kāḇōḏ (Glory) rûḥ (Spirit) and yāḏ (Hand) Divine Presence and Activity of Ezekiel (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48) Thirdspacing the Exile and its Implications to the Theology of Divine Presence

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kābōd (GLORY) rû'āh (SPIRIT) AND yāḏ (HAND) DIVINE PRESENCE AND

ACTIVITY IN EZEKIEL

(EZEK 1-3; 8-11; 40-48)

THIRDSPACING THE EXILE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE THEOLOGY

OF DIVINE PRESENCE

A Dissertation by

MALACHYUDOCHUKWU THEOPHILUS

Presented to

The Faculty of the

Jesuit School of Theology

of Santa Clara University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

of for the degree of

Doctor of Sacred Theology

Berkeley, California

April 2020

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"Glory", "Spirit" and "Hand" of YHWH: Divine Presence and Activity in Ezekiel (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48)

Thirdspacing the Exile and Its Implications to the Theology of Divine Presence

MALACHY UDCHIUKWU THEOPHILUS, O.S.A.

ABSTRACT

In Ezek 1-3; 8-11 and 40-48, Ezekiel saw the "visions of God". In these visions one observes that the presence of YHWH is experienced in three different spaces: in the temple, in exile and on the mountain east of the city. These manifestations of the divine presence in different spaces challenged the traditional priestly understanding of YHWH as exclusively "tabernacled" in the Jerusalem temple. Thus in this research, I investigate, not only where God is really found, but also the implication of the movements of the הַנְפָרּוֹת אֵל (glory of God) from the sacred space to the non sacred space and back to the sacred space.

While the community in Judah considered those in exile as "other" because they had no temple and were not within the geographical location called "Judah" (cf. Ezek 11:15); this study leans on the Critical Spatial Theories of Edward W. Soja and Wesley A. Kort to show that location does not guarantee the experience of the divine. What counts is not location, but praxis; that is, our orientation towards the Holy One.

Rereading YHWH's expression (cf. Ezek 11:16) in reaction to the tension that existed between the exilic community and the remnant community in Judah challenges the religious tension and religious exclusivism that characterize our world today. It shows that despite the existential peculiarities of each community of faith, there exists a theological minimum that can form the basis of our experience of the divine. Sometimes we may think we possess the fullness of truth as symbolized in the temple with its sacred adornments or as contained in the Torah, the Holy Bible or the Koran. But the reality of the experience of the divine does not necessarily lie in the one who possesses the truth. It is not the possession of the truth that matters, it is how prepared we are to walk in the light of the truth that we possess.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to God the giver of life and the source of wisdom for his inspiration and guidance in the course of this research work. In a profound manner, I wish to thank Professor Gina Hens-Piazza, my thesis director, for her patient guidance and motivation. I could not have imagined a better mentor and advisor for this dissertation. Thank you Prof. I will not forget you in a hurry. May I also thank Prof. John Endres and Prof. Rebecca Esterson, who are part my dissertation committee. Thank you immensely for your sacrifices, especially during this global pandemic. You defied all odds, and took time out of your busy schedules to read my work. You have made a lasting impression in me. Thanks for your humility and selflessness.

My humble thanks go to my Prior Provincial: Very Rev. Fr. John Abdunlahi Abubakar, who gave me the opportunity to study for my doctorate in Biblical Studies. Thank you Fr. for your support throughout my studies in the United States. I appreciate you! To all my Augustinian Brothers in Nigeria and in the United States: thanks for your encouragements and for the Fraternity we share.

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<td>AnBib</td>
<td>Analecta Biblica</td>
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<tr>
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<td>AB</td>
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<td>ANET</td>
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<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
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<tr>
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<td>JAOS</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Scope and Nature of the Research

The idea of divine presence was imperative to the people of the ancient Near East. This was evident in their cultic practices. Temples, sacrifices and rituals ensured the deities were present to those who revered them. In the ancient Near East, it was obvious that the gods were not present in the same way humans were present to others and themselves. The most important form of divine presence was the embodiment in a cultic image that resided in a temple. These divine images remained what they always were: wood and stone without any self-locomotive ability.

The kingdoms of Israel and Judah were not exceptions to this concern for the presence of the divine. They may have depended upon the theologies of the ancient Near East in the construction of their theology of divine presence. However, "around the time of the neo-Babylonian empire, the Israelite prophetic writings began to show unambiguous evidence of a changing attitude towards some widely shared assumptions about divine presence."¹ Notable among these literatures is the book of Ezekiel wherein lies the focus of this research. Scholars normally study the theology of divine presence in the book of Ezekiel in conjunction with divine abandonment/absence from the temple in Jerusalem. As such, they see it as a shift from Ezekiel's Zadokite priestly tradition.² This tradition maintained that divine

¹ Nathan MacDonald, *Divine Presence and Absence in Exilic and Post Exilic Judaism*, FZAT 61, eds. Nathan MacDonald and Izaak D. de Hulster. (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013), XI.

presence was confined exclusively to the temple. There are other scholars who study the divine presence in Ezekiel from the point of view of YHWH's kāhōd (glory) and rū'h (spirit). Building upon this scholarship, my study expands the notion of divine presence as associated with kāhōd (glory) in Ezekiel and opines that the activity of YHWH's rū'h (spirit) and yad (hand) adds new dimension to the theology of divine presence.

The scope of this work is not the book of Ezekiel in its entirety, but rather the visions of Ezekiel. "The book of Ezekiel is punctuated by three great visions linked by the experience of divine glory, the kāhōd (glory) YHWH." In the first vision (Ezek 1-3), the kāhōd (glory) comes to Ezekiel and his fellow captives in exile beside the river Chebar of Babylon. In Ezek 8-11 (the second vision), the kāhōd (glory) leaves the temple and takes a stand on the mountain to the east of the city. In the last part of Ezekiel's prophecy (Ezek 40-48), Ezekiel sees another vision of the kāhōd (glory) returning and inhabiting the glorious temple. Each of these visions is marked by the manifestation of the powerful presence of the divine upon the prophet. This divine manifestation occurs through the divine rū'h (spirit) and yad (hand) [cf. Ezek 3:12,

---


14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 40:1; 43:5]. This shows that in Ezekiel, divine presence is not only manifested through the kāḇōḏ (glory). The presence of the Holy one is also experienced through the divine rūaḥ (spirit) and yad (hand). Because the rūaḥ (spirit) and yad (hand) of YHWH shared a connotation of power, they are therefore closely related concepts and are used in the visions of Ezekiel as instruments of divine presence and activity.

In the above stated visions (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48), one observes that the presence of YHWH is experienced in three different spaces: in the temple, in exile and on the mountain east of the city. These manifestations of the divine presence in different spaces challenged the traditional priestly understanding of YHWH as exclusively "tabernacled" in the Jerusalem temple.

Therefore, the questions that this research seeks to investigate include: Where is God really found: in exile (non-sacred space) or in the temple (sacred space)? What do the movements of the kāḇōḏ (glory) in the book of Ezekiel tell us about the meaning of divine presence? Could this divine mobility be a prelude to the theology of omnipresence?

2. Thesis Statement

This study argues that a synchronic reading of the movements of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH in Ezekiel 1-3; 8-11; and 40-48; and thirddspacing the exile, disclose

---

that divine presence can be experienced in both sacred (temple) and non-sacred (exile) spaces, thus challenging a dichotomist theology of God as either present or absent.

3. Significance of the Study

This study will be significant both to scholarship and to the religious reality of our contemporary world. While many scholars have written about divine presence and absence in Ezekiel, the activity of the divine through the ṭūḥ (spirit) and the yāḏ (hand) of YHWH has been greatly overlooked; further, very few have delved into the implication of the movements of the kāḇōḏ (glory) for the theology of divine presence. Many studies of Ezekiel, particularly ones about the divine presence, allude to God abandoning the temple in Jerusalem and pitching the divine tent with the exilic community. This implies the absence of YHWH from Jerusalem. However, a re-examination of the vision of the kāḇōḏ (glory) in the book of Ezekiel shows there is an alternative way of looking at it. Thus, this study will attempt to demonstrate that God is not restricted only to the sacred space and that divine presence in the profane space of the exile does not imply a holy absence in the sacred space (Jerusalem). This will contribute to scholarship on Ezekiel and the theology of divine presence.

This paper is especially relevant in our world today, whose struggles echo the religious tension that existed between the exilic group and those that remained in Judah, as both claimed to be the true qahal (assembly) of YHWH (cf. Ezek 11:15-16; 33:25-29). We live in a world polarized by religious conflicts and faith leaders' claim to exclusivity of truth and monopoly on God. This study will illuminate the reality that God cannot be monopolized or restricted to any particular group. No one has an
exclusive claim on God. Even though God is present in the sacred space, the divine one should not be seen as just localized to that sacred space.

4. Methodology

The first part of this work gives an overview of divine presence and abandonment in the ancient Near East. Here, the connections between Israel's theology and the theologies of the ancient Near East will reveal that representations of God in the Old Testament were not created ex nihilo. A social historical method will elucidate the understanding of divine presence and abandonment in the ancient Near Eastern world between the first and second millennium B.C.E.

The second part will enlist a synchronic lens, offering an in-depth exegesis of the texts. The exegetical analysis will be primarily literary. It will track the development of the three motifs [kāḇōḏ (glory), rūḥ(spirit) and the yad (hand)] with the assumption that repetition does not merely repeat. It will consider the new disclosures with each occurrence of these motifs and how each relates with the one that precedes it.

In discussing the theological implication of divine mobility in the visions of Ezekiel, this study will employ the Critical Spatial theories of Edward W. Soja and Wesley A. Kort to show how praxis and mobility bridge the gap between the sacred and "non-sacred" spaces. This is possible thanks to Soja's theory on thirdspace. Soja wrote an influential book in 1996: Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-And-Imagined Places. Soja argues that every life, every event, every activity we engage in is usually unquestionably assumed to have pertinent and revealing historical and social dimensions. Hence, one should be aware of the simultaneity and
interwoven complexity of the social, the historical, and the spatial: their inseparability and interdependence. He revisits Lefebvre's perceived space, conceived space, and lived space to define *Thirdspace* as "an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality-historicality-sociality." Simply put, *thirdspace* is a new way of thinking, an alternative spatial imagination, a *thirding* that goes beyond mental and material spaces. For Soja, lived experience is the decisive factor in human spatiality. In other words, he studies the *thirdspace* as the comprehensive recombination of material perceptions (First space), and mental conception of space (Second space) in lived reality.

In his work, "Sacred/Profane and an Adequate Theory of Human Place-Relations," Kort observed that place-relations are often valued at the expense of mobility and the temporal associations carried by mobility. This evaluation of place-relations over mobility often implies a contrast between attitudes that are in some way or to some degree judged as traditional and "sacred" in contrast to mobility and temporality, which are judged as modern and "profane" or "non-sacred." Kort further observed that the high value placed on rootedness makes it easier to pit "sacred space" against the "profane." He opined that theories of sacred space should be based on

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7 Ibid. 10.

8 Ibid., 62.

positive human place-relations rather than on history constructed as sacred space’s negative contrast.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus said, even though the book of Ezekiel in this study will be considered in its final form, this is not an outright disregard of the diachronic approach. Therefore, an acknowledgment of the redactional layers in the book will be made where needed. Since the last century, scholars have been observing numerous repetitive doublets and illogical breaks in the text and thus suggest a late editorial compilation.\textsuperscript{11} This notwithstanding, the book of Ezekiel has been regarded in some quarters of biblical scholarship, and rightly so in my opinion, as one of the most highly structured and chronologically organized works despite some of its literary complexity.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10}Cf. Ibid., 32-50


5. Overview of Chapters

In the first two chapters of this study, this dissertation will provide preliminary observations that will serve as a foundation. The next three chapters that follow will consist of exegeses of the three passages (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48). The last chapter of the dissertation will focus on the theological implication of the study.

In other words, chapter 1 will set the stage for assessing divine presence by considering how the notion of the deity was tied to cultic shrines and temples in the ancient Near East and, when those no longer existed, how divine presence was considered absent. This will help inform our understanding of how the presence of God was understood within the social and historical reality of Ezekiel and help us appreciate the novelty Ezekiel brings to the theology of divine presence. Chapter 2 will review some works that have contributed to the scholarship on the topic in question. This will give us some insights into earlier studies related to this project.

