No Disrespect
Ezekiel 2:3-7
Dr. Pierre Cannings

I.   Straight Disrespect vs.3-4

A. Son of Man

   a. Son of Man

      1. God uses the designation "son of man" ninety-three times in the book to address the prophet, while he never calls him by his proper name

      2. The expression "son of" in Hebrew could mean "having the characteristics of," as in the phrases (literally) "son of a night" (Jonah 4:10), "son of death" (1 Sam 10:27), and "son of peace" (Luke 10:6). "Son of man," then, can mean simply "member of humanity." But characteristic of humanity, and perhaps the focus in its use in Ezekiel, is frailty and mortality, in contrast to the eternality and awesome majesty of God (cf. 31:14

      3. It would be through him that God would renew his favor toward his people. Thus in addition to a reminder of his dependence upon God, the repeated address also may have reminded him of his responsibility as God's watchman and messenger of redemption.

      4. The same phrase was used of the messianic figure in Dan 7:13 who appeared before the Ancient of Days and of Daniel himself in 8:17. It was often used later in the New Testament by Jesus about himself (see Matt 8:20; 9:6; 11:19; Mark 2:28).

      5. The title answers to Ez.'s habit of thought: as a creature he receives from his Creator a designation which is all that a mere man can claim; as a prophet he is the mouthpiece, and nothing more, of the divine will

   b. Sending – Dispatching

B. Sons of Israel

   a. Sons of Israel

      1. Ezekiel was sent to the Israelites, including those captives in Babylon and those who remained in the homeland. But he also was to address the rebellious nations (chaps. 25–32). The term "nation" in v. 3 is in fact plural in the Hebrew text and is the usual designation for non-Hebrew people or Gentiles. While Ezekiel's message had specific reference to Israel, its truths also were universally applicable.

   b. Rebellious – Against

1. AGAINST ME
2. The emphasis is on Israel's disloyalty to Yahweh their God. The history of the nation was replete with examples of their rebellion against God. From their first episode with the golden calf in Exod 32:1–35 to the introduction of Baal worship in Num 25:1–18 and in later occurrences in 1 and 2 Kings constant idolatry
3. The primary sense of *marad* is "refuse allegiance to, rise up against, a sovereign"; its antonym is *ʿabad* "serve, be subject to" (Gen 14:4; 2 Kings 18:7) but more commonly it has a religious or ethical meaning, "transgress, commit an offense" (e.g., Ezek 18:31);

c. They and their Fathers
1. This was before your time

d. Transgressed
1. Transgressed
   a. Second, the term "revolt" (*paša*, v. 3) was the word often translated "transgress," meaning to go beyond the bounds proscribed by the law of God, or to betray a trust. Thus the term referred to an act of defiance against the will of God. The people were rebellious because they had revolted against the commands of God.
2. AGAINST ME
   a. To this Very Day
   b. In spite of the past history of the nation as a rebellious people, Ezekiel was not to let personal feelings or the hope of visible response from the people become the measure of his success as a prophet

II. Against a Brick Wall v. 5

A. Sending
   a. Stubborn - hard > impudent (not showing due respect for another person)
      1. Fourth, the term "stubborn" reinforced the third characteristic and is literally "firm [*ḥizqê*, a synonym of *qěšê*] of heart." The word "heart" (*lev*) is most often used in the Old Testament to refer to the "will" or center of volition. Thus the people were described as motivated by a fixed, stubborn self-will that dismissed the will of God as irrelevant
      2. *brazen* (lit. *hard*)-*faced*. Impassive, with a face that shows no emotion or disconcertion when it should—as when confronting divine Majesty or displeasure
   b. Obstinate - hard heart and mind
      1. Obstinate

a. Third, the people were described as "obstinate" (v. 4) or literally "hard [*qĕšê*] of face."This referred to their stubborn selfish will, which totally disregarded the commands of God's Word. This stubbornness was further reinforced by the fact that even though the prophet brought a message from God, it made no difference in their behavior.

2. Children

B. Say "Thus Says the Lord God"

    a. Whether they Listen or Not

        1. They will know a Prophet has been among them

        2. With the message destined for such an unwelcome audience, there should be no surprise that God warned the prophet of the rejection he would face. His success would not be measured in terms of the people's response but in terms of his obedience. Though he was told that no one would welcome his messages from God, the prophet still was responsible for delivering them. Once delivered, the messages placed the burden of response on the people (v. 5).

III. No Fear vs. 6-7

A. Son of Man

    a. Do not Fear

        1. Fear- Terrible

        2. Words or Deeds

    b. Hardship

        1. Thistles

        2. Thorns

        3. Scorpions

            a. His congregation was described as "briers and thorns" and "scorpions" (v. 6), terms that allude to their stubborn rebellion and hardened disobedience. Ezekiel would not be held accountable for the people's lack of receptivity; he was responsible only to speak the words

    c. Do not be Dismayed

        1. Dismayed- Broken

        2. Presence

B. Speak My Words

    a. Whether They Listen or Not

        1. Success is to be measured in terms of our obedience to the words, commands, and will of God regardless of the visible results.

Ideas

Mark 6:4 Prophet without Honor

Unpleased- When you are pursuing the gospel and your calling you are less concerned with people pleasing and your qualifications
Galatians 1:10-17

Word Studies

Son of Man –

Sending - Dispatching

Rebellious – Against

Stubborn - hard [1]> **impudent (not showing due respect for another person)**

Obstinate – hard heart and mind

Thus Says the Lord

Fear – terrible deeds

Dismayed – Broken

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[1]> develops into

Commentary Studies

2:1–2 God uses the designation "son of man" ninety-three times in the book to address the prophet, while he never calls him by his proper name (contrast Exod 3:4; 1 Sam 3:4, 6, 10; 1 Kgs 19:9, 13; Jer 1:11; Amos 7:8; 8:2). The expression "son of" in Hebrew could mean "having the characteristics of," as in the phrases (literally) "son of a night" (Jonah 4:10), "son of death" (1 Sam 10:27), and "son of peace" (Luke 10:6). "Son of man," then, can mean simply "member of humanity."[624] But characteristic of humanity, and perhaps the focus in its use in Ezekiel, is frailty and mortality, in contrast to the eternality and awesome majesty of God (cf. 31:14).[635] While used as an equivalent to "man" (ʾîš) in Num 23:19, the focus is on human unreliability. In Job 25:6 it is associated with "maggot" and "worm." Emphasizing "human frailty and moral ineptitude," it is associated with terms that "symbolize a wretched, lowly existence" and that "have the smell of death about them."[646] It describes man's apparent insignificance in Ps 8:4 [Heb., 5] (also Ps 144:3). But in Ps 80:17 [Heb., 18] the reference is to the Davidic dynasty as God's appointed agent on the throne of Israel, also called "the man at your right hand." It would be through him that God would renew his favor toward his people.[657] Thus in addition to a reminder of his dependence upon God, the repeated address also may have reminded him of his responsibility as God's watchman and messenger of redemption. The same phrase was used of the messianic figure in Dan 7:13 who appeared before the Ancient of Days and of Daniel himself in 8:17. It was often used later in the New Testament by Jesus about himself (see Matt 8:20; 9:6; 11:19; Mark 2:28).[668] Thus G. Van Groningen probably is right that "when used of an individual person, who is spoken of as Yahweh's agent, it points to humankind created royal, restored to a regal position, and called to serve as Yahweh's human representative on behalf of human beings."[679]

Ezekiel's response to the awesome vision was to fall prostrate in an act of worship and fearful reverence (v. 28). God commanded him to stand to receive the message of his call and commission (compare the experience of Daniel in Dan 10:11), indicating his acceptance of

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[264] Cooke, *Ezekiel,* 31; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1,* 131.

