles presuppose Edom's actions against Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian assault (see Obadiah 11-14; Ps. 137). This may explain their placement here, rather than with the earlier collection of oracles concerning the nations. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1110.

- a. An open valley with dry bones (Ezk. 37.1-2).⁴¹
- b. "These bones are the whole House of Israel" (Ezk. 37.11).⁴²
- c. The two sticks (Ezk. 37.15-28).⁴³
 - i. "take another stick, and write upon it, for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim" (Ezk. 37.16).⁴⁴ See also D&C 27.5 where the Lord references "The Stick of Ephraim" as the Book of Mormon.

⁴¹ Outside in the plain there opens before the prophet's eyes the terrifying picture of a field of corpses. The bones have been lying about unburied for a long time... already picked clean by the birds of the sky, stripped of their skin and flesh and sinews, bleached and dried out by the heat of the day... It is not only with his eyes that Ezekiel registers this death. He is led all over the field and in the fatigue caused by this action, **there is to be impressed upon him the idea that this is not simply a symbol of death but death in all its fulness-the great death.** Walther Zimmerli, [Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of Prophet Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48](#), Fortress Press, 1983, p. 258-259.

⁴² "As is common in Ezekiel's revelations, the symbolic activity or vision is followed by a clear interpretation. **'These bones are the whole house of Israel,'** the Lord said. The metaphor of scattered bones well describes Israel's pitiful condition: they had been destroyed as a nation, their temple and holy city lay in ruins, thousands of their number had been killed in the Babylonian invasion (and earlier invasions as well), and their Davidic monarch and thousands of their countrymen had been taken into exile. They lamented, 'our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts' (Ezek. 37:11). Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones announced to ancient and modern Israel that their scattering would not be forever. The Lord would bring them out of their graves, assemble their scattered parts, give them life, and reestablish them in their own land (Ezek. 37:12-14). **The image of resurrection in this passage shows that though the house of Israel were dead, it would be restored again-to life and to a renewed covenant with God.** Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi*, Deseret Book, 1993, p. 301, emphasis added.

⁴³ **Ezekiel's symbolic action represents the unification of Israel and Judah under the rule of a Davidic king.** Isa. 11 also employs the image of a growing tree to symbolize the unification of Israel and Judah under a Davidic king... This may be a highly idealized prophecy, since it is unlikely that significant remnants of the ten northern tribes survived until this period. On the use of a stick or staff to represent a tribe, see Num. 17.1-26. 1 6: Judah is the Southern Kingdom, and Joseph is the father of Ephraim, the central tribe of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. ὕψ = Stick, lit. "tree" or "wood." Berlin, Brettler, and Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1114. I see Berlin and Brettler's summation to be congruent with the Greek translation of this verse. The beginning of Ezk. 37.16 reads as follows: υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου λαβὲ σεαυτῷ ῥάβδον καὶ γράψον ἐπὶ αὐτήν... "Son of man, take for yourself **a staff** and write upon it" (my translation). I see this as a wooden staff, at least in one way. I am open to Ezekiel writing this vision in the hopes that it could be seen in multiple ways. For more on the idea that this is a staff, see: Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p. 273.

⁴⁴ The world wants proof of the Book of Mormon. They want to see the Gold Plates. They want Biblical proof that the Book of Mormon is true. Well this verse is the best missionary scripture prophesying of another record to come forth (see also Isa. 29:4, 11-12; John 10:16; Gen. 49:22-26). What is the stick of Ephraim? It is the Book of Mormon. The world is going to have to deal with this truth-sooner or later. "For more than a century, members of the Church have taught that these two 'sticks' represent the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph or Ephraim). Recent research has revealed that the word stick refers to a wooden, folding writing tablet (see Ensign, Feb. 1987, pp. 4-13), although the Prophet Joseph interpreted what the sticks represented long before the discoveries of modern research. (See D&C 27:5.)" George A. Horton Jr., "[Prophecies in the Bible about Joseph Smith](#)," *Ensign*, Jan. 1989, 22. (George A. Horton, Jr., was the associate director of the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies in 1989).