The next stage of the study (chapters 3-5) will be an exegetical study of Ezek 1-3; 8-11; and 40-48. These texts will be exegeted with a focus on divine presence and activities in the book of Ezekiel. The exegesis will show the perspectives of both the exilic community and the remaining community in Judah regarding the reality that confronts them as it relates to divine presence and activity.

Finally, chapter 6 will discuss the theological implication of the study. How these three visions in Ezekiel expand on the Israelite's conception of divine presence will be summarized. Moreover, the implications for a contemporary theology of divine presence amidst the world's diverse religions will be considered.
6. Historical Background to the Book of Ezekiel

The Assyrians besieged the ancient Near East and were in control of Judah since the time of Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh (697–642 B.C.). Manasseh became disloyal to Assyria and was deported to Babylon around 645 B.C. (2 Chr 33:10–13). Manasseh was eventually released. Upon his return to Judah, he tried to reverse the idolatry he had perpetrated, but his efforts could not stop the people from worshiping foreign gods. Daniel Block noted that "in spite of the apparent latter-day conversion of Manasseh (2 Chr. 33:10–20), historians branded him as the worst king to sit on David's throne (2 K. 21:1–18; 24:3–4), and the kingdom of Judah never recovered from the spiritual degradation to which he had brought the nation." 

After about forty-five years of court-sponsored paganism, Josiah (640-609 B.C.), the godly king, took to the throne. "He turned his political power toward religious reforms (2 Chr 34:3). This religious intensity roughly coincided with a civil war in Assyria and with YHWH's call of the prophet Jeremiah." As Josiah fought to re-establish true worship in the religious life of Judah, Assyrian power was focused on salvaging its empire from Babylonian forces. Around 614 B.C., Assyria fell to Babylon's ally, the Medes. During this turbulent time, Neco II (an Egyptian pharaoh) helped the Assyrians. As the Assyrians were warring against the Babylonians at Haran in 609 B.C., the Judean king Josiah intercepted Neco as he was coming to the aid of the Assyrians. In the course of this, Josiah lost his life on the plains of

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14 Block, Ezekiel 1-24, 2.

15 Fredenburg, 15.
Megiddo, and the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians. After the death of Josiah, his son, Jehoahaz, took to the throne.\textsuperscript{16}

Neco survived the onslaught of the Babylonians and regained control over Judah. He dethroned Jehoahaz for his anti-Egyptian move and replaced him with his elder brother, Jehoiakim, who was pro-Egyptian. Thus, Judah became the vassal of Egypt, and Jehoiakim acted on the biddings of Egypt. However, shortly after, Judah became a contested zone between Babylon and the joint forces of Egypt and Assyria. This led to the great battle of Carchemish in 605 BC (cf. Jer 46:2).\textsuperscript{17} The Assyrians were humiliated by Nebuchadnezzar, and the latter pursued Neco and his men almost to Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar took control of Judah and made Jehoiakim his vassal. In an attempt to sustain the loyalty of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar "brought many of the leading Judean noble, including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, back to Babylon. Babylon now controlled much of the ancient Near East."\textsuperscript{18}

After some time, Jehoiakim resumed his pro-Egyptian attitude and refused to comply with Babylon. "Now Nebuchadnezzar had had enough. Together with a horde of other armies, after a three-month siege, Nebuchadnezzar's forces brought Jerusalem to its knees."\textsuperscript{19} Judging from Jeremiah's prophecy, Jehoiakim was apparently executed (Jer. 22:18–23; 36:30), and Nebuchadnezzar installed his son Jehoiachin as the king of Judah (2 Kgs. 24:8–17). Jehoiachin was also disloyal to Babylon and refused to submit to their dictates. Just like his father, he continued to make alliances with Egypt (2 Kgs. 24:7). This did not go down well with Nebuchadnezzar. According to

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{17}Block, 2.

\textsuperscript{18}Fredenburg, 16.

Daniel Block, he responded "with severe indignities: the king, queen, royal officers, leading citizens, and vast amounts of booty, including the temple treasures, were removed to Babylon. Many of these captives, including Ezekiel, were settled in a separate Jewish colony near Nippur on the Chebar canal.  

It is within this historical context that Ezekiel saw his "visions of God." In these visions, which are in three phases (Ezek 1-3; 8-11 and 40-48), Ezekiel saw the Holy One in his glory and holiness, enthroned yet in motion, approaching to reveal Himself in Babylon, outside the land of Israel. This marked Ezekiel's call to prophetic ministry.  

To better grasp Ezekiel's visions and his message to his compatriots, we must first and foremost examine the motifs of divine presence and abandonment in the ancient Near East — the world in which Ezekiel lived and prophesied. This is exactly what this study intends to do in the next chapter. But it suffices to say at this juncture that "ancient Near Easterners assumed that the effectiveness of a god, including YHWH, extended only to the boundaries of his or her nation or empire."  

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20 Ibid., 3-4.  
22 Jonah's flight from Israel to Tarshish (Jonah 1:4; cf. Jonah 4:2) probably indicates that Jonah held this view. Certainly this concept is behind Naaman the Syrian's request for Israelite dirt on which to worship in Syria (2 Kgs 5:17). Grasping these basic ideas about the nature of gods in the ancient Near East will allow us to understand several matters in Ezekiel's visions and oracles. See Fredenburg, 19.
CHAPTER ONE

DIVINE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE/ABANDONMENT IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN TEXTS

1. Introduction

In a precarious and unstable world, the ancient Near Eastern temples used to be the primary meeting point between human and divine. According to Michael B. Hundley, the temples were "the principal means of establishing security in an otherwise insecure world."¹ The temple made the people feel the deity in the midst of them. Humans paid homage to the deity through the offerings of gifts and services in exchange for divine protection and prosperity.² Thus, "through regular and regulated interactions in the temple, people could gain some measure of control over both their own fate and that of the world around them."³

Hence, Israel, and the ancient Near Easterners in general, feared any likelihood of divine abandonment. The concern of this chapter is to give a brief overview of the understanding of divine presence and absence or departure of titular deities from their cities in the ancient Near East, with special reference to the temple as the abode of the deity. To do this, the chapter will first and foremost discuss divine presence as it


³Hundley, 3.
relates to the temple and statues; it will then proceed to analyze divine absence from
the points of view of some extra-biblical accounts available to it, particularly the
Sumerian accounts, second-millennium B.C.E. Akkadian accounts, and first-
millennium Akkadian accounts. To conclude, it will summarize the study and relate it
to Ezekiel's theology of divine presence with the aim of highlighting Ezekiel's
novelty.  

2. Temples and Divine Presence in the Ancient Near East

Theoretically, the temple was fundamentally related to, and reliant upon, the
divine presence and the interaction between that presence and humans. It had a
significant role to play, although this role must not be overestimated. Hundley puts it
succinctly when he said:

The temple was secondary to both divine presence and ritual action,
serving as the setting for both. Without them, it was merely an empty
building, a stage bereft of actors and action. However, when all three
elements converged, the temple became a place of power, accomplishing
specific functions and communicating specific messages.  

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4In this chapter, I am particularly indebted to the works of Michael B. Hundley, Gods in
Dwellings; Daniel I. Block, "Divine Abandonment: Ezekiel's Adaptation of the Ancient Near Eastern
Motif," in The Book of Ezekiel Theological and Anthropological Perspectives, eds. Margaret S. Oce11
and John T. Strong, SBLSS (Atlanta: SBL, 2000); Andreas Johandi, "The Motif of Divine
Abandonment in Some Mesopotamian Texts Featuring the god Marduk," in Kings, Gods and People
Establishing Monarchies in the Ancient World, eds. Thomas R. Kämmerer, Mait Kõiv and Vladimir
Sazonov, Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments,
Band 390/4 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag2016). For the translation of the ancient texts, I depended mostly
on Benjamin R. Forster, Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature, vol. 1, Archaic,
Classical, Mature; 3rd edition (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2005).

5Hundley, 3.

6Ibid., 3.
As the stage for human-divine interaction, the temple's structure elicits and inculcates in the people some sense of emotive and behavioral responses. However, "when the deity is permanently or semi-permanently resident, boundaries must be carefully established and the rooms appropriately fashioned and adorned." 7

Ancient Near Eastern temples, in the past, have been classified according to means of access and the shape of the cella, 8 and three elements stand as connecting factors: "an inner sanctuary, outer sanctuary, and vestibule, to which a court or annexes may be added as accessories." 9 Hundley observes that the names of the temples, especially in Mesopotamia, attests to the fact that the temple served as the link between heaven and earth. 10 He further adds:

As heaven on earth, the welfare of the temple and its resident was deemed absolutely essential to the welfare of the nation and its residents. Indeed in mythology the very purpose of humanity was to serve the gods. 11

Now, because the temple was the primary locus of this service, the quality of human service becomes very important since it determines the quality of divine care. This divine care could be in terms of agricultural fertility, protection, victory in wars, healing in terms of sickness and epidemic etc. 12 In other words, we can say that the welfare of the state depended on the maintenance of the temple. The state exists to

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7Ibid., 4.

8 "Cella" here refers to the sanctuary where the cult image was housed.

9Hundley, 50-51.

10 For example, Enlil's sacred precinct in Nippur was named Duranki, "the connection between heaven and earth. See Hundley, 76-7.


meet the needs of the gods. If the needs of the deities are not met, it could jeopardize
the people's peace, prosperity and life. In the words of Hundley: "Avoidance was akin
to high treason. It was cult, supervised by the ruler or his priests, that met this
obligation. The cult provided the gods with food and shelter or, in cultic terms, with
offerings and a temple." 13

Because the state existed to serve the gods, to provoke the gods was to invite
disaster, which could potentially result in divine abandonment of the temple (e.g., the
image being destroyed or plundered). 14 Instead of acknowledging and accepting defeat
as a result of the superior might of a plundering foe, the people of ancient Near East
attributed the plundering of their city (and temple in most cases) to the wrath of their
gods. 15 At the opposite side, "kings attributed their prosperity, especially in warfare, to
good relations with the deity. Thus, the king's care of the gods, especially in his
upkeep of the temple, was considered his primary responsibility that ensured his
success in both war and peace." 16 Simply put, the well-being of the people was
guaranteed by keeping the "gods happy."

These gods are represented in cultic images; however, there is no way of
discovering to what extent these statues reflected reality or whether the image
depicted was the deity itself or merely a representation of the deity. The gods are
depicted primarily either in human-like form or as symbols. Hundley observes that
"the anthropomorphic statues of the primary deities venerated in the temple resembled
the human form in most aspects, yet could be differentiated by their skin of gold or

13 Hundley, 77.

Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 134-135.

15 Hundley, 77.

16 Ibid., 77-78.
silver, as well as by their identifying supernatural paraphernalia and attributes. One of the defining attributes of divinity in the ancient Near East was radiance. This characteristic was not only attributed to inaccessible divinities, but also to cultic statues. This was evidenced by their skin of gold and silver. In fact, texts apply the same terms (melammu, pulhu, and namuratu) to statues as they do to otherwise inaccessible divine beings. For example, an incantation from the mouth-washing ritual describes the statue as "clothed in splendor, ... he is surrounded with radiance (melammu), he is endowed with an awesome radiance, he shines out splendidly, the statue appears brilliantly."

3. The Relationship Between the Statue and the Deity

The relationship between the statue and the deity was possibly conceptualized in different ways and in different contexts. In the majority of cases, the statue was simply identified as the god, that is, the texts generally make no body-soul dichotomy. As an approved image of the deity, it bore the divine essence. Through the course of the rituals, through purification and the addition of other necessary divine aspects, the statue became the true functioning god on earth.

17 Hundley, 214. Also see Angelika Berlejung, Die Theologie der Bilder: Herstellung und Einweihung von Kultbildern in Mesopotamien und die alttestamentliche Bilderspoleink. OBO 162. (Fribourg: University Press, 1998), 54-55, 58-60.