[365] Brownlee (Ezekiel 1–19, 25–26), while acknowledging this possibility, nevertheless understands the main point of the address as to "nobody special, simply as a member of the human race." See Taylor, *Ezekiel,* 60; Alexander, "Ezekiel," 761; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 61.

[466] J. E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 357. The phrase and its parallel אֱנוֹשׁ, he says, "bear the note of human weakness and earthiness," as אָדָם, "man," is related to אֲדָמָה, "ground."

[567] See W. A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," EBC, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 527.

[668] On the meaning of the expression in the Gospels, see C. L. Blomberg, *Matthew,* NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 146–47. On this and other connections between Ezekiel and the Messiah of the NT, see C. H. Bullock, "Ezekiel, Bridge Between the Testaments," *JETS* 25 (1982): 23–31.

[769] Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, 739.

Ezekiel and this intention of calling that man into service. So the Spirit entered him and enabled him to obey God's command, as the indwelling Holy Spirit does today (see Rom 8:1–28).[870] The presence of the Spirit also enabled Ezekiel to speak with authority, confidence, and courage.

2:3–5 Ezekiel was sent to the Israelites, including those captives in Babylon and those who remained in the homeland.[971] But he also was to address the rebellious nations (chaps. 25–32). The term "nation" in v. 3 is in fact plural in the Hebrew text and is the usual designation for non-Hebrew people or Gentiles.[1072] While Ezekiel's message had specific reference to Israel, its truths also were universally applicable.

God also described to Ezekiel the character of those to whom he was sent. Four terms were used to define their character. First, previously they were called "rebellious" here and throughout the call narrative (2:3, 5, 6–8; 3:9, 26–27).[1173] Except for the use in v. 3, "rebellious" in Ezekiel translates the noun *mĕrî* ("rebellion").[1274] It usually is found in the expression (literally) "house of rebellion" (2:5–6; 3:9, 26–27; 12:2–3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3), although it also occurs independently (2:7–8; 44:6). The final clause in v. 7 is literally "for they are rebellion." The emphasis is on Israel's disloyalty to Yahweh their God. The history of the nation was replete with examples of their rebellion against God.[1375] From their first episode with the golden calf in Exod 32:1–35 to the introduction of Baal worship in Num 25:1–18 and in later occurrences in 1 and 2 Kings, there was constant recurrence of idolatry. This behavior accelerated after the division of the kingdom in 1 Kgs 12.

In spite of the past history of the nation as a rebellious people, Ezekiel was not to let personal feelings or the hope of visible response from the people become the measure of his success as a prophet.

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[870] D. Block argues: "The fact that the raising of the prophet occurs concurrently with the sound of the voice suggests a dynamic and enabling power in that voice. We should probably associate the *rwḥ* that vitalizes the wheels with the *rwḥ* that energizes the prophet" ("Prophet of the Spirit," 37).

[971] Fisch, *Ezekiel,* 9. The verb שלח ("send") helps link the subparagraphs 2:3–4a and 3:5–7.

[1072] גוֹיִם may be taken as a reference to foreign nations (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1,* 133) although some see the term as applicable to Judah and Benjamin (see Fisch, *Ezekiel,* 9–10).

[1173] The phrase כִּי בֵית מְרִי הֵמָּה occurs once in each of the subparagraphs Parunak labels b_1, b_2, and b_3, then again in b_2'.

[1274] The word in v. 3 is מֹרַד ("rebel"). It is used first as an active participle (because of the continuous nature of their rebellion), then as a finite verb. It could describe rebellion against either God (as here; cf. 20:38; Josh 22:16, 18–19, 29; the noun מֶרֶד ("rebellion") is used in Josh 22:22) or a human king (e.g., 11:15). The remaining occurrences of "rebellious" in Ezekiel (NIV) translate the noun מְרִי ("rebellion") from the root מרה, used almost always of rebellion against God. Outside Ezekiel מְרִי occurs only in Num 16:45 [10]; Deut 31:27; 1 Sam 15:23; Neh 9:17; Prov 17:11; Isa 30:9. The verb is used in Ezek 5:6; 20:8, 13, 21 and several times in Numbers, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah-Lamentations, Isaiah, and Psalms (note especially 78:17, 40, 56).

[1375] *TWOT,* 525.

Second, the term "revolt" (*paša*, v. 3) was the word often translated "transgress," meaning to go beyond the bounds proscribed by the law of God, or to betray a trust.[1476] Thus the term referred to an act of defiance against the will of God. The people were rebellious because they had revolted against the commands of God.

Third, the people were described as "obstinate" (v. 4) or literally "hard [*qĕšê*] of face."[1577] This referred to their stubborn selfish will, which totally disregarded the commands of God's Word. This stubbornness was further reinforced by the fact that even though the prophet brought a message from God, it made no difference in their behavior.

Fourth, the term "stubborn" reinforced the third characteristic and is literally "firm [*ḥizqê*, a synonym of *qĕšê*] of heart." The word "heart" (*lev*) is most often used in the Old Testament to refer to the "will" or center of volition. Thus the people were described as motivated by a fixed, stubborn self-will that dismissed the will of God as irrelevant.[1668]

With the message destined for such an unwelcome audience, there should be no surprise that God warned the prophet of the rejection he would face. His success would not be measured in terms of the people's response but in terms of his obedience. Though he was told that no one would welcome his messages from God, the prophet still was responsible for delivering them. Once delivered, the messages placed the burden of response on the people (v. 5).

2:6–7 Like Joshua (Josh 1:9), Ezekiel was encouraged at the beginning of his mission not to fear opposition.[1779] His congregation was described as "briers and thorns" and "scorpions" (v. 6), terms that allude to their stubborn rebellion and hardened disobedience. Ezekiel would not be held accountable for the people's lack of receptivity; he was responsible only to speak the words God gave him, "so that they will know that a prophet has been among them" (vv. 5, 7). The measure of success in God's work is not always in terms of the amount and frequency of visible response. Success is to be measured in terms of our obedience to the words, commands, and will of God regardless of the visible results. So the mission of the prophet was to proclaim the word of God to a rebellious and unresponsive Israel.[18]

[1476] See E. A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 49.

[1577] קְשֵׁי פָנִים.

[1668] Contrast is made between the obstinate, self-willed person and the person who yields to the divine will. King Saul was obstinate and disobedient (see 1 Sam 13:13; 15:11, 22–23; 16:14); therefore God could not establish his dynasty. David, on the other hand, was sinful but not obstinate; thus he was responsive to God's own heart (BDB, 54; cf. 11:17–21, note; 1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22).