- ii. The joining of the two into one “stick” (Ezk. 37.17).⁴⁵
- iii. Seeing how Ezekiel uses עץ *etz* in his writings.⁴⁶
- iv. The writing on wax writing boards in antiquity.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ וְהָיָה לְאֶחָדָם בְּיָדָךְ אֶל־אֶחָד לָךְ לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהָיָה לְאֶחָדִים בְּיָדָךְ “Then join them together into one stick, so that they become one in your hand.”

⁴⁶ “What kind of wood is this? The question cannot be answered simply by appealing to the expression for wood used here. ‘ēš is a general term capable of a variety of meanings. Ezekiel himself uses it at least four different ways: trees in general (6:13; 17:24), fruit trees in particular (34:27), a piece of wood from a vine or a forest tree from which a skilled craftsman may make an object (15:2-3), fuel for fire (15:4-5; 24:10; 39:10). Several possibilities have been proposed for the present context. **Trees** - Some have viewed the two houses of Judah and Israel “apart like two palms standing solitary and apart on the great Euphratean plain, but they are to be brought near to one another by Ezekiel’s ministry, so they will become again as ‘one tree.’” **Shepherds’ staves** - Support for this interpretation may be drawn from the reference to the *ro’eh*, “shepherd,” in v. 24, and the manner in which the motif of the union of two staves is developed by Zechariah, who envisages the conjoining of staves labeled “Grace” and “Union,” respectively (Zech. 11:4-17). It seems odd, however, that Ezekiel would have referred to shepherds’ instruments as *esim* when he could have used the more common and certainly more specific terms *matteh* (cf. 4:16; 5:16), *maqel* (39:9), or *misenet* (29:6), all of which are used elsewhere in the OT of shepherds’ staves or clubs. **Rulers’ scepters** - This meaning suits the present royal context (cf. vv. 21-24) and accords with Ezekiel’s use of *mattot oz*. “strong branches,” and *sibte moselim*, “rulers’ scepters,” in 19:11. It also appears to have been the LXX understanding. Departing from convention, the Greek translators rendered the term πάβδος, which elsewhere translates *sebet* and *matteh*. Perhaps this passage reminded them of Num. 17:16-26, which has Moses procuring twelve staves (*mattot*), one for each of the tribes, and inscribing on each the name of the prince (*nasi*), that is, the leader (*ro’s*) of the respective tribes. This seems also to have been the understanding of Ben Sirach, whose reflections on the breakup of the kingdom and the implications of the division for the eternity of the Davidic covenant in Sir. 47:20-22 seem to have been inspired by the present text... **Special pieces of wood, or writing tablets** - REB’s rendering, “wooden tablet,” reflects an ancient if uncommon interpretation of Ezekiel’s *esim*. The Targum translates ‘es as *lwh’*, “tablet,” the same word that is used of *gillayon* in Isa. 8:1. *lwh* (Heb. *luah* is cognate to Akkadian *le’u*, a generic designation for “(wax-covered) writing board,” or sets of writing boards consisting of two or more “leaves.” These boards were made of flat pieces of wood, and occasionally ivory or metal, covered on the writing surface with a compound of beeswax and 25 percent orpiment, into which a message would be etched. **But some have argued that such writing boards were too luxurious for Ezekiel, a deported Hebrew living away from the urban center of Nippur.** Papyrus, potsherds, and perhaps clay tablets would have been available to him, but not expensive writing boards, let alone the required beeswax compound.” The author continues, explaining that several Old Testament texts attest a familiarity with writing tablets, and that these tools were widely used in the ancient world. [Keck (p.133) disagrees with this assessment, stating, “the evidence for writing boards in the Aramaic speaking lands, including pre-exilic Palestine, is minimal.”] Daniel Block, [The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48](#), Eerdmans, 1998, p. 397-400. See also: W. E. Barnes, “Two Trees Become One: Ezek. xxxvii 16-17,” *JTS* 39 (1938) 391-93. Brian E. Keck “[Ezekiel 37, Sticks, and Babylonian Writing Boards: A Critical Reappraisal](#),” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23 [1990] 126-38. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, (p. 274) entertained the notion momentarily that the “stick” could be a writing tablet, but appears quickly to have returned to the standard “royal scepter” view.