18 Hundley, 214.


As long as it is practicable and palatable, such a unity was assumed. The link remained intact even when a statue was deported. For example, the prophecy of Marduk catalogs his trips (i.e., his statues trips) with the Hittites, Elamites, and the Assyrians and his ultimate return to Babylon.\textsuperscript{21} However, as Michael Dick observed, the threat of destruction necessitates a different solution. Since the death of a god is unacceptable, Mesopotamians distanced the gods from their statues in the face of their destruction. For example, Esarhaddon boasts that with the destruction of their statues "the gods and goddesses living within (their statues) fled to heaven above like birds."\textsuperscript{22} In such cases, the statues became "something like a body filled with the immaterial divine absence."\textsuperscript{23} Thus, to preserve the deity, the statue-deity connection was dissolved and the material, which was the statue, may be sacrificed, for with the loss of one statue, another may take its place.\textsuperscript{24} But until the deity was united with its image, it had no anchor in the earthly world, and as such, was considered catastrophically as divine absence. Thus, "without the statues, the gods of the ancient Near East could not function on earth."\textsuperscript{25}

4. Ancient Near Eastern Accounts of Divine Abandonment

As earlier observed, ancient Near Easterners in general, feared the prospect of divine abandonment. Thus, this section will analyze the departure of the titular deities

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Hundley, 277.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 277.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 278.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
from their cities and/or states. The only available Sumerian city laments date from Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000-1600 B.C.). These include five relatively long lamentations: The Lamentation over Sumer and Ur, The Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur, The Eridu Lament, The Uruk Lament, and The Nippur Lament. Most scholars estimate that the laments were written within 50 years of the city's fall. M. W. Green notes the variations of dialect found in the city laments. For the most part, the historical laments utilize emegir, the Sumerian dialect. However, emesal, another dialect, occurs in several passages and appears to have a special function in most of the laments. Donna Lee Petter notes that:

the laments detail a specific historical event, the devastation of Ur and the major cities of the Ur III Dynasty at its collapse. This historical event unfolds in a simple plot movement contained in each lament. The plot commences with divine abandonment, intensifies with invasion by means

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26 It has been observed that to date no Northwest Semitic text describing the departure of a deity from his/her land or city with such detail has been discovered. The most promising text is the ninth century B.C.E. stele inscription of Mesha, the Moabite king, commemorating his victory over the Israelites. For English translation of the text, see ANET, 320-21, and John C. L. Gibson, Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions, Syrian Semitic Inscriptions (vol. 1; Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 71-83. Some such event may be implied in the comment, "Omri, King of Israel, had oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land" (lines 4-5). The statement creates the impression that the deity had been absent during the Omride occupation, but had now returned. In any case, the text provides no hint concerning the cause of Chemosh's anger.


28 Petter, 8.

29 Ibid., 8

of the storm, and proceeds to various pleas for the gods to observe the
destruction, and in some cases, ends with the hope of restoration.\textsuperscript{31}

It might likewise be fair to state that this loose plot centers on divine
abandonment and divine presence. In other words, the poems speak of death, due to
divine abandonment and life (both here and in the hereafter), due to the return of the
divine presence.\textsuperscript{32} Let’s now turn our attention to few accounts of divine abandonment
in the ancient Near Eastern Texts. These accounts are not exhaustive, but they will
give us some insights into Ezekiel’s world, with particular reference to divine
presence and abandonment.

\textbf{4.1 Sumerian Accounts of Divine Abandonment}

In the \textit{Curse of Agade}, “Inanna abandons her cult shrine in Agade because of the
cries of Naram-Sin (2254-2218) in sacking Nippur, and turns on her own
subjects.”\textsuperscript{33} The text does not give any hope of her return.\textsuperscript{34} About a hundred and fifty
years later, Ur and the neighbouring Sumerian cities suffered the same fate as Agade,
a tragedy that was commemorated in a series of poetic laments.\textsuperscript{35} Most of the

\textsuperscript{31}Petter, 8-9. For full discussion on the topic consult R. McAdams, “Contexts of Civilization

\textsuperscript{32}Petter, 9.

\textsuperscript{33}Block, “Divine Abandonment,” 19.

\textsuperscript{34}The most detailed study of the text is provided by Jerrold S. Cooper, \textit{The Curse of Agade}

\textsuperscript{35}Block, “Divine Abandonment,” 19. Also see Samuel Noah Kramer, “Lamentations over the
Samuel Noah Kramer, \textit{Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur} Assyriological Studies 12 (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press 1940).
Sumerian accounts of the deity abandoning their cities occurred as a lament. They are composed as a "liturgical accompaniments to the royal rebuilding of the destroyed temples, which involved the inevitable razing of their remains - a potential sacrilege against the gods." Petter observes that the content of these laments concern ideas, which were sometimes overlapping. In her words:

their main content or subject matter concerns three overlapping ideas: hymns of praise, wails over catastrophes and narratives based on mythological motifs. The catastrophes described in the erēmmas occur, so it seems, due to the deity's departure from their shrine. When, for example, Inanna, Dumuzi or Gestiannna (who are all astral deities) are trapped in the nether world and are absent, their respective cities are ravaged.

One commonality in all these laments was the representation of the catastrophic effect on the cities as a result of the departure of the titular deity. In some of these laments, we see the anticipation or some glimpse of hope of the return of the deity. Hence, it was not all gloom; there is, sometimes, light at the end of the tunnel.

4.2 The Akkadian Accounts of Divine Abandonment

It is believed that the Akkadians, which include the Amorites, the Babylonians, and the Assyrians, were all heirs of the Sumerians. In the Akkadian accounts, we

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37Petter, 11.

38Block, "Divine Abandonment," 19-20. For examples of laments that give some glimpse of hope, see Sumer and Ur Lament, Uruk Lament, and Nippur Lament. In most of these laments, the return of the titular deity also means the return of peace and prosperity.
sample the gamut of titular deities abandoning their shrines. In most of these examples, the reason for the departure was almost always the result of the sins of the inhabitants. The texts we will be reviewing in this section represent a range of times, contexts, and literary genres.39

4.2.1 A Prophetic Letter from Mari

The prophecics in the Mari letters date from the time of Zimri-Lim, an eighteenth-century-BCE king of Mari. Mari was an ancient city believed to be located in the modern day Syria. Most of these letters were addressed to Zimri-Lim. For the sake of this study, we will be considering one example of the letters: ARM X No. 50. "This tablet contains letter of a prominent woman of the court in which she communicates a prophetic dream she had as follows":40

Say to my lord: Thus Addu-dûri, your maid-servant. Since the fall of your father's house I have never had such a dream. My earlier omens were like this. In my dream I entered the temple of Bêlet-ekalim. Bêlet-ekalim was not there, and the statues standing in front of her were not. When I saw this I began to weep. This was the dream of the first watch of the night. In another dream I saw Dada, the priest of Ištar-pišrà standing at the temple door of Bêlet-ekalim. A hostile voice kept calling out in the following

39 Ibid., 20.

40 Ibid., 20.
manner: "Come back, Dagan! Come back, Dagan!" This is what it called.\textsuperscript{41}

Unlike the Sumerian accounts, the above text does not say what caused the deity to abandon the city and the consequence of the departure of the deity from the city and its people. It is also silent on the possible return of the deity.\textsuperscript{42}

4.2.2 The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic (Middle Assyrian)

The narrative poem commonly called the Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I describes a story of repeated military battles between Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 B.C.E.), an Assyrian monarch of the thirteenth century B.C., and his opponent, king Kaštiliaš IV (1242-1235 B.C.E) of the Kassite dynasty that had been ruling Babylonia for the preceding three centuries.\textsuperscript{43} Peter B. Machinist notes that a close reading of the poems, with the eulogy of the military might of Tukulti-Ninurta I in mind, reveals the contrasting character of the two protagonists. In his words:

Kastilias is evidently the first to enter, already condemned by the gods for his treachery against Assyria. Tukulti-Ninurta follows as the agent of the gods who will carry out the punishment. In keeping with this, he is extravagantly praised in a hymn for his military powers and his special closeness to the gods in which the Epic was constructed, the place it holds in Mesopotamian literature, and the evidence it can provide on the

\textsuperscript{41} This text is cited in Block, "Divine Abandonment," 20. It is an adaptation of the translation provided by Daniel Bodi, The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra, (OBO I 04; Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 207.

\textsuperscript{42} Block, 20.

\textsuperscript{43} Peter B. Machinist, "Literature as Politics: The Tikulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible," (CBQ 38 (1976): 456. See also idem, "The Epic of Tikulti-Ninurta I: A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1978).
complex political and cultural conflict between Assyria and Babylonia in the Late Bronze Age.\textsuperscript{44}

After this opening, the text presents the theological explanation for the defeat of the Kassite king. The segment of the text that interests us: 1:32'-46', reads as follows:\textsuperscript{45}

32' [The gods were angry at] the treachery/ies of the king of the Kassites (committed) by the standard of Šamaš.

33' Against the oath-breaker, Kaštīliaš, the gods of heaven (and) earth decided to send punishment.

34' They developed wrath against the king, the land, and the people.

35' With the forceful/obstinate one, the shepherd over them, they were angry and.

36' The Enlilship of the lord of all the lands became distressed, so that Nippur [he cursed/abandoned,]

37' So that the habitation of Dur-Kurigalzu he no longer approaches..

38' Marduk abandoned his august sanctuary, the city.

39' He cursed the city of his love, Kar-

40' Sin left Ur, [his] cult center.

41' With Sippar and Larsa, Šamaš became wroth.

42' Ea [abandoned] Eridu, the house of wisdom.

43' Istaran became angry with Der.

\textsuperscript{44} Machinist, "Literature as Politics," 456.

\textsuperscript{45} Block, "Divine Abandonment," 21.
44'Anunitu no longer approaches Agade [.]

45' The mistress [of] Uruk gave up [her city .]

46' The gods were extremely angry and. [.]."  

Block notes that the above poem differs from the Sumerian laments in several important aspects. First, Marduk's abandonment of his sanctuary was associated with a curse (arēru) that he invoked on his beloved city (lines 39-40). Second, there was a swap in the role of the deities. According to the Sumerian laments the collapse of the Ur III period occurred because the high god had decreed that the kingship that had been granted to Ur be transferred to another state.  

But in this case, the gods of the respective cities tried to intervene on behalf of their shrines, but to no avail. Reluctantly and with great lamentation they abandoned their shrines.  

Block, commenting on this, further notes that in this poem, anger over the crimes of Kaštiliaš has spread to all the titular deities of Sumer and Akkad. "Far from defending their shrines, the gods take the side of the invader and unleash all the forces of destruction upon their respective cities."  

4.2.3 The Marduk Prophecy  

This text is structured in the form of a monologue by Marduk. In the text, the god speaks about his past sojourn to Hatti, Assyria, and his final stay in Elam. Marduk
also gives a prediction regarding a future prince who will gain his benevolence and re-establish Babylon. Scholars believe that this anonymous prince is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon. Thus, composed with reference to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon (1125-1104 B.C.E.), it predicts that a future king (Nebuchadnezzar I) will lead Marduk back from Elam. In this supposedly divine speech, "Marduk reminds his hearers of the three occasions in which he had left his city, traveling successively to Hatti, Assyria, and Elam." Block opines that these successive divine abandonments of the cities "appear to correspond to the conquests of Babylon by Mursili I (1620-1590 B.C.E.), Tukulti-Ninurta I, and Kudur-Nahlunte (ca. 1160 B.C.E.)."