[1779] Note the thrice repeated אַל־תִּירָא in v. 6 (Parunak's subparagraph b_2), also used once (with לא) in 3:9 (in Parunak's b_2'). In both cases it appears to be at the focal point of the paragraph. In v. 6 it is flanked on either side by commands to speak "whether they listen or fail to listen" (vv. 5, 7).

[18] Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 74–77.

Ch. 2:1–7. The prophet's commission. *And he said unto me, Son of man*] So v. 3; 3:1, 3, 4, 10 in this section. The title *son of man* (*ben 'ādhām*) has a special emphasis in Ez.; it occurs 87 times, when God speaks to the prophet. According to Hebr. idiom *son of* denotes a member of a class (e.g. *son of a foreigner* 44:9; *son of a prophet* Am. 7:14 etc.), and the second word is a collective. Outside Ez. *son of man* = mankind in general, e.g. Num. 23:19; Is. 51:12; Jer. 49:18; Ps. 8:5 [4], Job 25:6; as applied to an individual it is peculiar to Ez.; Dan. 8:17 is based upon the present passage, and the Aram[19]. equivalent in Dan. 7:13 has a different meaning, as the context shews. The title answers to Ez.'s habit of thought: as a creature he receives from his Creator a designation which is all that a mere man can claim; as a prophet he is the mouthpiece, and nothing more, of the divine will.—*stand upon thy feet*] 'It is man erect, man in his manhood, with whom God will have fellowship and with whom he will speak' (Davidso[20]n). Jacens sermonem Dei audire non poterat, says Jerome, and refers to Ex. 34:2; Dan. 10:11. Cp. Acts 26:16.—**2.** *And a spirit entered into me*] The divine impulse (see 1:12 *n.*) is often noted by Ez. in connexion with his ecstasies; thus 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; 37:1; 43:5. The *spirit* instigates his bodily movements, but does not, except in 11:5, convey the divine word; that is imparted through visions. See Jepsen *Nabi* (1934) 27.—*according as*, or *when he had spoken unto me*] The construction as in Gen. 7:9; 18:33; 20:13 etc. [21] [22][23] om[24]. the words, substituting 'and lifted me up and took me,' from 3:14.—*and I heard one speaking unto me*] Almost a repetition of 1:28b; but that is not a sufficient reason for treating 2:1, 2 as a later expansion (Hölscher *Hesekiel* 52). The two passages may well describe different stages in the prophetic apprehension. When the vision ended he fell upon his face, and only heard a mysterious voice; now he has risen to his feet, prepared to listen, and he hears one speaking words which he can understand. Not unlike this is Samuel's advance in apprehension at the time of his call, 1 S. 3:4–10.—**3.** *I send thee*] So of prophets, Is. 6:8; Jer. 1:7; of apostles, Mk. 6:7; Mt. 10:5; Lk. 9:2 cp. 10:1—*unto the sons of Israel*] [25] *unto the house of I.*, which is the usual phrase on Ez., 83 times, as against *sons of I.* 10 times Jeremiah shews the same preference, though not so strongly marked, *house of I.* 20 times, *sons of I.* 9 times; in Amos and Hosea the occurrences are about equal. Perhaps Babylonian usage, e.g. *bît Ḫumri* ('house of Omri'), *bît Ammanu* ('house of Ammon') had some influence upon Jer. and Ez. Though the prophet could only reach his fellow-exiles, his mission is to the nation as a whole, at home and in Babylonia; see Introduction, pp. xxiii. f., and cp. 3:11 and 4.—*unto the rebellious nations*] The Hebr. is not

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[19]Aram. Aramaic
[20]Davidson A. B. Davidson *Ezekiel* (Cambridge Bible) 1892
[21]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)
[22]𝔏 Old Latin Version
[23]𝔄 Arabic Version (in Walton's Polyglot)
[24]om. omit, omits, omitted
[25]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)

strictly grammatical; and *nations* can only mean *heathen*, not Israel and Judah (as in 36:13; 37:22). [26] [27] om[28]. *nations*, reading 'who provoke me,' which makes good sense, though confusing *rebel* (מרד) with *provoke* (מרה). We may read therefore *unto the rebellious ones*, cp. 20:38 and 17:15; it is possible that *nations* was inserted to avoid calling Israel 'rebellious' the first time that the name appears; Geiger *Urschrift* 267, and Co[29]., who cps. 2 S. 12:14.—*they and their fathers have transgressed against me*] Ez. can see no signs of goodness in Israel's past; a theme which he develops in chs. 16 and 23. Jeremiah took a similar view, e.g. Jer. 2:20; 7:24f.; 22:21; 32:30, and it comes out in the Dtc. compilers of the historical books. But Ez. goes further than any of them in unqualified condemnation.—*to this very day*] Again 24:2 bis 40:1; lit. *to the bone* i.e. inner substance (cp. Ex. 24:10; Job 21:23), *of this day*; the phrase was evidently current in priestly circles, for it occurs 5 times in [30]H, Lev. 23:14, 21, 28–30, and was adopted by ^{31}P, Gen. 7:13; 17:23, 26 etc. (9 times).—**4.** [32][33]B [34] om[35]. the first half of the v.; it interrupts the connexion, and may have been added from 3:7. After *they and their fathers* have been condemned in v. 3b, it seems needless to single out the sons for blame. With *stiff-faced* (not again) cp. *stiff-necked* Ex. 32:9 [36]R[37E] 33:3 [38]J 5 [39]R[40E] 34:9 [41]J; Dt. 9:6, 13; Acts 7:51.—*thus saith Adonai Jahveh*] Cp. 3:11, 27, where again Ez. is told to begin his prophesying with these words. The use of the two-fold Name *Adonai Jahveh* is one of the remarkable features of the Book; it has been made the subject of detailed investigation by Herrmann in *AT Studien* dedicated to R. Kitte[42]l, 1913, 70–87, *Die Gottesnamen im Ezechieltexte.* The double Name occurs 217 times, and, according to Herrmann's analysis, (*a*) in the announcement of the divine message, 122 times; (*b*) at the conclusion of a prophetic oracle, 81 times; (*c*) when the prophet addresses God directly, 5 times. There remain nine instances: *I am A.J.* 5 times, *the word of A.J.* 3 times, *the hand of A.J.* once. At the same time it is to be noticed that *Jahveh* alone is used just as often, 218 times, (*a*) in the formula *I am Jahveh, they* (or *thou, ye*) *shall know that I am J.*, 87 times; (*b*) in the gen. after a construct state in such phrases as *the word, the hand, the glory of J.*, 131 times. Thus we can make out a certain distinction in the usage, as Herrmann maintains: where a special

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[26]𝕲 Greek Version (Septuagint)

[27]𝕷 Old Latin Version

[28]om. omit, omits, omitted

[29]Co. Cornill *Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel* 1886

[30]H Holiness Law, Lev. 17–26

[31]P Priestly Code

[32]𝕲 Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[33]B Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[34]𝕷 Old Latin Version

[35]om. omit, omits, omitted

[36]R Redactor of JE

[37JE] Redactor of JE

[38]J Jahvist

[39]R Redactor of JE

[40JE] Redactor of JE

[41]J Jahvist

[42]Kittel Kittel *Biblia Hebraica*[2] 1913, [3]1931 (*Ezechiel*)

emphasis seems fitting, as at the beginning and end of a prophecy, or in addressing the Godhead, the Name is *Adonai Jahveh*; on the other hand, where Jahveh Himself is speaking, or where the reference is to a property of God, the Name is *Jahveh* alone. Yet it may be questioned whether any such distinction was always felt or intended; for why should *thus saith J.* be used 4 times as well as *thus saith A.J.* 122 times, *'tis the oracle of J.* 4 times and *'tis the oracle of A.J.* 81 times, *I am J.* and *I am A.J.* both 5 times? Herrmann would explain these divergencies from the normal usage as due to error in the text.