⁴⁷ Keith Meservy analyzes the argument that Ezekiel may be discussing wooden boards covered in wax that were used as writing boards in his time. Meservy explains, “He (Ezekiel) was told to write on wood, join the two boards into one, and inscribe the names of the owners on the covers. **These three simple but specific actions were typical of scribal procedures; in fact, all of them were peculiar to scribes who wrote on boards.** Since Ezekiel’s use of wood is the key to the word’s specific meaning, and since what he was doing typified the technical actions of scribes who wrote on wax writing boards, **Ezekiel most likely was writing on wax writing boards.**” Keith Meservy, “[Ezekiel’s Sticks and the Gathering of Israel](#),” *Ensign*, Feb. 1987. Keck takes issue with Meservy’s view of this passage, stating: “**The point of the whole passage is that just as Ezekiel brought two sticks together into one**

5. The Victory Over Gog and Magog (Ezk. 38.-39.29).⁴⁸

a. The Invasion of Gog (Ezk. 38.1-16).⁴⁹

i. Gog in the land of Magog (Ezk. 38.2).⁵⁰

hand, so God will bring back the North and South Kingdoms into their homeland, to be ruled over by one leader, a Davidic descendant... By placing the Ezekiel passage into the context of the sign-form, it becomes clear that Ezekiel's performance with the sticks was intended for the public and symbolized what God was planning to do—reunify the two kingdoms of Israel. In fact, Ezekiel could have used any two objects inscribed or otherwise associated with the names of Joseph and Judah—bricks, lumps of clay, potsherds, or rocks—and the audience, on the basis of his actions and words, would have connected the objects with the nations of Judah and Israel. That identification was simply underscored by the metaphoric use of the two sticks. Introducing scripture here complicates the sign-form and confuses the progression of Ezekiel's message. In conclusion, therefore, identifying the sticks of Ezekiel with Babylonian writing boards was a clever exegetical idea, but it does not hold up to a close inspection. On the other hand, this passage is lucid when interpreted within the framework of Ezekiel's own literary style." Keck, p. 136-137, emphasis added.

⁴⁸ John parallels this vision of Ezekiel. The Gog and Magog prophecy of Ezek. 38-39 is paralleled by John's vision in Rev. 17-20, part of which speaks about the great "whore," the "mother of harlots" (Rev. 17:1-6, 15-18) which falls (Rev. 18:1-3) and whose "smoke rose up for ever and ever" (Rev. 19:1-3). John wrote of the war of Gog and Magog, wherein the forces of evil are devoured by fire from heaven and the devil who deceived them is "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" with his followers (Rev. 19:20; 20:7, 14; 21:8).

⁴⁹ Apostle Bruce R. McConkie conflates the battle of Armageddon in the Book of Revelation with the battle described here in Ezekiel: ***Our Lord is to come again in the midst of the battle of Armageddon, or in other words during the course of the great war between Israel and Gog and Magog.*** At the Second Coming all the nations of the earth are to be engaged in battle, and the fighting is to be in progress in the area of Jerusalem and Armageddon. (Zech. 11; 12; 13; Rev. 16:14-21.) The prophecies do not name the modern nations which will be fighting for and against Israel, but the designation Gog and Magog is given to the combination of nations which are seeking to overthrow and destroy the remnant of the Lord's chosen seed.

The 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel record considerable prophetic detail relative to this great war. It should be noted that it is to take place "in the latter years"; that it will be fought in the "mountains of Israel" against those who have been gathered to the land of their ancient inheritance; that the land of Israel shall be relatively unprotected, a "land of unwalled villages"; that Gog and Magog shall come "out of the north parts" in such numbers as "to cover the land" as a cloud; that the Lord will then come, and all men shall shake at his presence; that there will be such an earthquake as has never before been known, which will throw down the mountains; that there will be pestilence, blood, fire, and brimstone descend upon the armies; that the forces of Gog and Magog will be destroyed upon the mountains of Israel; that the Supper of the Great God shall then take place as the beasts and fowls eat the flesh and drink the blood of the fallen ones (Rev. 19:17-18; D. & C. 29:18-21); and that the house of Israel will be seven months burying the dead and seven years burning the discarded weapons of war.

In the light of all this and much more that is prophetically foretold about the final great battles in the holy land, is it any wonder that those who are scripturally informed and spiritually enlightened watch world events with great interest as troubles continue to foment in Palestine, Egypt, and the Near East? Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Gog and Magog.