Of significance is Marduk's prophetic speech. It portrays divine involvement in the series of disasters that struck Babylon. The destruction of Marduk's image is purportedly presented as a voyage undertaken by Marduk of his own accord. Human activities or offences do not seem to have any significant impact. It is explicitly pointed out that he had set out on these travels of his own volition:

I am Marduk, great lord, lord of destinies and decisions am I! Who (but me) made this journey? I have returned from whence I have

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51 See Andreas Johandi, 139.
52 The return of the cult statue and reconstruction of Esagila from Hatti is commemorated in an autobiographical account by the Kassite King Agum-Kakrim (mid-fifteen century B.C.E.). See Benjamin R. Forster, 273-77.
53 Block, "Divine Abandonment," 23.
54 Ibid., 23.
55 Ibid., 23.
gone, it was I who ordered it. I went to the land of Elam, and that all
the gods went, it was I who ordered it.56

Of all the exile or sojourn of the god, Marduk, to foreign land, the Elamite exile
is described more extensively. Marduk portrays himself as having ordered the
termination of the temple cultus. However, it gave no hints of human causation,57 yet,
represents the effects of the departure of the patron deities in a very catastrophic
manner:

I cut off the offerings to the temples, I caused gods of cattle and grain to
go away to heaven. The goddess of fermentation sickened the land, the
people's corpses choked the gates. Brother consumed brother, comrade
slew his comrade with a weapon, free citizens spread out their hands (to
beg of) the poor! Authority was restricted, injustice afflicted the land,
rebellious kings diminished the land, lions cut off travel, dogs [went mad]
and bit people. As many as they bit did not live but perished!58

The texts begins with cultic calamity of the cessation of offerings to the
temples. This is followed by a cultic and social calamities, namely, "the gods of cattle
and grain leaving their dwellings and the goddess of fermentation sickening the
land."59 Then follows two moral calamities of brothers killing each other; two political
calamities of rebellious kings; and another social calamity(injustice). The text

56 Benjamin R. Forster, 389.
57 Block, "Divine Abandonment," 23.
58 Forster, 389.
concludes with two natural calamities, lions cutting off travel and dogs attacking humans.\textsuperscript{60}

At the end, comes a change in the fortunes of the city as a result of a change in the disposition of the deity. Block notes that "when Marduk had fulfilled his days in exile, he yearned for his city and recalled all the goddesses."\textsuperscript{61} The text does not speak specifically of the god's appointment of a new king, however, it is implied in another text. Forster observed that in the surviving part of another manuscript of the same text it is written: "... [this prince] will see the benevolence of the god. [The years of] his reign will be long."\textsuperscript{62} The king is not mentioned by name although it is in all probability Nebuchadnezzar I and the benevolent god — deciding by the context — is Marduk, the first person storyteller of Marduk Prophecy. With the predicted arrival of the new ruler a dramatic transformation within the city will occur, and prosperity, peace, and security return.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{4.2.4 The Seed of Kingship (Middle Babylonian)}

The \textit{Seed of Kingship} is a fragmentary "historiographic" bilingual (Sumerian/Akkadian) text.\textsuperscript{64} The text describes the events that happened before and during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104). During this time Marduk became angry and Babylon fell into the hands of neighboring Elamites. Eventually, Marduk's
wrath ceased and he returned to his temple in Babylon.⁶⁵ Unlike the "Marduk Prophecy," Block notes, "this text explicitly attributes the anger of the gods to human evil."⁶⁶ The anger of Marduk caused a group of unnamed gods to abandon the land:

The lord (Marduk) became angry and (full of) wrath. He commanded and the land was abandoned by its gods. The thinking of its people changed; they were incited to treachery. The guardians of peace became angry and went up to the dome of heaven; the protective spirit of justice stood aside. The god [...] who guards living creatures, abandoned the people.⁶⁷

Johandi suggests that this implicitly alludes to the rule of a previous "improper" king.⁶⁸ However, the nature of the improper deeds that occasioned the divine abandonment is uncertain, and the text does not mention a possible return of the divine patron.⁶⁹

4.2.5 The Poem of Erra

The Poem of Erra deals with war as a mythological event. Its protagonist is Erra, the god of chaos and destruction. Unlike other texts dealt with thus far, the god Marduk plays a secondary role in the Poem of Erra.⁷⁰ Block notes that "although the circumstances are extraordinary, the composition of 'Erra' offers one of the fullest

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⁶⁵Johandi, 39.


⁶⁷Cf. text B.2.4.8, lines 17–20 as adapted by Wilfred G. Lambert, "Enmeduranki and Related Matters, JCS 21 (1967): 130.

⁶⁸Johandi, 144.


⁷⁰Johandi, 140.
portrayals of divine abandonment of any ancient Near Eastern document."\textsuperscript{71} While the date of this text is uncertain, the poem reflects certain historical events pertaining to the fall of Babylon. The reference to the Sutu invasion (1050 B.C.E.) provides a firm \textit{terminus a quo} for the text.\textsuperscript{72} In this composition, the patron deity of Babylon is presented as a weakling,\textsuperscript{73} or, in the words of Luigi Cagni, as a "senile personality."\textsuperscript{74}

Marduk was unaware of the state of his domain and powerless before Erra, who seemed to instigate the former to abdicate his throne and surrender his city for destruction.\textsuperscript{75} It is clear that the rebelliousness of the inhabitants of Babylon was ultimately the catalyst for the divine wrath.\textsuperscript{76} Erra's provocative report in I: 20-29 details the following:

"All the (other) gods are afraid of battle, So that the black-headed people despise (them). But I, because they no longer fear my name, And since prince Marduk has neglected his word and does as he pleases, I shall make prince Marduk angry, and I shall summon him from his dwelling, and I shall overwhelm his people." Warrior Erra set his face towards Shuanna, city of the king of the gods. He entered Esagila, palace of heaven and earth, and stood in front of him (Marduk), He made his voice heard and spoke to the king of the gods, "Why does the finery, your lordship's adornment which is full of splendor like the stars of heaven, grow dirty?

\textsuperscript{71} Block, "Divine Abandonment," 24.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 24-5.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 25.

\textsuperscript{74} Luigi Cagni, \textit{Das Erra-Epos, Keilschrifttext} (Studia Pohl 5; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1970), 19.

\textsuperscript{75} Block, "Divine Abandonment," 25.

\textsuperscript{76} Johandi, 145.
The crown of your lordship which made Ehalanki shine like E-temen-anki
— its surface is tarnished.\(^ {77} \)

This text gives a different interpretation to the sub-motif of the ire of the god. Marduk is obviously not the real protagonist; it was Erra's interference, along with the sins of the inhabitants of Babylon, that incited the anger of Marduk. This becomes even more obvious when Erra hinted of his plan to destroy humankind.\(^ {78} \) Erra said to his subordinate god, Išhum: "I shall make prince Marduk angry, and I shall summon him from his dwelling, and I shall overwhelm his people."\(^ {79} \) This is confirmed in another poem where Marduk himself alluded to being angry and leaving his dwelling. In I: 132 he reminisces about the past: "Once long ago indeed I grew angry, indeed I left my dwelling, and caused the deluge!"\(^ {80} \) Thus, "Marduk acceded to Erra's plan. Unfortunately, however, the description of his departure is poorly preserved."\(^ {81} \) Nevertheless, the text is clear in alluding to the actions of Erra as the primary cause for Marduk's departure. In another text, Erra takes advantage of Marduk's looks and deceives him into leaving his dwelling.\(^ {82} \) Erra says to Marduk:

Why has your precious image, symbol of your lordship, which was full of splendor as the stars of heaven, lost its brilliance? Your lordly diadem,

\(^ {77} \)Forster, 886.
\(^ {78} \)Johandi, 148.
\(^ {79} \)Forster, 886.
\(^ {80} \)Ibid., 887.
\(^ {81} \)Block, "Divine Abandonment," 26.
\(^ {82} \)Johandi, 152.
which made the inner sanctum shine like the outside tower, (why is it)
dimmed?83

In yet another text, Erra promises to act as a custodian to Marduk's dwelling in
the absence of the latter. In addition, he promises to appoint Anu and Enlil as guards
to the house where Marduk's appearance is refurbished.84 We read in I: 181–189:

O noble Marduk, while you enter that house, fire cleanses your apparel
and you return to your place. For that time I will govern and keep strong
the regulation of heaven and earth. I will go up to heaven and issue
instructions to the Igigi-gods, I will go down to the depths and keep the
Anunna-gods in order. I will dispatch the wild demons to the netherworld,
I will brandish my fierce weaponry against them. I will truss the wings of
the ill wind like a bird's. At that house you shall enter, O noble Marduk, I
will station Anu and Enlil to the right and left, like bulls.85

Johandi notes that "all of Erra's sweet talk is a fraud, as the dominant nature of
Erra is to wreak havoc and not to keep guard over the equilibrium of cosmos. Erra's
exhortation of Marduk is successful, as the latter is said to be pleased with Erra's
words."86 Surprisingly, though, the poem ends without any reference to the return of
Marduk. Even more striking is the god's absence from the restoration of the city.87

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83 Forster, 887.
84 Johandi, 152.
85 Forster, 889-90.
86 Johandi, 153.
4.2.6 Esarhaddon's Rebuilding of Babylon (Neo-Assyrian)

Esarhaddon (Aššur-ahu-iddin) was the king of Assyria between 680–669 B.C.E. "The description of the reconstruction of Babylon by Esarhaddon provides the most helpful account for our study because it offers the most complete extra biblical account of the cycle of divine abandonment and return." This account is usually interpreted as an "apologia" from the perspective of the Babylonians. It emphasized that this Assyrian ruler, Aššur-ahu-iddin, had been specifically chosen by Marduk, the titular deity of Babylon, to govern his city and to restore its peace and prosperity.

4.2.6.1 The Reasons for Marduk's Departure from Babylon

Esarhaddon's account attributes Marduk's departure from Babylon to cultic and moral crimes caused by the people of Babylon. In I: 18–33, it states:

At that time, in the reign of a previous king, bad omens occurred in Sumer and Akkad. The people living there were answering each other yes for no (and) were telling lies. They led their gods away, neglected their goddesses, abandoned their rites, (and) embraced quite different (rites).

They put their hands on the possessions of Esagil, the palace of the gods, an inaccessible place, and they sold the silver, gold, (and) precious stones at market value to the land Elam.

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88 Ibid., 26-7.
90 Block, "Divine Abandonment," 27.
91 RINAP 4, 195 as cited in Johandi, 142.
Thus, the people are responsible for following improper deeds:

1. Answered each other yes for no and told lies.
2. Abandoned their rites.
3. Embraced different rites.
4. Stole from the Esagil temple.
5. Sold their silver, gold and precious stone at market value to Elam.

4.2.6.2 The Effects of Marduk’s Anger towards Babylon

Marduk’s fury had disastrous consequences for Babylon.\(^2\) After Marduk became infuriated, one would next expect to see him abandon the land and depart from the city and from his dwelling. But this was not the case. According to “Esarhaddon’s Inscription,” Marduk’s next action was to cause a destructive flood across the city.\(^3\) We read in RINAP 4, 196:

> The Enlil of the gods, the god Marduk, became angry and plotted evilly to level the land (and) to destroy its people. The river Aralatu, (normally) a river of abundance, turned into an angry wave, a raging tide, a huge flood like the deluge. It swept (its) waters destructively across the city (and) its dwellings and turned (them) into ruins. The gods dwelling in it flew up to the heavens like birds; the people living in it were hidden in another place and took refuge in an [unknown] land.\(^4\)


\(^3\) Johandi, 151.

\(^4\) RINAP 4, 196 as cited in Johandi, 156-57.
Commenting on this episode, Johandi observes that "it seems certain that Marduk is not among the birdlike gods who flew away, as it seems unthinkable that Marduk in his anger caused the deluge and as the result of this very deluge escaped to heaven."\(^95\)

4.2.6.3 Marduk's Change of Heart Towards Babylon

The text under review, "Esarhaddon's Inscription," also mentions the relenting of Marduk's fury. Here, we see the motif of the deity's change of heart, which begins with Marduk's appointment of Esarhaddon as the new king:

The merciful god Marduk wrote that the calculated time of its abandonment (should last) 70 years, (but) his heart was quickly soothed, and he reversed the numbers and (thus) ordered its (re)occupation to be (after) 11 years. You truly selected me, Esarhaddon, in the assembly of my older brothers to put these matters right, and you (are the one) who placed your sweet protection over me, swept away all of my enemies like a flood, killed all of my foes and made me attain my wish, (and), to appease the heart of your great divinity (and) to please your spirit, you entrus[ted] me with shepherding Assyria.\(^96\)

In this text it seems like one of the first tasks of Esarhaddon, the reason for his selection as king, was to appease the anger of Marduk. We do not know if Esarhaddon was able to achieve this task—that detail is not available to us from the text.\(^97\)

\(^95\) Johandi, 152.

\(^96\) RINAP 4, 196 as cited in Johandi, 159.