When we turn to the Greek Version, we find that the two-fold Name, so far from being reproduced consistently throughout, is translated in different ways in different sections of the Book. The full equivalent of *Adonai Jahveh* would be κύριος κύριος; but to take [43][44B] alone, in 1:1–20:38 κύριος κύριος seldom occurs; in 20:39–30:22, only now and then; in chs. 31–39 it predominates; in chs. 40–48 there is no uniformity, though in chs. 43 and 44 κύριος ὁ θεός comes into use (κύριος once), while in chs. 45–48 κύριος θεός appears in every case. Altogether in [45][46B] *Adonai Jahveh* is rendered by κύριος κύριος 56 times, and by κύριος 159 times. This variation in the rendering shews, beyond doubt, that the Gk. translation was made by several hands, a fact which has been established by Dr. St. J. Thackeray, and supported by other evidence (*JTS*[47]*.* iv. 1903, 398–411); independently Prof. Herrmann, in the treatise referred to above (1913), arrived at the same result; though Thackeray postulates two collaborators, i.e. in 1–27; 40–48 and 28–39 (excepting 36:24–38), instead of Herrmann's three.

From the figures which have been given it will be seen that [48] and [49][50B] agree in less than a quarter of the cases where *Adonai Jahveh* occurs; and the question arises, which of the two forms of the text, the Hebrew or the Greek, is the more faithful to the original? In other words, Did Ezekiel himself write the two-fold Name, or is the usage to be ascribed to his editors and copyists? Herrmann believes that in all the 217 instances [51] represents the original, and the variations of [52] are due to the preferences of different translators; Cornill and Rothstein, on the other hand, only allow *Adonai Jahveh* to be original where [53] gives κύριος κύριος; and Cornill makes the suggestion that in chs. 43–48, where [54] renders κύριος ὁ θεός (43–44) and κύριος θεός (45–48), the original reading was *Jahveh Elohim*, a view which has not met with acceptance. But there is another possibility. *Adonai Jahveh* may be a sort of scribal direction to pronounce *Adonai* where *Jahveh* stands in the text (see Blau *Jewish Enc.* xii. 118, Thackeray *Sept. and Jewish Worship* 121 f.). The custom of substituting Adonai for the ineffable Name

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[43]𝔊 Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[44]B Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[45]𝔊 Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[46]B Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[47]*JTS. Journal of Theological Studies*

[48]𝔐 Massoretic text

[49]𝔊 Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[50]B Greek Version cod. Vaticanus

[51]𝔐 Massoretic text

[52]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)

[53]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)

[54]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)

began earlier than is often imagined; it can be traced perhaps as far back as the fourth cent. B.C., at any rate to a time before the Greek Version was made, for, as Thackeray points out, the translators constantly render *Jahveh* by κύριος i.e. *Adonai.* But when the text of Ez. assumed its present form the rule had not yet become rigid; neither the Hebr. copyists nor the Gk. translators felt at liberty to enforce it in every instance; so that what we seem to discover in Ez. is a tentative, early stage of the movement which ended in the punctuation of *Jahveh* everywhere in the O. T. with the vowels of *Adonai* or *Elohim.* It is possible, of course, that the prophet himself used the two-fold Name now and again (Cornill, Thackeray); but if such were the case, later scribes have so greatly extended his usage that it can no longer be recovered, and [55] cannot be relied upon for any help towards identifying the actual instances.—**5.** *hear … forbear*] So v. 7; 3:11; cp. 3:27; *forbear* lit. *cease.* Of the alternatives the second is the more probable, as the next clause implies.—*a rebellious house*] Such is Ez.'s invariable estimate of his countrymen, repeated 15 times, 2:5, 6, 7 [corr.] 8; 3:9, 26, 27; 12:2 bis 3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3; 44:6 [corr.]; cp. Acts 7:51. The phrase may have been adopted from Is. 30:9 *rebellious people*; the post-exilic term is *rebellious sons* Num. 17:25 [10] [56]P.—*they shall know*] by the fulfilment of his predictions *that a prophet has been among them*: Ez.'s version of the test proposed in Dt. 18:21f., cp. Jer. 28:9. Neither his fellow-exiles, nor his countrymen left behind in the land of Israel, would listen to him, or if they listened would not take him seriously (see v. 4; 3:7; 21:5; 12:22, 27; 33:30–32). It was always a prophet's lot to be in opposition, and to deliver a message which his people did not want or expect (cp. Is. 6:10; Jer. 1:17ff.). But here Ez. is comforted with the assurance, repeated at the beginning of his second period (33:33), that the truth which he utters and his Lord reveals will in the end be recognized: *they shall know that a prophet* etc. finds its counterpart in *they shall know that I am Jahveh*, which echoes through the Book.—**6.** *But thou, son of man*] So v. 8; 23 times in Ez., and usually to introduce a new topic; see v. 1 n.—*be not afraid of them*] Cp. Jer. 1:8.—*and of their words be not afraid*] An unpleasing repetition, which may be avoided by reading with [57] *be not dismayed*, thus making cl. a correspond with cl. b; cp. 3:9. The use of the verbs *afraid, dismayed* in parallelism is a point of style affected by the literature of the time, e.g. Dt. 1:21; 31:8; Josh. 8:1; 10:25; Jer. 23:4; 30:10; 46:27; and imitated in 1 and 2 Chr.—*though briers and thorns be with thee*] There is an alliteration in the Hebr., cp. 19:13; 23:33; and for the expression cp. Gen. 3:18; Is. 5:6; 7:24f. The meaning of the first noun, which occurs only here, is inferred from the context; that of the second is well supported, cp. 28:24 *a pricking thorn* ([58] σκόλοψ). The Vrs[59]. render the two words differently; see phil. note.—*and thou sittest upon scorpions*] So rather than *dwellest among.* The prophet must expect hostility even from his companions in exile.—**7.** *And thou*

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[55]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)
[56]P Priestly Code
[57]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)
[58]𝔊 Greek Version (Septuagint)
[59]Vrs. Versions

shalt speak] Repeated 3:11.—At the end of the v., 27 Hebr. MSS [60][61] read 'for they are *a house* of rebellion,' the usual phrase, v. 5 *n.*; *house* has fallen out by accident, cp. 44:6.[62]

COMMENT

1:28 *the voice of one speaking*. So rendered by [63]G; or translate "a voice speaking (2:1 and *it* said …)"; either way the expression avoids ascribing the speech directly to the human figure visible on the throne in the apparition, as though reserving the source of the speech for the unseen God.