⁵⁰ The Hebrew syntax could also be construed as "Gog of the land of Magog." ***Both names, which look quite foreign in the Hebrew, are mystifying and as such have encouraged the mythological readings of this prophecy prevalent in both Christian and Jewish tradition.*** Gog is sometimes linked by scholars with a King Gugu of Lydia in Asia Minor. Ezekiel does not appear to be referring to a historical figure—in contrast, for example, to Second Isaiah's references to Cyrus—and may have embraced the name for its sheer strangeness. ***What is important is that Gog comes from the far north, the direction from which destruction traditionally descends upon Israel, as is repeatedly evident in Jeremiah.*** Alter, p. 4077, electronic version, emphasis added. Bruce R. McConkie offers this

- ii. Meshech and Tubal (Ezk. 38.2).⁵¹
 - iii. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya (Ezk. 38.5).⁵²
 - iv. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm (Ezk. 38.9).⁵³
 - v. "Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets in Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?" (Ezk. 38.17).⁵⁴
- b. The Victory over Gog (Ezk. 38.17-39.29).
- ii. "I will rain upon him, and upon his bands... an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone" (Ezk. 38.22). "I will send fire on Magog" (Ezk. 39.6). See D&C 29.16-21.⁵⁵

The Vision of the Restored Temple in Jerusalem: Ezekiel 40.1-48.35

The last nine chapters of the book of Ezekiel record another great apocalyptic vision. In it are depicted, among other things, a temple with its priesthood and sacrifices, the division of the land among the tribes, and the dimensions of the land and the city.

This vision, received in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's exile, or 573 B.C., is like nothing else in the Old Testament. Its apocalyptic nature is evident. As we learn from the introductory verses, Ezekiel was transported "in the visions of God" from Babylonia to a "very high mountain" which overlooked Jerusalem and its temple to the south (Ezek. 40.2). There he was met by a man whose appearance was

identification for the peoples of Gog and Magog: The name Gog may have reference to **one leader or to a combination of leaders** who will make up the evil alliance. Gog and Magog are all **the nations of the earth who take up the sword against Israel and Jerusalem in the day of Armageddon**. Their identities remain to be revealed when the battle alliances are made." Bruce R. McConkie, [Millennial Messiah The Second Coming of the Son of Man](#), Deseret Book, 2009, p. 481, emphasis added.

⁵¹ This is Asia Minor.

⁵² *Persia, Nubia, and Put*. This suggests a vast array of mercenaries assembled by Gog from Persia in the east down to Nubia and Put south of Egypt. Alter, p. 4077.

⁵³ One of the peculiar features of this strange prophecy is that the people of Israel, after having been restored from bitter exile to their land, are to be subjected to still another horrendous assault. Ibid.

⁵⁴ No actual mention of Gog appears in any of the earlier prophets, but he is represented here as the realization of the sundry vague prophecies of a dire enemy descending on Israel from the distant north. This could be an example of the loss of prophetic oracles or the editing of texts.

⁵⁵ And there shall be a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth. And it shall come to pass, because of the wickedness of the world, that I will take vengeance upon the wicked, for they will not repent; for the cup of mine indignation is full; for behold, my blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not. Wherefore, I the Lord God will send forth flies upon the face of the earth, which shall take hold of the inhabitants thereof, and shall eat their flesh, and shall cause maggots to come in upon them; And their tongues shall be stayed that they shall not utter against me; and their flesh shall fall from off their bones, and their eyes from their sockets; And it shall come to pass that the beasts of the forest and the fowls of the air shall devour them up. And the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire, **according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, who spoke of these things, which have not come to pass but surely must, as I live**, for abominations shall not reign. [D&C 29.16-21](#).

like bronze, who accompanied him and guided him through the vision. These elements of the revelation—transported in vision, placed on a very high mountain, nonexistent mountain north of the temple, strange angelic guide—are recognizable characteristics of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic vision is characterized by the use of vivid symbolic scenes that can only be understood fully with the help of additional revealed information. It seems that much more needs to be made known concerning this vision before all of its symbols can be understood. Still, its general message of a renewed house of Israel in a renewed promised land is clear.⁵⁶