\(^97\) Johandi, 159.
Interesting to this sub-motif, however, is the remark that Marduk was meant to be furious for seventy years, but out of his bountiful mercy, he relented in his anger after just eleven years and allowed for the reoccupation of Babylon. Hence, the rebuilding of Babylon by Esarhaddon is simply the effect of Marduk's change of heart and his mercy towards his own city.

4.2.7 The Cyrus Cylinder

The last text to be considered in this chapter is the famous inscribed clay cylinder known as "the Cyrus Cylinder." In this text, Cyrus, the Persian king (557-529 B.C.E.), relishes over his bloodless conquest and victory over Babylon. This is the main topic of "The conquest of Babylon" by Cyrus II in 539. Shahrokh Razmjou holds that Cyrus Cylinder was probably written in the following year after the conquest "when some of the building work mentioned in the text had already been accomplished and Cyrus was long established as the legitimate ruler, the king of Babylon." 

The improper deeds or misdeeds which precipitated Marduk's abandonment of the city include, according to Daniel Bodi, cultic deeds (inappropriate rituals, incorrect prayers, dispensing with the regular sacrifices, general sacrilege against Marduk), moral crimes (oppression of the citizens) and political offenses. However, Johandi observes that "while it certainly makes sense for us to make these kinds of

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98 Ibid., 159.


101 Bodi, 215.
distinctions, the differences between these offences for ancient people were probably not as clear. In *Cyrus Cylinder*, Babylon's misdeeds are blamed on Nabonidus (556–539), the last king of Babylon before Cyrus ascended the throne as the king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Despite the corruption of the text, including the omission of the name of the person responsible for the improper conducts that led to the deity's departure, we can infer with some sense of certainty that Nabonidus was responsible for Babylon's sins. In lines 3–10 of the *Cyrus Cylinder*, it reads:

[...] his [first]born (=Belshazzar), a low person, was put in charge of his country, but [...] he set [a (...) counterfeit over them. He made a counterfeit of Esagil, [...] for Ur and the rest of the cult cities. Rites inappropriate to them, [impure] food-offerings [...], disrespectful [...] were daily gabbled, and, as an insult, he brought the daily offerings to a halt; he interfered with the rites and instituted [...] within the sanctuaries. In his mind, reverential fear of Marduk, king of the gods, came to an end. He did yet more evil to his city every day; [...] his [people [...], he brought ruin on them all by a yoke without relief. Enlil-of-the-gods became extremely angry and [...] their territory. The gods who lived within them left their shrines, angry that he had made (them) enter into Shuanna.

Despite the text's many gaps, it is possible to list twelve of Nabonidus' sins that caused the deity to depart. Nabonidus:

102 Johandi, 141.
103 Ibid., 141.
104 Ibid., 141.
1. Put his firstborn son—a low person—in charge of the country.

2. Made some sort of unidentifiable counterfeit.

3. Made a counterfeit of Esagil.

4. Did something, probably "improper," to Ur and to the rest of the cult-cities.

5. Introduced inappropriate rites in the shape of impure food offerings.


7. Brought to halt the daily offerings.

8. Introduced something (definitely sacrilegious) within the sanctuaries.

9. Lost the reverential fear of Marduk.

10. Did more daily evil to his city.

11. Brought ruin on his people by a yoke.

12. Made the gods enter Babylon against their will.\textsuperscript{106}

Again, just as in the other texts studied so far, the departure of the deity resulted in the annihilation of the vast number of the population, as well as in the destruction of the temples and the city.\textsuperscript{107} However, it was not all gloomy. The motif ends with the soothing of Marduk's fury:

Ex[alted Marduk, Enlil-of-the Gods, relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins, and the

\textsuperscript{106}For the list of Nabonidus sins, see Johandi, 141-142.

\textsuperscript{107}Block, "Divine Abandonment," 31.
population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them.\(^{108}\)

We do not know for sure why and how Marduk's fury relented. However, Johandi argues that "Marduk only lives up to expectations we have for him based on his ability to balance between anger and mercy – without explicit reasons or at least reasons not fathomable for humans."\(^{109}\) Meanwhile, Block notes that Babylon's return to good fortune "occurred only after Marduk's anger had subsided and he had displayed mercy towards the city. This was expressed concretely by calling out Cyrus as the righteous king who should lead Marduk once more in the annual procession."\(^{110}\)

5. Summary and Conclusion

The ancient Near Eastern policy of spoliation of divine images was the basis for the notion of divine abandonment. It was believed that the deity's statue contained its very spirit.\(^{111}\) Consequently, in the words of Block, "no experience could be more devastating psychologically than to lose the image. Without the god the people were doomed."\(^{112}\)

In accordance with this study and with our knowledge of Ezekiel's historical circumstances, it is safe to say that Ezekiel's visions of the departure and return of YHWH (8-11; 43: 1-5) can be read in light of the motif of divine presence and

\(^{108}\)See RINAP 4, 128, 260-262. Also cf. Johandi, 158.

\(^{109}\)Johandi, 158-9.

\(^{110}\)Block, "Divine Abandonment," 31.


\(^{112}\)Block, "Divine Abandonment," 34.
abandonment. However, even at that, it is worthy to note that the Israelite prophet, despite his historical context, did not adopt this motif holistically. Block's insight is pertinent here. He notes:

Ezekiel was undoubtedly familiar with Babylonian presentations of catastrophes such as Jerusalem experienced. However, although the accounts discussed above follow a certain pattern, the Israelite prophet could not adopt the Mesopotamian model wholesale. In contrast to the idolatrous cults, in which the deity was thought to indwell the image of him/herself, Yahwism was a spiritual religion.¹¹³

Unlike the presence of deity statues in ancient Near East temples, images of YHWH did not appear in the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, His presence was represented by His glory, the kāḇôd. The kāḇôd was not an image or a statue. It was what John Strong calls the "Hypostasis" of YHWH.¹¹⁴ It was the visible manifestation of the presence of YHWH. It is not surprising to see some features of the ancient Near Eastern motif in Ezekiel's representation of YHWH's departure from his temple in Jerusalem. Block suggests that "Ezekiel exploits these ancient Near Eastern elements polemically, to expose the bankruptcy of pagan religious notions: YHWH will defeat the gods in their own game."¹¹⁵

Another novelty in Ezekiel's vision, when compared to ancient Near Eastern motifs, is YHWH's leaving of his own volition. Even though Marduk, the titular deity

¹¹³Ibid., 35.


of Babylon, sometimes gives the impression of departing the city of his own accord, the decision usually comes after the catastrophe had occurred. Block notes that "although the ancient Near Eastern accounts of divine abandonment generally create the impression that the gods voluntarily leave their shrines, enemy invasions and the spoliation of divine images lie behind these accounts." Though YHWH's departure would seem to coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple according to ancient Near East motifs, the temple does not contain an image of YHWH, so the issue of YHWH's spoliation is rendered inconsequential. Moreover, Ezekiel's vision highlights the independence of the kābōd YHWH at each stage of his departure. In the vision of the departure of the kābōd, the Holy One rises from the cherub of His own accord, filling the entire court with His emanating brightness and splendor (cf. Ezek 9:3; 10:4). The kābōd moves from the entrance of the temple and rests above the Cherub (cf. Ezek 10:18), the vehicle bearing the kābōd. The kābōd then departs from the temple and stands over the mountain to the east (cf. Ezek 11:23). In contrast to the deities of the ancient Near East, the kābōd never leaves the city. He stands over the mountain to the east of the city. The independence and the maneuverability of the Holy Presence during these movements is remarkable; Block captures this sense of remarkability, observing that:

"at this climactic moment the vision breaks off. But the description of the vehicle bearing the throne, with its absolute freedom of movement and limitless maneuverability, sends a clear and unequivocal message: YHWH

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117 Cf. Ibid., 37-38.
118 Ibid., 38.
This chapter has shown that Ezekiel’s visions of the kābōd (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48) follow the motif of divine abandonment in the ancient Near East. This is not surprising, given that he resided in Babylon and his message is directed primarily to those in exile. This connection reveals that representations of God in the Old Testament were not created ex nihilo, or without regard for the ancient Near East context. That being said, Ezekiel also infused the existing motif with his own theology. In the following exegetical chapters, this study intends to demonstrate that Ezekiel brought novelty to the theology of divine presence and, subsequently, to draw important theological implications from this notion.

\[119\text{Ibid., 38.}\]
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Introduction

This chapter will survey scholarship on Ezekiel, particularly regarding the visions of the kāḇōḏ (glory), and the theology of divine presence. The chapter will limit itself to scholarship beginning in the 1980s, starting with Moshe Greenberg who charted a new course in the history of biblical interpretation by rejecting the usual methods of modern biblical interpretations because of their a priori approach, "an array of unproved modern assumptions that confirm themselves through the results obtained by forcing them on the text and altering, reducing, and reordering it accordingly." Greenberg states that "the present book of Ezekiel is the product of art and intelligent design" in spite of "irregularities in the grouping of the oracles." Thus, he advocates for a holistic (synchronic) interpretation.

Therefore, this chapter will evaluate literature that approach each of the three vision accounts (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48) synchronically. It will begin with literature on the inaugural vision (Ezek 1-3); and proceed to scholarship on the vision of the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) from the temple (Ezek 8-11). It will then turn to a review of interpretations of the third vision on the return of the kāḇōḏ (glory) to the

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2 Ibid., 26.

3 Ibid., 5.
glorious temple (Ezek 40-48). The focus will be on divine presence, and the sequence will be chronological.

2. Literature on Ezekiel 1:1-3:27

This inaugural vision of the book of Ezekiel has traditionally been treated as a call narrative. This is a common consensus among scholars. However, the focus here will not be on the call of the prophet Ezekiel, but rather on the interpretation of what Ezekiel sees.

For Greenberg, what Ezekiel saw is not a "vision of God," but instead a "supernatural vision," because in Ezekiel, ‘elohim is usually an appellative for "divinity," and not the proper noun "God." Therefore, both in Ezek 1:1; 8:3 and 40:2, the sense is "a supernatural vision," one no mortal eye could see without divine help.4 He further added that this divine help is made evident through the yad (hand) YHWH and the ruḥ (spirit) YHWH. Greenberg interprets the yad (hand) YHWH as the urgency, pressure, and compulsion by which the prophet is stunned and overwhelmed. In addition, Greenberg sees the ruḥ (spirit) YHWH as that sense of vigor or even courage infused into the prophet by the address of God.5 All this is to enable the Prophet see the kābōd (glory), which Greenberg translates as the Majesty of YHWH.6 Greenberg lucidly captures the different nuances of the divine in the inaugural vision of Ezekiel; however, he says nothing about the implication of this divine

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4 Greenberg, 41.

5 Ibid., 62.

6 Ibid., 54.
manifestation for those in exile, and how this affects Israel's traditional understanding of the locus of the divine presence.

Greenberg's approach has influenced subsequent scholars. One such scholar is Daniel Block. In his study of the inaugural vision of Ezekiel (Ezek 1-3), Block noted some difficulties one encounters when interpreting the vision and proposed an alternative approach. Unlike scholars with redactional viewpoints who attribute all textual irregularities to either scribes or redactors, Block suggests a shift in the common translation of Ezekiel's vision as the "vision of God." The expression should therefore be interpreted as a "divine or supernatural vision," echoing Greenberg. He claims that what transpires is an unusual, unprecedented, unexpected encounter with divinity. The language of the description may, therefore, reflect the nature of the experience. It is apparent from the account that, although Ezekiel has a clear view of what he is seeing, he is at a loss for words to describe the vision adequately. This, for Block, explains the difficulty one encounters in reading Ezekiel's vision. But is there really a clear-cut difference between interpreting Ezekiel's vision as "the vision of the kābōd (glory)," and as a "divine or supernatural vision"? Even if the supernatural nature of the vision explains the semantic difficulties in the book of Ezekiel, it does not help much in understanding the theology of divine presence.