2:1 *Man*. Hebrew *ben ʾadam* "son of mankind"; *ben* + generic noun is a common manner of expressing a male member of a class; e.g., *ben baqar* "a (male) head of cattle." *ben ʾadam* is almost entirely limited to poetic or prophetic literature; Ezekiel is called this in order to single him out from the divine beings that fill this scene. He continues to be addressed thus throughout the book (over eighty times) rather than by name (contrast Amos 7:8; 8:2; Jer 1:11; 24:3), underlining his mortal nature among the divine beings he sees and has contact with (chs. 8–11; 40ff.).

get on your feet. As Dan 8:17f.; 10:9–11 show, the biblical visionary must be in possession of himself in order to receive the divine word. The ecstasy of biblical prophecy consists in a Godward concentration of consciousness that obliterates circumstances, in contrast to the ecstasy of pagan prophets, in which consciousness itself was obliterated; see Kaufmann, *Religion*, pp. 94–100.

2. *Spirit*. Hebrew *ruᵃḥ*, here in the sense of vigor or even courage (BD[64]B, p. 925a, 3.a.b.) infused into the prophet by the address of God.

as he spoke to me. The phrase connects his invigoration with the preceding speech without explicitly ascribing it to God.

the one speaking. Hebrew *ʾet middabber* is peculiar in having *ʾet* before an indefinite substantive, and in the vocalization of the participle as reflexive (hitpaʿel) "speaking to himself" ([65]T *mtmll*). Both appear to express reservations: the former—defining yet leaving indefinite "the one speaking"; the latter—redirecting the divine speech back onto the speaker. The reflexive vocalization of *mdbr* recurs in 43:6, in the vision of the future temple, when from the interior, just reoccupied by the divine Majesty, Ezekiel hears "one-speaking-to-himself"

[60]𝕲 Greek Version (Septuagint)
[61]𝕾 Syriac Version (Peshiṭto)
[62] G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), 30–34.
[63]G Greek (Septuagint), according to J. Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, Septuaginta … auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum, XVI/I, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952
[64]BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907 (corrected impression, 1952)
[65]T Aramaic Targum (Jonathan), according to A. Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. III, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962

(*middabber*) to him; the speech can only emanate from the Majesty, but that is not said explicitly. Both passages must be related to Num 7:89, the only other passage in which the hitpaʿel of *dbr* occurs—the archetypical description of Moses' regular oracular hearing "the voice"—it is not said "God's voice"—speaking to him from the holy of holies. In these three passages, where the consonantal text was oddly vague about the source of speech—though it was obviously divine—a peculiar vocalization of the pertinent verb reinforces the impression of a reverential reservation respecting the directness of God's speech: "The Shekinah [the immanent divine presence] speaks in its majesty to itself; its messengers only overhear it" (Rashi). The same reflexive form appears in the common Mishnaic *niddabber* (-*bar*), specialized for God's speech to prophets (its nominal analogue is *dibber* "God's utterance," plural *dibbᵉrot* as in *ᶜᵃśeret haddibbᵉrot* "the Decalogue," based on the hapax legomenon in Jer 5:13). The rare M[66]T vocalization seems to be artificial—an exploitation of a textual opening for introducing a later reverential linguistic conceit.

3. *sons of Israel*. This rendering of *bᵉne yisraʾel*, otherwise "Israelites," brings out its relation to "the sons" of vs. 4a, both expressions of the father-sons subtheme of this passage—the theme of hereditary sinfulness (see Structure and Themes). For the purpose of this subtheme *bᵉne yisraʾel* was employed here instead of *bet yisraʾel*, which is far more common in Ezekiel (and, indeed, is read here by [67]G—which, however, lacks 4a!).

The prophet's mission is to "Israel" at large, no distinction being made here between exiles and those in the homeland (after the fall of the northern kingdom, "Israel" came to designate the remaining kingdom of Judah as well as the ideal whole nation; see BD[68]B, p. 975, 2.a.[3]). This vague entity is described as "the rebellious nations," an unclear epithet. (The absence of the article, as here with *goyim*, often occurs when a following attribute consists of a participle; the article attached to the attribute alone (*hammorᵉdim*) approaches the relative in meaning; GK[69]C § 126 w–x; Joüo[70]n § 138 b–c.) Perhaps the simplest explanation of "nations" is found in God's promise to the patriarch Israel that "a nation, indeed an assembly of nations, shall stem from you" (Gen 35:11), in which "nations" must mean "tribes" (cf. Deut 33:19, where "peoples" [ᶜammim] must refer to Israelite tribes); "the rebellious nations" will then refer either to the remaining kingdom of Judah, consisting of Judah, Benjamin, and Simeon, or—if by "Israel" the ideal whole is meant, as seems more likely—to the ideal twelve-tribe entity. Alternatively "nations" may mean the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, called "two nations" by the prophet in 35:10; 36:13ff.; and 37:22.

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[66]MT Masoretic Text, according to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, [fasc] 9, Liber Ezechiel, K. Elliger praep. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1971

[67]G Greek (Septuagint), according to J. Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, Septuaginta … auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum, XVI/I, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952

[68]BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907 (corrected impression, 1952)

[69]GKC *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, as edited and enlarged by the late E. Kautzsch, revised … by A. E. Cowley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910. Cited by section

[70]Joüon Joüon, P. *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1947.

Note that in the peroration of this speech, God defines the audience of the prophet more narrowly and realistically as the community of exiles (3:11).

rebellious nations. The participle (*morᵉdim*) expresses a characteristic attribute; cf. the string in Isa 1:4 ("sinful nation," etc.). The following verb clauses (ʾšer marᵉdu, etc.) refer to repeated acts exhibiting the attribute.

who have rebelled (marᵉdu) … *transgressed* (pašᵉʿu). The gist of Israel's offense is political or, better, theopolitical: rebellion against their divine Lord and King (on this concept consult index in M. Buber, *Moses* [Oxford and London: East and West Library, 1946] s.v. Theopolitical idea). The primary sense of *marad* is "refuse allegiance to, rise up against, a sovereign"; its antonym is ʿabad "serve, be subject to" (Gen 14:4; 2 Kings 18:7). This is also the sense in the context of Israel's relation to God, as here. *pašaʿ*, too, has this sense (1 Kings 12:19; 2 Kings 8:20; "violation of vassal duties … breach of covenant relations," J. Pederson, *Israel* I–II [London: Oxford University Press, 1926], p. 417), but more commonly it has a religious or ethical meaning, "transgress, commit an offense" (e.g., Ezek 18:31); the latter predominates in the noun *pešaʿ* "transgression, offense" (Ezek 14:11; 18:22ff.; 21:29, etc.). The combination of the two verbs points to the dual aspect of Israel's offense, denoted by the coinage "theopolitical"; it recurs only in Ezek 20:38—an eminently theopolitical context (cf. 20:33: "… I will be king over you").