1. A New Temple (Ezk. 40.1-43.27).
 - a. The outer court and its three gates (Ezk. 40.5-27).
 - b. The inner court and its three gates (Ezk. 40.28-47).
 - c. The Temple itself (Ezk. 40.48-41.26).⁵⁷
 - d. The chambers in the inner court (Ezk. 42:1-20).
 - e. The return of the glory of the Lord (Ezk. 43.1-12).
 - f. The altar of burnt offering (Ezk. 43.13-27).
2. A New Service of Worship (Ezk. 44.1-46.24).
 - a. Those who may minister (Ezk. 44.1-31).⁵⁸
 - b. Support for those who minister (Ezk. 45.1-17).
 - c. Offerings (Ezk. 45.18-46.24).
 - i. Offerings at the feasts (Ezk. 45.18-25).
 - ii. Offerings on Sabbaths, new moons, and daily sacrifices (Ezk. 46.1-15).

⁵⁶ Kent Jackson, *The Lord is There (Ezekiel 37-48)*, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4, 1 Kings-Malachi*, Deseret Book, 2004.

⁵⁷ “Let us make the temple a sacred home away from our eternal home. This temple will be a standing witness that the power of God can stay the powers of evil in our midst. Many parents, in and out of the Church, are concerned about protection against a cascading avalanche of wickedness which threatens to engulf Christian principles...There is a power associated with the ordinances of heaven—even the power of godliness—which can and will thwart the forces of evil if we will be worthy of those sacred blessings. This community will be protected, our families will be protected, our children will be safeguarded as we live the gospel, visit the temple, and live close to the Lord.” Ezra Taft Benson, Atlanta Georgia Temple Cornerstone Laying, 1 June 1983, *Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, Deseret Book, 1998, 256

⁵⁸ This entire chapter exalts the Zadokites and denigrates the Levites. The Levites are described as those that “ministered to idols,” thus causing the Lord to “Lift up mine hand against them” (Ezk. 44.12). Zadok was a Kohen (priest), biblically recorded to be a descendant from Eleazar the son of Aaron (1 Chron 6:4–8). He was the High Priest of Israel during the reigns of David and Solomon (2 Samuel 8:16–18). He aided King David during the revolt of his son Absalom, was subsequently instrumental in bringing Solomon to the throne and officiated at Solomon’s coronation. After Solomon’s building of the First Temple in Jerusalem, Zadok was the first High Priest to serve there (1 Kings 2:35). This is another example in the Hebrew Bible of rival factions struggling for supremacy in the temple in Israel’s history. See: Mark Leuchter, *The Levites and the Boundaries of Israelite Identity*, Oxford University Press, 2017. See also: [Zadok, The Jewish Virtual Library](#).

- iii. Regulations for the prince (Ezk. 46.16-18).
 - iv. Places for preparing the offerings (Ezk. 46.19-24).
3. A New Holy Land (Ezk. 47.1-48.35).
- a. The river giving life to the land (Ezk. 47.1-12).⁵⁹
 - i. Everything the water touches lives (Ezk. 47.8-9).⁶⁰
 - ii. The trees will feed humans, “all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade” (Ezk. 47.12).⁶¹ Compare these verses to Revelation 22.1-6.
 - b. The boundaries of the land (Ezk. 47.13-23).⁶²
 - c. The division of the land (Ezk. 48.1-35).

⁵⁹ “Two characteristics of the water are noteworthy. First, though the small stream had no tributaries, it grew into a mighty river, becoming wider and deeper the farther it flowed. Something similar happens with the blessings that flow from the temple as individuals are sealed as families. Meaningful growth occurs going backward and forward through the generations as sealing ordinances weld families together.

“Second, the river renewed everything that it touched. The blessings of the temple likewise have a stunning capacity to heal. Temple blessings can heal hearts and lives and families” Elder Dale G. Renlund, “Family History and Temple Work: Sealing and Healing,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2018, 47–48.

⁶⁰ Whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on a family, it lives. Howard W. Hunter, *Conference Report* Oct. 1979, p. 93.

⁶¹ All kinds of trees for food will grow up on both banks of the stream. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail; they will yield new fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the Temple. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing." – Ezekiel 47.12 JPS trans, *Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1135.

⁶² The boundaries of the land are an idealized portrayal of the greatest extent of the Davidic kingdom and that of Jeroboam II (2 Sam. 8.5-12; 2 Kings 14.25; cf. Num. 34). *Ibid.*, p. 1135.