Two years after Block's effort, Joseph Blenkinsopp published a commentary on Ezekiel in which he argued that the key to understanding the inaugural vision is to determine what the term (kabod) "effulgence"(Blenkinsopp's translation) means,
especially in the context of the priestly tradition in which Ezekiel was formed. He alludes to 1Sam 4:21-22, where the Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant and the daughter-in-law of the shrine priest Eli gave birth to a son who she named Ichabod, after an ill omen. The ominous name represents divine departure: "The effulgence has gone into exile from Israel, for the ark of God is taken" (I Sam. 4:21-22). For Blenkinsopp, the idea of the divine effulgence was associated with the ark from earliest times, an association that is richly developed in the priestly traditions with which Ezekiel was familiar. Blenkinsopp further argues that the priestly tradition later added the motifs of "fire" and "storm cloud" to the idea of the "divine effulgence." As such, for Blenkinsopp, the kabod in Ezekiel is the priestly way of describing the manifestation of the divine as both presence and transcendence. In other words, divine presence is mediated through the effulgence, the kabod. Thus, Blenkinsopp introduced a new understanding to the theology of the kabod, namely, a mediation of the transcendent God. However, he still does not tell us what this meant to the people, particularly those in exile. Did this mean that the divine could be experienced in the unclean land of the exile?

Bruce Vawter and Leslie Hoppe agree with Blenkinsopp that the priestly tradition is the foundation of Ezekiel's theology of the divine presence. However, unlike Blenkinsopp, they argue that what Ezekiel sees is the actual "throne" of the LORD, with the LORD in "human form" seated upon it. They further argue that the luminary images that Ezekiel uses to describe the divine are influenced by ancient

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10 Ibid., 18.
Near Eastern pictorial images of the god Asshur from the period 890–884. In contrast to Blenkinsopp who sees the "fire" and "storm clouds" motifs as depicting a present and transcendent God, Vawter and Hoppe see the visible, numinous appearance of the divine majesty as "the glory of the LORD."12

Regarding the vision's theological importance, Vawter and Hoppe argue that the vision reveals to Ezekiel that the God of Israel, whom he once knew intimately as resident in Jerusalem, is present to him here in Babylon.13 Vawter and Hoppe provide the missing link thus far in Ezekiel scholarship: the importance of the vision of the divine presence for those in exile. However, they say nothing about what this implies for the traditional understanding of divine presence with respect to Jerusalem and the temple.

Two years later, Leslie C. Allen14 disagreed with Vawter and Hoppe with respect to the purpose of the inaugural vision. He argues that it is unsatisfactory to reduce the vision to just the self-revelation of YHWH to his people in Babylon. A study of the structure of Ezekiel's inaugural vision reveals an alternating sequence of sections that feature a storm theophany, a throne theophany and, in the latter sections, an emphasis on mobility. Prophetic usage of the storm theophany tradition and earlier examples of the heavenly throne tradition are associated with divine judgment. Thus, for Allen, the purpose of the vision is to introduce the character of YHWH as God that judges, not as a vision of hope to the exilic community. He further argues that unlike the traditional use of storm theophany, the theological program of Ezekiel

12 Ibid., 29.
13 Ibid., 32-4.
includes a strong tendency to engage in ideological reversal, whereby comforting
traditions were re-used in a challenging way, namely the portrayal of the coming of
YHWH in a storm theophany to Israel as his victim. Allen plausibly points out this
novelty in Ezekiel's storm theophany, but says nothing about what this theophany in
Babylon means with respect to the locus of divine presence.

In contrast to Allen, Charles Biggs echoes the position of Vawter and Hoppe.
He sees Ezekiel 1:28 as the climax of the inaugural vision, namely, the prophet's
recognition of what he saw: "It was like the appearance of the glory of God" (1:28a).15
Biggs notes that the glory (kāḥōḏ) of the Lord is a technical term for the presence of
God among the people of Israel. This presence was said to dwell in the temple in
Jerusalem (cf. 1Kgs 8:10-11),16 and was an assurance that God was among his people.
The distinctive feature in Ezekiel is that this divine presence, the kāḥōḏ YHWH,
appeared to him while in Babylon. Biggs interprets this as hope for the people in
exile, as an indication that they are not far from God, rather God is with them.17 Like
past scholars, Biggs does not tell us if the holy presence in Babylon meant its absence
in Jerusalem.

Thomas Renz disagrees with Biggs as to the interpretation of the inaugural
vision. In contrast to Biggs, he echoes Allen and points out that the rhetorical function
of the divine presence in the inaugural vision is one of judgment.18 Like Allen, he
notes that the vision consists of a storm theophany and a throne theophany and

16 Ibid., 5.
17 Ibid., 5-7.
18 Thomas Renz, The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel, VTSupp 76 (Leiden: Brill
1999), 64-65.
thereby draws on the tradition associated with divine judgment. Renz argues that the vision distinguishes YHWH's cherubim chariot (which is below the dome) and his throne (which is above), thereby undermining Jerusalem where YHWH is enthroned above the cherubim (cf. 1Sam 4:4; 6:2; Psalm 80:1). The image does not describe an earthly throne as in the Jerusalem temple, but rather portrays a divine chariot, emphasizing divine mobility.\(^{19}\) While he makes this important distinction, Renz fails to clarify what this undermining of Jerusalem means in reference to divine presence and absence.

The year 2000 saw an increased focus on the book of Ezekiel, and particularly on the theology of the divine presence. This led to the SBL symposium series 9: The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives. Two of the essays in this volume are pertinent to this section. John T. Strong, in his essay,\(^{20}\) contends that Ezekiel's visions of the קָדָשׁ (glory) YHWH were not contrary to the Zion traditions of the Jerusalem temple cult. He argues that Ezekiel sought to maintain Zion theology through the use of certain tenets surrounding the קָדָשׁ (glory) YHWH. Through the use of certain aspects of Zion theology, Ezekiel affirms YHWH's presence in the earth, albeit temporarily mediated through the קָדָשׁ (glory), as well as his presence on the divine throne. For Strong, such a conception of the קָדָשׁ (glory) gives the enthroned presence of YHWH greater ideological flexibility. YHWH was never dethroned from the temple, rather, the קָדָשׁ (glory) YHWH, YHWH's hypostasis, went out of the temple to battle Chaos and purify the earth before returning to Zion at

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 65-66.

the end of the book. Thus, Strong contends that the kāḇōd (glory) was understood by
Ezekiel to be the hypostasis of the enthroned divine king, YHWH. This interpretation
seems somewhat awkward since the kāḇōd (glory) YHWH in Ezekiel is never said to
do battle. Additionally, Strong's analysis of the dichotomy between the kāḇōd (glory)
that went to do battle in Babylon and the presence of YHWH in the temple ultimately
lacks clarity.

Steven S. Tuell's essay\(^{21}\) proposes that the text of Ezekiel was a "verbal icon"
that mediated to exiled readers Ezekiel's ecstatic experience of an ascent to heaven. In
other words, the prophecy of Ezekiel presented a dramatic rethinking of the divine
presence. Tuell argues that YHWH in Ezekiel had abandoned the traditional trappings
of cultic presence, linked to temple, cult, city, and king. Henceforth, YHWH's
presence would be experienced among YHWH's people in exile. The words of
Ezekiel would be a tangible manifestation of that divine presence. Thus, Ezekiel
reworked his traditional priestly ideology about YHWH's presence in the city or cult,
and the text itself "replaced the temple as the locus of divine presence."
\(^{22}\) Tuell's essay
is one of the few to assess various stages in the textual development of the Book of
Ezekiel. Tuell rightly pointed out the shift in the traditional understanding of
Jerusalem and its temple as the locus of divine presence. But to what extent does the
"text" replace the "temple" as the locus of divine presence? He also does not tell us if
this "text" that replaced the temple as the locus of divine presence implies divine
absence in Jerusalem.

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\(^{21}\) Steven S. Tuell, "Divine Presence and Absence in Ezekiel's Prophecy," in *The Book of

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 97.
A year after the publication of the symposium series, Christopher J. H. Wright published his work on the message of Ezekiel where he summarized the current studies on the divine presence in Ezek 1-3 into four points: 1) It portrays the transcendence of God. 2) It portrays the universal sovereignty of God. 3) The location of the vision itself implies that the place where he seemed to be absent and the place where his people seemed to be utterly rejected have been transformed by this tumultuous invasion of the divine. 4) Although there must have been great comfort in realizing that YHWH was present in Babylon, the vision made it clear that the predominant mood of his presence was one of judgment.²³ Wright rightly summarizes these major points in the study of divine presence in Ezekiel, but he does not progress the study any further. He does not tell us the implication of the four points stated above on Israel's theology of divine presence.

Three years later, Dale Launderville²⁴ gave a new nuance to Ezekiel's inaugural vision through his emphasis on the divine royal rule. He argues that Ezekiel emphasizes that his anthropomorphic royal imagery for YHWH is not literal and that his portrayal of the creatures of the throne-chariot stretches the limits of the analogical. Ezekiel's qualification of this visionary scene as a feeble reflection of the divine reality is communicated most strongly by the striking imagery of the throne-chariot. The otherworldly character of the four creatures constituting the throne-chariot stands in the foreground of the picture of the enthroned YHWH and helps to communicate a vision of YHWH's sovereign power both at work within the visible world and incommensurate with it. As the divine king enthroned on this mobile chariot, YHWH can exercise royal rule over those in exile, who are without an earthly

king and in a territory apart from Judah and Jerusalem. The exiles' capacity to perceive the otherworldly throne-chariot as a symbol of YHWH's sovereign power will depend on their reception of the spirit. The reconstituted Israel is expected to live and understand itself within a transformed relationship with YHWH. Launderville's point on the sovereign implication of the manifestation of the divine in exile is worth commendation. However, he leaves unaddressed the question of the implication of this divine movement for the theology of divine presence.

Three years later, Margaret Odell could not agree more with Launderville. She echoes the sovereignty of YHWH as the theological import of the divine presence in the inaugural vision. In contrast to those scholars who see the inaugural vision as an example of storm theophany, Odell argues against categorizing the vision of the kābōd (glory) in Ezekiel as such.25

Echoing Theodore Hiebert,26 Odell states that storm theophanies are narrative accounts that show YHWH in action resolving crisis. They focus on YHWH's deliberation with his courtiers as they work to carry out divine decrees. The vision in Ezekiel (chapter 1 in particular), by contrast, is a description of a static image of YHWH's glory. It is a static portrait, not a dynamic demonstration of divine power.27 Is the kābōd (glory) in Ezekiel's inaugural vision really static? Further, Odell does not

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26 Odell, like Theodore Hiebert, believes that one of the most prevalent forms of divine self-manifestation in the Old Testament is storm theophany. Storm theophanies draw their evocative power from the most powerful and essential phenomenon in the life of people in Canaanite agricultural society. The imagery is at the same time both terrifying and awe-inspiring. In storm theophanies, earthquakes, thunder, lightning, wind, dark clouds, brightness, fire, and tempest all signify YHWH's appearance (Cf. Psalm 18:6-19; Hab 3:3-15; Judg 5; Exod 15:1-18 etc). However, even though the vision in Ezekiel 1 bears semblance of this, it doesn't belong to the category of storm theophany. See Theodore Hiebert, "Theophany in the Old Testament," ABD 6:509 for more details.

27 Ibid., 18-21
discuss the implication of the manifestation of the kāḇōḏ (glory) in Babylon for the theology of divine presence.

In the same year, Dalit Rom-Shiloni brought a new dimension to the study of the inaugural vision of Ezekiel. He argues that as a member of the Jehoiachin Exile (597 B.C.E.), Ezekiel's identification with the exile community is clearly apparent. He suggests that Ezekiel's sympathy with his exile audience leads him to build a separatist ideology, by which he constructs the Jehoiachin Exiles as dichotomous to the community of Those Who Remained in the homeland prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.E.) and in its aftermath.28 Rom-Shiloni further argues that Ezekiel's position in the conflict between Exiles and Those Who Remained in Judah governs his prophecies and visions of the divine presence. To substantiate this argument, Rom-Shiloni unearths the interpretative devices by which Ezekiel both rephrases the pentateuchal concepts of land and exile and transforms the triangular relationship between God, people and land. These theological paths that Ezekiel paves, indeed, constitute the Diaspora ideology. Through his ideology of exile, Ezekiel establishes the community of the Jehoiachin Exiles as the exclusive people of God, consistently expresses his denigration of Jerusalem, and implicitly strengthens the binary distinction that he makes between these communities.29 Rom-Shiloni's unfair imputation of bias to Ezekiel beclouds Ezekiel's contribution to the theology of divine presence.