4. *brazen* (lit. *hard*)-*faced*. Impassive, with a face that shows no emotion or disconcertion when it should—as when confronting divine Majesty or displeasure (Isa 50:7 "… I have made my face like flint and I know I shall not be shamed"; cf. Exod 20:20; Jer 5:3). This unique phrase is an adaptation of the common *qᵉše ʿorep* "stiff-necked (lit. naped)"—cf. the contrast "nape-face" in Jer 2:27; 18:17; 32:33—with "face" giving the nuance of impudence and *qᵉše* shifting its weight from "stiff, unbending" to "hard, unimpressionable," as in *qᵉše leb* "hard-hearted" of 3:7; see next comment. The substitution of "face" here adds a dimension to the commonplace ʾal teḥat mippᵉnehem of vss. 6 and 3:9; ordinarily it would be rendered "do not be daunted by them," but in this context it must be more literally "daunted by their faces"; see comment to 3:9.

tough-hearted. Obdurate, having a "heart of stone" (36:26) incapable of receiving impressions; this and the related "hard-hearted" of 3:7 recall the cognate verbal terminology used of Pharaoh's obstinacy in Exod 7:3, 13, and elsewhere.

In "brazen-faced and tough-hearted" the moral fault of the people is expressed in an exterior and an interior figure, each with a different nuance (impudence-obstinacy). This may be contrasted with the language of 2 Chron 36:13, "he stiffened his neck and toughened his heart," which, while using closely related exterior and interior images, expresses the same idea—obstinacy—twice.

"*Thus said* …" This is the prophetic adaptation of the formula with which messengers began their verbatim delivery of messages (Gen 32:5; 45:9; Exod 5:10; Num 20:14; Judg 11:15; for

extrabiblical examples, see *ANE[71]T[723]*, pp. 480, 482f., 484ff., 623ff.). The frequency with which it is found in Ezekiel (129 times according to Müller, *Ezechiel-Studien*, p. 33) is matched only in Jeremiah. Precisely these two contemporaries explicitly challenged, and were challenged by, other prophets of their time who claimed divine authority for messages diametrically opposed to theirs (e.g., Jer 23; Ezek 13; cf. esp. Ezek 22:28; on the formula, see Y. Hoffmann, "Two Opening Formulae in Biblical Style" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 46 [1977], 157–80).

With respect to the double appellation of the deity *ᵃdonay YHWH* "(my) Lord YHWH," it is to be noted that often in the messenger formula the sender's name is accompanied (preceded in biblical usage) by a qualifier—"your servant," "your brother"; in this context *ᵃdonay YHWH* may well have been interpreted thus, *ᵃdonay* meaning something between "my lord" (its literal, vocative sense) and a divine name (see the perplexed treatment in BD[73]B, p. 11, defs. 3 and 4) but in any case clearly conveying the notion "Lord" (cf. the archaic formula *haᵊadon YHWH*, Exod 23:17; 34:23). The double appellation occurs 217 times in this book, overwhelmingly (208 times) in the opening formulas of oracles (as here) and in their closings (or internal pauses) in the phrase *nᵉᵊum ᵃdonay YHWH* "the speech of Lord YHWH"; in these phrases the tetragram alone does not occur. This preference appears to be rhetorical, a verbal signature to the oracle. In our passage the mere message formula, without any specific content to be delivered, is dictated to the prophet. Now, since an alternative wording for the charge to speak to the people was available (see vss. 7; 3:4), this choice of the empty messenger formula must have its own significance. It may be suggested that the meaning of the mere formula, with its double divine appellation, is given by the context of vss. 3–5. Israel's rebelliousness is emphasized; it is the prophet's duty to take them to task in the name of their Lord, against whom they have rebelled. The very pairing of YHWH with "Lord" aims to force upon them awareness of their true state—subjection to a Lord whom they refuse to acknowledge. The imprint of this initial experience of a messenger formula with a double appellative (chosen here for its specific contextual value) became normative for the rest of Ezekiel's experience. He continued to use the double appellative virtually without variation in the openings of all his messages, and in a common closing formula (see at 5:11) as a kind of divine signature. (This suggestion resembles that made earlier with regard to the consistent use of *ben ᵊadam* as the prophet's appellative, from the call narrative onward.) J. Lust has proposed that since only in the prophet's speech does this double appellation appear, it must be understood personally, "my Lord YHWH" (Lust revocalizes *ᵃdoni*), and is intended to deny the people's servantship to YHWH in the present, as

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[71]ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed., ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. When page numbers are followed by letters a–d, reference is to the top and bottom half of the first (a, b) or second (c, d) column.

[723] *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed., ed. J. B. Pritchard, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. When page numbers are followed by letters a–d, reference is to the top and bottom half of the first (a, b) or second (c, d) column.

[73]BDB F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907 (corrected impression, 1952)

opposed to the future (in *De Mari à Qumran: Hommage à J. Coppens*, ed. H. Cazelles [Gembloux: Duculot, 1969], pp. 167–73).

In the witnesses to [74]G, the occurrences of a double appellative are far fewer than in M[75]T, and without pattern. Zimmerli (pp. 1250–58, 1265) has marshaled arguments indicating the likelihood that this is a result of the transmission of [76]G and without relevance for Hebrew usage. Preserved Jewish relics of translation into Greek keep the tetragram in Hebrew letters; Christian copyists replaced this, to them meaningless, graph by *kyrios* "lord" or *theos* "God," and in the case of the double appellative—since the result was repetition (*kyrios kyrios*)—might simply omit it (see also G. Howard, "The Tetragram and the New Testament," JB[77]L 96 [1977], 63–83). The nearly systematic, limited use of the double appellation in M[78]T itself argues strongly against the widespread older assumption (still maintained by Elliger in *BH[79]S*) that it is a secondary development.

5. *or not*. Lit. "or forbear (from listening)"; for this use of *ḥadal* as asserting the nonperformance of the act denoted by the previous verb, cf. 1 Kings 22:6; Jer 40:4.

a rebellious house (bet mᵉri). *mᵉri*—in 1 Sam 15:23 an antonym of obedience and in Deut 31:27 a synonym of recalcitrance (ʿorep qaše)—is the noun of *mara* "be defiant, contumacious, disobedient" (synonymous with "not [be willing] to listen to" in Josh 1:18; 1 Sam 12:15; 1 Kings 13:21; Ezek 20:8). In Num 17:25 Israel are called *bᵉne meri* "sons of *meri*" (cf. Num 20:10, *hammorim* "You rebels!") and in Isa 30:9, ʿam mᵉri "a people of *meri*" (parallel to "disloyal [keḥašim] sons"). *bet mᵉri* is Ezekiel's coinage; in the light of vss. 3–4 above, it is to be understood as "a line (*bayit* = dynasty) of *meri*" with reference to the generations-long persistence of the trait. The conventional rendering "rebellious house" has been retained here, although the root *mr(y)* must be distinguished from *mrd*, whose derivatives in vs. 3 were also rendered "rebel." (To be sure, in exilic and later texts, as well as in theological contexts, *mr(y)* is combined both with *mrd* [Neh 9:26] and *pšʿ* [Lam 3:42].)