Two years later, Paul Joyce offers a commentary that focuses especially on the theological interpretation of the book of Ezekiel. His discussion of theological themes


29 Ibid., 1-45.
correctly notes that Ezekiel is written as a form of crisis literature insofar as it addresses the theological questions prompted by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Exile. He observed that the book opens with the great vision of chapter 1, where the divine throne itself is witnessed in far-off Babylon. For him, the inaugural vision anticipates the vision in Ezek 8-11. He interprets this vision as "YHWH is with his people in Exile, no longer tied to the land of Israel." Joyce rightly notes one of the implications of the inaugural vision: "YHWH no longer tied to the land of Israel." However, Joyce does not say if the divine presence in exile means its absence in Jerusalem.

In contrast to Joyce, Kristen Nielsen reads Ezekiel 1 as a prologue to the entire book of Ezekiel and as a literary unit that anticipates, not the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH, but the epilogue in Ezek 40-48. She argues that the vision in Ezekiel 1 signals complexity and changeability that will be resolved in Ezek 40-48. Nielsen here wrongly downplays the significance of the relationship between the manifestation of the divine in the first vision (Ezek 1-3) and the second vision (Ezek 8-11). She does not comment on what this vision of "changeability" means for Israel's traditional understanding of where God is found.

Like Joyce, William Tooman agrees that the inaugural vision in Ezek 1-3 has a relationship with the vision in Ezek 8-11. But for him, the relationship is one of presence and absence. He states that "if the divine Presence, in its freedom of..."
movement, appears in Babylon, it is absent from the temple in Jerusalem." Tooman does not demonstrate beyond doubt how divine presence in Babylon implies a Holy absence in Jerusalem. Can God really be absent?

In her commentary on Ezekiel, Nancy Bowen highlights the significance of *yad* (hand) YHWH in the inaugural vision and the other visions of the *kāḇôḏ* (glory) in the book of Ezekiel. Toeing the path of Jimmy Jack Roberts, she interprets *yad* (hand) YHWH as a revelatory formula primarily used in Ezekiel's vision report to designate the "disastrous manifestation of the supernatural power." She alludes to the nonbiblical parallels of the expression: "The hand of YHWH had been upon me." The Akkadian equivalent is "hand of X," where X represents a divine name or a generic word for *god*. Thus, Bowen argues that the acts of the *yad* (hand) YHWH upon Ezekiel and what God commanded Ezekiel to do is identified today with symptoms often associated with trauma. Bowen further observes that in associating the *kāḇôḏ* (glory) with the motifs of "blazing fire" and "cloud" (cf. Ezek 1:4, 13), Ezekiel speaks of God as both present and transcendent. The transcendent God can be present and known to the people through the *kāḇôḏ* (glory). Highlighting the place of *yad* (hand) YHWH in the vision of Ezekiel is worth commending, but associating it with symptoms of trauma sounds negative and does not help bring out the richness of the theology of the divine presence in the vision of Ezekiel.

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35 Ibid., 17.

36 Ibid., 18.

37 Ibid., 5.
John Strong, in his essay—"The God that Ezekiel inherited," 38 explores Ezekiel's use of earlier theological traditions. While many have claimed that Ezekiel rejects Zion theology and replaces it with completely new ideas of divine mobility and accessibility, Strong argues that earlier Zion theology did not restrict YHWH to the temple. YHWH was believed to manifest himself in multiple sancta, and his kābōd (glory) was believed to be a mobile hypostasis. He observed that Ezekiel uses imagery associated with Zion traditions in the Tyre oracles and depends on Zion theology to depict the separation and reunification of YHWH, his kābōd (glory), and the temple. Even though this essay offers a rich investigation of conceptions of YHWH's presence, I disagree with Strong on his position that earlier traditions did not restrict YHWH to the temple. Strong refers to the period of the wilderness journey, when there was no temple. Eventually, when the temple was built, kābōd (glory), in their view, did become restricted to the temple.

Literature on Ezekiel 8-11

Achim Behrens sees this section of Ezekiel "as prime example of how redaction-critical explanation models reach their limits..." 39 because its relationship with the inaugural vision gives more credence to a holistic interpretation of the visions of Ezekiel. This section will focus on literatures that discuss divine presence and absence/abandonment in Ezek 8-11.


As to the departure of the kābōd (glory), Greenberg alludes to the motif of divine abandonment in the ancient Near East as a possible influence. No temple was destroyed, so was the common belief in the ancient Near East, unless its god had abandoned it, whether reluctantly under coercion of a higher decree or in anger because of the offenses of the worshipers. Thus, Greenberg argues that in the vision of Ezekiel, this commonplace belief is expressed by the intertwining of the stages of the Majesty's departure with scenes of the people's wrongdoing. Greenberg does not say if divine abandonment means divine absence.

Like Greenberg, Peter Craigie identifies the people's wrongdoing as the reason for the glory's (kābōd) departure. He identifies these wrongdoings as the presence of two divinities where there should only be one. The kābōd (glory) YHWH was there, but so was the image of a false deity; immediately, there is a sense of incongruity. Craigie adds that a true temple has room for only one god. If two are present, then one will leave. Better to remove the false presence than to have the true presence depart, as was the case for Jerusalem and its temple. Craigie concludes that the divine presence does not depart of its own accord. It is the people who drive him out of his sanctuary. This holds a terrible omen for the people, for the judgment of a God who is present, however terrible, is surely preferable to the absence of God. Again, Craigie's analysis implies the absence of the divine. Can God really be absent?

40 Greenberg, 200.
42 Ibid., 58.
43 Craigie, Ezekiel, 70.
Douglas Stuart agrees with Greenberg that this second vision underscores the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH. But unlike Greenberg, he goes further to specify the reason for the departure. While Greenberg and Craigie make reference to the people's wrongdoings without specification, Stuart attributes the fault to the remnant in Judah. The throne-chariot bearing the kāḇōḏ (glory) of God come to Ezekiel in exile, having departed from Jerusalem. Thus, he argues that the presence of God is a sign of His favor (Deut. 4:29, 31) whereas the absence of God is a sign of His rejection (Deut. 31:17, 18). The passage symbolizes the fact that it is the exiles to whom God has entrusted continuation of true religion and a right relationship with Himself. In addition, Stuart notes that the departure of the divine presence is not simply about doom; an element of hope looms in these prophecies as well. God's promise to restore His people eventually (11:16–20) provides a beam of encouragement through the gloom of the nation's current sinfulness and coming judgment. However, Stuart wrongly implies that the kāḇōḏ (glory) of God in Ezek 8–11 went to Ezekiel and the exiles. A close reading of this section of the vision of Ezekiel shows that the kāḇōḏ (glory) does not go to Ezekiel after departing from the temple; rather, the divine presence goes to the mountain east of the city (cf. Ezek.11:23). Stuart says nothing about what this means in relation to Israel's understanding of the locus of divine presence.


46 Ibid., 92.
Blenkinsopp analyses the movement of the effulgence (kāḇōd) and its implications. He argues that the kāḇōd distances itself from the temple in stages as preparations for its destruction are completed: first, the effulgence moves from the Holy of Holies to the threshold (cf. Ezek 9:3; 10:4); then, to the east gate of the temple, where the cherubim are waiting (10:18–19); and, finally, the effulgence moves to the Mount of Olives east of the city (11:22–23).47 This movement to the east contrasts Ezekiel's gradual movement into the doomed building from the north, the cardinal point from where, according to ancient representations, danger and disaster are to be expected. The movement also signifies that the divine presence is henceforth to be sought among the deportees until the time of the return.48 For the doomed land and city, the intervening period is marked by the absence of God.49 Here again Blenkinsopp holds, wrongly in my opinion, that God is absent to Jerusalem. I also see his claim that the divine presence, in the interim, will be sought among the deportees to be overstretched.

A year after the publication of Blenkinsopp, Vawter and Hoppe noted that the vision of the divine presence in Ezek 8-11 explains the reason that the kāḇōd (glory) YHWH manifests itself to Ezekiel beside the river Chebar in Babylon at the time of his inaugural vision. It shows that God has already departed from the Jerusalem temple and has taken a place among the exiles. There the YHWH's presence among the exiles is for them "a sanctuary in small measure." (cf. Ezek 11:16).50 They further argue that, contrary to the glib self-assurance of the remaining inhabitants of

47 Blenkinsopp, 52.

48 Ibid., 53.

49 Ibid., 64.

50 Vawter and Hoppe, 62
Jerusalem, the kāḇōḏ (glory) of God has departed the city and the temple. Their claim to possession of the land as a gift of God is illusory. Even this illusion is soon to be snatched away. If the God of Israel is present anywhere, that God can only be in the exile, whence God will bring back a new Israel. Until God establishes the new Israel and the people build a new temple, this is the only presence that Israel-to-be can count on. But still it is presence in a mitigated sense. Vawter and Hoppe's claim of a restricted divine presence does not represent a complete picture of the visions of Ezekiel, especially when read synchronically. I think, contrary to their claim, the vision of the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) shows a God who is not restricted.

Like Vawter and Hoppe, Leslie Allen acknowledges the literary and thematic relationship between this vision and the inaugural vision. The kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH is a crucial theme of the vision accounts. Allen further argues that in Ezek 9:3, when the motif of YHWH's abandoning the temple is introduced, the vision of YHWH's conveyance signified his character as judge. The conveyance provides the fiery coals of judgment that will destroy Jerusalem. Allen does not say if the abandonment means divine absence from Jerusalem.

Millard Lind analyzes the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) from the perspective of the elders of Judah who come to the house of Ezekiel in Ezek 8:1. Lind interprets the departure of the kāḇōḏ to indicate YHWH's universal sovereignty. He notes that it is the same kāḇōḏ (glory) that Ezekiel sees in the inaugural vision that reappears to

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51 Ibid., 76.
him in the second vision. As such, he concludes that this divine manifestation is of utmost importance for the elders, they will come to know who is in charge of Jerusalem's future, their own future, and the future of the nations. Although Lind notes YHWH's universal sovereignty as one of the implications of the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory), he says nothing about what this departure means with respect to Israel's notion of divine presence.

For Biggs, on the other hand, the point of the vision in Ezek 8-11 is that the glory not only departs from the temple, it also goes from the city, leaving both temple and city without the assuring presence of God and depriving the people of the sign that they were God's people. In contrast to Lind, Biggs asserts that the importance of the vision for the elders is that they could not take hope in Jerusalem, which was condemned by God and would be destroyed. Rather, they should acknowledge that, even though they have been judged and are being punished in exile, yet God has spared them, is with them and will renew them. Biggs position that the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) leaves the temple and the city without divine presence does not represent a true reading of Ezek 8-11. Did the kāḇōḏ (glory) really leave the city in Ezek 8-11? Furthermore, he does not say what this means with respect to the theology of divine presence.

A year later, Daniel Block published a commentary on Ezekiel in which he analyzes the second vision (Ezek 8-11), describing it as epexegetical in respect to the inaugural vision. Through this vision, Ezekiel discovers why his inaugural vision had

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54 Ibid., 87-88
55 Biggs, 36.
56 Ibid., 36.
come to him in its overwhelmingly brilliant and fiery form.\textsuperscript{57} In addition, he notes that the divine presence, identified as \textit{the glory of the God of Israel} (kēbōd 'ēlōhē yišrāʾēl) and not as its equivalent, \textit{kēbōd yhwh}, highlights the spiritual treachery represented by this pagan image and all the abominations described in chapter 9. YHWH is the divine patron of the nation; Israel has no business worshiping other gods.\textsuperscript{58} Furthermore, this temple is his residence exclusively; to introduce other deities constitutes a violation of sacred space. As to the focus of this second vision, Block believes that two perspectives are highlighted and emphasized reversely. 9:1-11 and 10:1-8 examine the same event from two perspectives. The former highlights the judgment of Jerusalem directly as an expression of divine wrath, with YHWH's departure being a secondary theme. The latter reverses this ranking, treating the divine abandonment of the temple by YHWH as the primary motif, and the judgment of the city as ancillary.\textsuperscript{59} Block's analysis of the qualification of the \textit{kīn/Jorf} (glory) as \textit{kēbōd 'ēlōhē yišrāʾēl}, and not \textit{kēbōd yhwh} is worth noting. However, he still does not say if the departure means a Holy absence in Jerusalem.