As a recurring closing formula in this commissioning speech, "for they are (a) rebellious (house)" justifies gloomy expectations of Israel; from a people of such ingrained contumacy little can be hoped for.

shall [*yet*] *realize*. When the doom you foretell comes (cf. 33:33).

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[74]G Greek (Septuagint), according to J. Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, Septuaginta … auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum, XVI/I, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952

[75]MT Masoretic Text, according to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, [fasc] 9, Liber Ezechiel, K. Elliger praep. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1971

[76]G Greek (Septuagint), according to J. Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, Septuaginta … auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum, XVI/I, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952

[77]JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*

[78]MT Masoretic Text, according to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, [fasc] 9, Liber Ezechiel, K. Elliger praep. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1971

[79]*BHS Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, eds. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1977. See also MT

6. Ezekiel's prose occasionally passes into a style characterized by short clauses, with repetition, parallelism, rhyme, or chiastic inversion; formally this style is poetic. The shift does not correlate with thematic changes, but slowing down the argument and dwelling on a matter conveys heightened feeling. Such a stylistic shift may be a brief flash (e.g., the chiasm in 3:10b), or it may extend, within a prose context, over several clauses or verses (as here). Often it is arguable whether the style of a given passage is poetic or merely repetitious, parallelistic, or otherwise structured prose. The decisions made here and expressed graphically in the translation do not reflect a scholarly consensus; they are based on the presence of short clauses with at least some of the accompanying above-mentioned features over a considerable stretch of text.

For nettles … scorpions. And so, to be sure, an ordinary person would be justified in being afraid. Hebrew *sarab* here rendered "nettle" is a hapax whose meaning is conjectured from its association with *sallon*, apparently = *sillon* in 28:24, parallel to *qoṣ* "thorn" (for an etymology Mandelkern, *Concordance*, s.v., compares *ṣarab* "burn" and German *Brennessel* "stinging [lit. burning] nettle"). [80]G [81]S [82]T render these two words as participles (e.g., [83]S: *dsrbyn wmslyn* "for they reject and despise"), but in view of the "scorpions" in the next clause, one prefers to take them as analogous stinging things.

7. *they are rebellious*. The usual *bet* "house" is missing here in order to assimilate this clause with the contrasting one in vs. 8, where the prophet is admonished not to be rebellious (ʾal tᵉhi meri). For the adjectival use of the abstract *meri* in these two verses, cf. GK[84]C § 141 c and fns. 2 and 3 (where there is no reason to treat *šalom* as an adjective); Driver, *Tenses*, pp. 251f.[85]

2:1–2. God told Ezekiel to rise and receive His message. **Son of man** (*ben-ʾāḏām*) occurs 93 times in the Book of Ezekiel to refer to that prophet. It emphasizes his humanity before God and seems to stress the distance that separates man from God. The word "son" expresses family and hereditary relationships, but often moves beyond the mere biological to denote association or

[80]G Greek (Septuagint), according to J. Ziegler, ed., *Ezechiel*, Septuaginta … auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum, XVI/I, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952

[81]S Syriac, i.e., Peshiṭta, according to S. Lee, *Vetus Testamentum Syriace*, Londoni: Impensis ejusdem societatis, 1823–26

[82]T Aramaic Targum (Jonathan), according to A. Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. III, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962

[83]S Syriac, i.e., Peshiṭta, according to S. Lee, *Vetus Testamentum Syriace*, Londoni: Impensis ejusdem societatis, 1823–26

[84]GKC *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, as edited and enlarged by the late E. Kautzsch, revised … by A. E. Cowley, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910. Cited by section

[85] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 61–66.

identification with someone or something (cf. "sons of God," Gen. 6:2, 4; "son of the dawn," Isa. 14:12). By this title God was stressing Ezekiel's association with the human race.

When God told Ezekiel to **stand**, He also enabled him by **the** Holy **Spirit** to stand. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit did not indwell all believers but indwelt selected persons temporarily for divine service (cf. Ex. 31:1–11; 1 Sam. 10:9–11; Ps. 51:11; Ezek. 3:24).

2:3–5. Ezekiel's assignment was difficult. His message was to be directed **to a rebellious nation** ("rebellious" occurs eight times in chaps. 2 and 3, and eight times elsewhere in Ezek.), **people** who were **obstinate** (cf. 3:7) **and stubborn**. Rather than acknowledging God's judgment and confessing their sins, the Jewish exiles viewed their time in Babylon as a temporary setback that would be alleviated by their soon return to Jerusalem. They refused to admit their sin or to believe the threat of impending judgment on their disobedient nation.

Ezekiel's task was to declare God's Word. **Whether they** responded was the people's own responsibility. But in the end (when the events did transpire), **they** (the **rebellious house**; cf. comments on 3:9) would **know that a prophet** had been in their midst.

As a prophet Ezekiel would be a channel for **the Sovereign Lᴏʀᴅ** (*'ăḏōnāy Yahweh*). Ezekiel used this title of God 217 times. Elsewhere in the Old Testament it occurs only 103 times (*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., s.v[86]. *'āḏôn, 'ăḏōnāy*, 1:62–3). This name stresses both God's sovereign authority and His covenant-keeping faithfulness.

2:6–7. Three times God told Ezekiel, **Do not be afraid**. He needed this encouragement because the task was difficult (**briers and thorns are all around you**) and even dangerous (**you live among scorpions**). Ezekiel learned his lesson well. Nowhere does the book hint that he cowered in fear or hesitated to proclaim God's message.

God said Ezekiel was to **speak** His **words**. Verses 7–8 are a bridge between two major sections. The first section (1:4–2:7) reports the visions for the work. The next section (2:8–3:11) gives the message for the work. This One who gave Ezekiel the word is the Sovereign Lord whom Ezekiel had just seen in the vision.[87]

Background

6. The Message of the Book

The Book of Ezekiel is not a random collection of messages from the prophet. Examination of the prophet's development of the themes indicates that the book was intended as a homogeneous unit. Ezekiel centered his message around four spiritual realities. These may be summarized as follows:

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[86]s.v. *sub verbo*, under the word

[87] Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1229–1230.

The Reality of God (1:1–3:27). These introductory chapters on Ezekiel's call center on a fresh vision of the character of God.

The Reality of Judgment (4:1–32:32). The first two-thirds of the book contains judgment messages that announce the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem (4:1–24:27). Ezekiel's prophecies against the nations follow (25:1–32:32), which show God's demands for righteousness to be universally applicable.

The Reality of Restoration (33:1–46:24). With the judgment messages as a background, Ezekiel turned to the theme of restoration. He presented the promise of restoration (33:1–37:28), the power of restoration (38:1–39:29), and the prospect of restoration (40:1–46:24).

The Reality of Redemption (47:1–48:35). Ezekiel realized the promise of restoration in a prophetic vision as he saw the fulfillment of promises in the river of life (47:1–12), the land of the redeemed (47:13–48:29), and the city of God (48:30–35).[88]

(3) Contents

The book is arranged in four main divisions.[8993] Chapters 1–3 present the call and commission of the prophet. Chapters 4–24 are prophetic messages concerning the judgment and fall of Judah, concluding with the announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem in chap. 24. Chapters 25–32 comprise an interlude of messages of judgment against foreign nations. Ezekiel wanted to declare that the Gentile nations also were accountable to God and would likewise receive judgment. Chapters 33–48 are messages of hope concerning the restoration of Israel and the reestablishment of the temple, sacrificial system, redistribution of the land, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Another unique feature of the Book of Ezekiel is the ordered sequence of dated messages.[9094] While these messages are not in strict chronological order, they do have a general chronological flow that makes the development of the book easy to follow. All but two of the messages begin with the year, month, and day the oracle was received (the two exceptions are 26:1 and 32:17, which contain only the day and year). Ezekiel's messages began with his call (1:1) in July of 593 B.C. and continued to his last dated message, which he received in either April

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[88] Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 44–45.

[8993] See Wood, *Prophets of Israel,* 360; J. B. Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 350; Cooke, *Ezekiel,* xvii; and Hals, *Ezekiel,* 3–4.

[9094] Taylor (*Ezekiel,* 36) identifies fourteen dated messages; Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1–20,* 8), fifteen; and Howie (*Ezekiel, Daniel* [London: SCM, 1961], 9), thirteen. The reason for the apparent discrepancy lies in the omission of the date in 29:17 by Howie and the omission by Taylor of the date in 3:16. The dated passages furnished by Greenberg are: 1:1; 1:2–3; 3:16; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 29:17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1; 32:17; 33:21; and 40:1. See chart "Dated Prophecies of Ezekiel."

or October 571 B.C. (29:17). While some see the use of dates in Ezekiel as evidence of editing,[9915] the use of dating also may be taken as an indication that the messages were written personally by the prophet. In this case the precise dating was his way of keeping a diary of his ministry and messages. Jeremiah, on the other hand, who used an amanuensis, Baruch (Jer 36:4), did not give the same attention to chronological flow.

Three of the messages of Ezekiel may be extensions of Jeremiah's prophecies. Ezekiel's[92]

This certainly fit Ezekiel. He was chosen to announce the words of God to unwelcome ears as the nation faced imminent destruction and captivity at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Such a task called for courage and strong will. Ezekiel stands in the tradition of other great individuals who were called to similar assignments such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and his contemporary, Jeremiah. In the Old Testament are several words associated with these prophets that describe their unique characteristics. At least six specific names were used to identify prophets, each of which suggest various aspects of their assignments and of their character: (1) *spokesman* (*nābî*; 1 Sam 9:9; 1 Kgs 1:8); (2) *seer* (*rōʾeh*; 1 Sam 9:9; 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 16:7); (3) *visionary* (*ḥōzeh*; 2 Sam 24:11; 2 Kgs 17:13; 2 Chr 33:18; Amos 7:12); (4) *man of God* (*ʾîš ʾĕlōhîm*; 1 Kgs 13:1–2); (5) *servant of Yahweh* (*ʿebed-yhwh*; Dan 9:11; Amos 3:7); and (6) *messenger of Yahweh* (*malʾak-yhwh*; Mal 2:7; 3:1).[393494]

Ezekiel's ministry spanned a large part of these troubled times. The book that bears his name chronicles the flow of events with exact dates from his call in July 593 B.C. to his final vision in April of 571 B.C.[1958] His ministry covered more than twenty of the most critical years in Judahite history. While his messages were filled with words of hope as well as judgment, he shared the pessimism of Jeremiah concerning hope for immediate restoration. Ezekiel was not taken seriously in the early years of his ministry because he, along with Jeremiah, forecasted the eventual fall and destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1–17; Jer 25:1–4; 29:1–9). Neither were optimistic about Judah's immediate future. Jeremiah prophesied that Judah and Jerusalem were to be judged and destroyed and that their inhabitants would remain captives in Babylon for seventy years (Jer 25:11; 29:10). Ezekiel foresaw a future resurrection of the nation (Ezek

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[9195] Vawter and Hoppe, *Ezekiel,* 4–5.

[92] Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 39–40.

[9334] See W. J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (1905; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 21–35.

[94] Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 28–29.

[9518] For a complete list of dated prophecies with discussion, see M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, AB (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 7–11. Also see Taylor, *Ezekiel,* 36–39, and the "Dated Prophecies of Ezekiel" in this introduction.

37:1–28), reunification of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, rebuilding of the temple (Ezek 40:1–42:20), and restoration of sacrificial worship (Ezek 44–48).[96]

In spite of the conquest of Judah by the Babylonians in 605 B.C., the Hebrew people were convinced of two things. First, they believed Jerusalem was inviolable. Though they had suffered the temporary setback of Babylonian domination, their city was still under Jewish administration. The city was the seat of Yahweh worship (Ps 48:1–14), and thus the people believed it would never be destroyed or fall to a pagan power. Second, they believed that those taken captive in 605 B.C. would be in Babylon only a short time. They were sure that friends, relatives, and leaders taken hostage to Babylon would be coming home soon.[971]

Nine years had elapsed since the day Nebuchadnezzar had come to Jerusalem and set up a provisional government with Eliakim, one of the sons of Josiah, as his vassal. He gave Eliakim the throne name of Jehoiakim. Unwise policies and unsound advisors led him to attempt a break with Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar quickly responded, and again the armies of Babylon returned to the streets of Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was taken hostage to Babylon with a second group of captives. His son Jehoiachin replaced him on the throne, and after only three months he also was supplanted by Zedekiah, who was another of the sons of Josiah.[982] Among those taken captive in 597 B.C. was a young priest named Ezekiel who fulfilled a crucial ministry to the exiles in Babylon and to the populace still in Jerusalem, a prophetic ministry that has affected God's people in every age since that time.

1. Historical Background

After the death of Solomon the years of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah were years of decline in every area of their national life.[993] Moral and spiritual decadence reached its zenith in the Northern Kingdom under Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 17:1–22:40), who reigned from about 874 to 853 B.C. Although the Northern Kingdom continued for another hundred and thirty years, the fall of Samaria, its capital, finally came in 722 B.C. at the hands of the Assyrians. Assyria was in the waning years of its power when Samaria was overthrown, and it soon fell prey to the rising power of Babylon. With the end of Assyrian dominance and the captivity of the Northern

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[96] Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 23–24.

[971] W. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel,* OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), 2–4; J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah,* NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 22; H. L. Ellison, *Ezekiel: The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 20; P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 106–7.

[982] P. P. Enns, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 13. Zedekiah was weak and yielded to a pro-Egyptian faction that encouraged revolt against Babylon (2 Kgs 24:20; Jer 27:1–11).

[993] W. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1,* Her [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 9–16) traces the decline of Judah in his discussion of the historical background of the Book of Ezekiel.

Kingdom, there was a glimmer of hope for Judah. A new young king named Josiah ascended the throne in Judah who desired to see a spiritual-moral revival in his kingdom.[1004][101]

[1004] Ibid., 11; G. W. Anderson, *The History and Religion of Israel*, NClarBib (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 140–49.

[101] Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 19–20.