Two years after the publication of Block's commentary on Ezekiel, Renz published his doctoral dissertation in which he analyzed the visions of Ezekiel from a rhetorical point of view. In this publication, Renz argues that the main thrust of the vision is to underline that conditions in Judah drive YHWH away from the sanctuary in Jerusalem. As a consequence, Renz claims, the temple in Jerusalem should no

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{57} Daniel I. Block, \textit{The Book of Ezekiel}, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1997), 317.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 282.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 315.
\end{itemize}
longer function as a focal point for the religious and national aspirations of the exiles.\textsuperscript{60} Instead, YHWH himself has become to the exiles "a sanctuary to some extent" (cf. Ezek 11:16).\textsuperscript{61} In consonance with this, he concludes that the promise of restoration declared in Ezek 11:14-21 is for the exiled community as distinct from those in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{62} I admire Renz's rhetorical interpretation, but not his exclusionist conclusion. "Sanctuary to some extent," of Ezek 11:16, speaks more to the exiles having the possibility of experiencing the presence of the divine than of it being a denial of the same privilege to the remnant community in Judah.

In the year 2000, Daniel Block wrote an essay\textsuperscript{63} wherein he investigates fourteen Mesopotamian texts with parallels to Ezekiel's motif of the abandonment of a city or land by a god. Block first and foremost notes that the possibility of YHWH's absence from his people, land, and sanctuary is widely recognized in the Old Testament (cf. Jer 48:7; 49:3). But it is Ezekiel who fully develops this motif, being an exile himself in a land where traditions of divine abandonment were common. He notes, however, that Ezekiel does not completely follow the Mesopotamian model of divine abandonment. In contrast to the idolatrous cults in which the deity was thought to dwell in the image of him or her, Ezekiel shows that Yahwism is a spiritual religion. The temple in Jerusalem housed no image of YHWH; the \textit{kābôd} (glory) YHWH

\textsuperscript{60} Renz, 68.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 69.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 69-70.

represented his presence. Here, again, Block fails to discuss the implication of the
divine abandonment to Israel's theology of divine presence.

Like Peter Craigie eight years earlier, Wright argues that the *kāḇôḏ* (glory)
YHWH did not leave the temple of its own accord; it was forced to leave.64 Wright
identifies four factors that induce YHWH to leave his abode: 1) The idol of jealousy
(cf. 8:5-6). 2) Prayer to animal deities (cf. 8:7-13). 3) Mourning cults (cf. 8:14-15). 4)
Sun worship (cf. 8:16).65 He further observes that this departure of the *kāḇôḏ* (glory)
YHWH creates suspense about the future that is not answered fully until much later in
the book.66 Wright does very well to highlight the suspense in Ezek 8-11. But he too
does not say anything about the implication of this divine departure to Israel's
theology of divine presence and absence.

Two years after the publication of Wright, Walther Zimmerli introduced a new
nuance in the scholarship of the theology of divine presence in the book of Ezekiel.
He argues that Ezekiel is the prophetic book that synthesizes elements of traditional
temple theology with the notion of *råḇh* (spirit) YHWH.67 Zimmerli submits that the
prophetic texts and traditions prior to Ezekiel rarely mention the Spirit of God and
that they do not associate the task of prophecy with the efficacy of the Spirit.68 The
Spirit therefore appears to be a new category in the scheme of prophetic theology.
Zimmerli sums that Ezekiel's vision of the *kāḇôḏ* (glory) YHWH leaving the

64 Christopher J. H. Wright, 99.
65 Ibid., 100-10.
66 Ibid., 119.
(Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 107–17.
68 Ibid., 109.
temple provides an apt example. In this vision, the prophet beholds the *kābōd* (glory) YHWH as it leaves the Holy of Holies to proceed to the temple entrance (Ezek 10:4). There, it boards a chariot carried by cherubim (Ezek 10:18). Behind this stands the assumption that, while the glory of God can move vertically between heaven and the temple as God’s dwelling places, it has no horizontal movement. Thus, it requires a carrier vessel in order to be able to leave the temple and travel to the exilic community in Babylon. The final piece in this scenario is the Spirit. While the cherubim carry the *kābōd*-filled chariot, the Spirit gives it direction. Zimmerli’s introduction of the *rūḥ* (spirit) dimension to the theology of divine presence in Ezek 8-11 is worth commending. However, I think he reads into the text what the text does not explicitly say. The idea of the *rūḥ* (spirit) directing the *kābōd* (glory) YHWH to the exilic community does not exist anywhere in Ezek 8-11. This may be true of Ezek 1-3, but not 8-11. Also, he does not say anything about what this movement of the *kābōd* (glory) to Babylon means to Israel’s theology of divine presence.

Odell analyzes the vision of the departure of the *kābōd* (glory) YHWH as a complete rejection of the remnant in Jerusalem as the true *qahal* YHWH. She argues that if there is to be a remnant of Israel, it will be forged from those who have been expelled from the land of Judah. But just as location does not guarantee divine presence for the Jerusalemites, neither does it guarantee salvation for the exiles. What matters, for Odell, is not location but orientation. Odell rightly put it that location does not guarantee divine presence, but I disagree with her claim on the

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69 Ibid., 115-17.
70 Odell, 119.
71 Ibid., 125.
exclusion of the remnant in Jerusalem from the hallowed privilege of the experience of the presence of the divine.

Horace Hummel notes that Ezekiel's identification of the "cherubim" in chapter 10 as the same "living creatures" that he saw in chapter 1 impresses upon him that the chariot is not only the means for YHWH to proclaim his majesty and sovereignty to his faithful exiles (chapter 1). It is also the means by which YHWH will terminate his relationship with his defiled temple and his apostate people (chapter 10). In addition, Hummel suggests that YHWH was reluctant to leave his chosen city, as evident in the slow-motion movement of the divine in nearly all of Ezek 8-11, even though Israel's sin had made his departure inevitable. Hummel implies that the departure of the Holy One in Ezek 8-11 means divine absence, at least momentarily. However, he does not say how the departure of the kābōḏ (glory) YHWH from the temple equates with a Holy absence from the city of Jerusalem?

For Joyce, the departure of the kābōḏ (glory) has a dual function: the absence of God from the temple is both theodicy and theophany. It allows the presence of God to be associated with Israel in exile and absent from the remnant in Judah. He notes that, in the present context, Ezekiel coopts a feature of the temple (e.g. 1 Kgs 8:6-7), skillfully exploiting the earlier associations of the "cherubim" with the mobility of the Ark of the Covenant in pre-temple times as he presents his narrative of the movement of the kābōḏ (glory) YHWH to be with the exiles. Joyce, like many of

73 Ibid., 312.
74 Cf. Joyce, 105-106.
his predecessors, does not tell us how God is absent to the remnant community in Jerusalem, if at all.

Two years later, Tooman wrote an article where he argues that the vision of Ezek 8-11 challenges the inviolability of Jerusalem. In his interpretation of the visions of Ezekiel, he notes that many passages in the Hebrew Bible depict Jerusalem as impervious to destruction so long as YHWH is in residence there (e.g., Isa 36-39; Ps 46; 48; 76). He observes that there is a remarkable consistency of opinion among contemporary Ezekiel scholars that this same belief lies behind Ezek 8-11. So long as the deity is resident in Jerusalem, the city is inviolable. Thus, for the city to be destroyed it must first be abandoned. Tooman contends that Ezekiel presents a radical challenge to the idea of Jerusalem's inviolability. According to Ezekiel, the temple has long been abandoned and chapters 8-11 envision the visitation of YHWH to destroy the city and its inhabitants. He argues that the purpose of Ezek 8:2 is to draw the reader's attention back to Ezek 1:27-28. However, he does not say if this divine abandonment or destruction means divine absence. This leaves his argument open to different interpretations.

In her interpretation of the movement of the kābōd (glory) from the temple in Ezek 10, Bowen, like Block, claims that the movement is an indication that YHWH has completely abandoned Jerusalem. The glory's (kābōd) movement provides a theological explanation for Jerusalem's destruction. As to where the kābōd (glory)

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76 Cf. Ibid., 498–514.

77 Bowen, 57.
went, Bowen claims that God went into exile, not to Babylon, but away from the covenant community. She concludes that this is not God who is Immanuel (God with us), but rather God to whom the Psalmist cries: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (cf. Psalm 22:1). Bowen does not say what she really means by divine exile, and how this so called divine exile affects both the exile community and the remnant in Jerusalem with respect to the locus of divine presence.

In his doctoral dissertation, Pieter de Vries argued that kābōd (glory) in Ezekiel is used almost exclusively as hypostasis, highlighting the dual and paradoxical nature of the divine as both defying verbal description and being potentially visible. He sees the departure of the kābōd (glory) YHWH from the temple (Ezek 8-11) as an indication of the profane state of the temple. YHWH departs from the temple because of the people's sins. For de Vries, Purity characterizes the ethic of Ezekiel: Israel's moral sins are portrayed in terms of impurity. The consequence of the impurity is the departure of the kābōd (glory) YHWH. Three years after his dissertation, de Vries wrote an essay on the relationship between the kābōd (glory) YHWH and the rū'āh (spirit) YHWH in the book of Ezekiel. He argues that the rū'āh (spirit) YHWH does not only signify the power and presence of God in man individually, but, like the kābōd (glory), also signifies God's presence with his people and in the temple.

78 Ibid., 57.


80 Ibid., 36.

Pieter says nothing about what this divine departure means the exile community and those that remained in Jerusalem, particularly in relation to divine presence and absence.

In 2015, the Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies published a collection of articles under the title *The God Ezekiel Creates*. This volume contains nine essays exploring how God is depicted in the book of Ezekiel. But only two of these essays are particularly pertinent to this section.

Katheryn Pfisterer Darr's essay in the aforementioned publication interacts with the works of Louis Stulman and Hyun Chul Paul Kim, who describe Ezekiel's God as a traumatized victim. While Darr agrees that the book of Ezekiel addresses the trauma of displacement, she calls for a more nuanced application of trauma studies to the book. Against claims that Ezekiel 8–11 depicts YHWH as feeble and driven out, Darr persuasively argues that the verb 'to be far off' in Ezek. 8:6 refers to the people, that YHWH is described not as fleeing but as arriving in power to inflict damage (Ezek 9). Within this analysis, the language of divine rage is not the result of Ezekiel projecting anti-Babylonian sentiments onto the Judeans. Ezekiel consistently depicts God as powerful; to do otherwise would have subverted his rhetorical goals. Thus, for her, Ezekiel's ideology of abandonment insists that the *kāḇōḏ* (glory) of Israel's infuriated God deserts Jerusalem, leaving the city and its inhabitants helpless. But it never portrays YHWH as enfeebled like the Mesopotamian gods. Darr argues that the book of Ezekiel resolutely rejects this opinion and insists that the responsibility for the voluntary departure of YHWH's *kāḇōḏ* (glory) falls squarely on the shoulders of

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YHWH's sin-filled people.\textsuperscript{83} Darr also does not say anything about the relation of the departure to the theology of divine presence.

John Strong, in his essay, "The God that Ezekiel inherited,"\textsuperscript{84} argues against the popular understanding that Ezek 8-11 shows a departure from Ezekiel's Zion theology due to YHWH's abandoning of his permanent abode. Strong argues that this would only be true if the kāḇōḏ is a synonym of YHWH and not his hypostasis. Thus, what has mistakenly been interpreted as a rejection of Zion theology is actually an aspect of it that becomes visible due to Ezekiel's exilic circumstances. If YHWH did not abandon the temple, then what happened? How do we interpret the departure of the kāḇōḏ (glory) from the temple? Strong does not say anything about this.

More recently, in 2017, Joel B. Kemp wrote an article\textsuperscript{85} wherein he argues for the legal implication of the verb ṣāzāh ("to abandon") in relation to the divine abandonment in the second vision of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH. He claims that Ezek 8:12 and 9:9 contain a legal formula relating to the legal effects of divine abandonment. In his rendering of the verses, YHWH's renunciation of his legal claim to the land and lack of oversight are intentionally deployed. The need to analyze these verses within a legal framework emerged from a recognition of the legal nature of prophetic discourse. Kemp further argues that the meaning of ṣāzāh is not only physical abandonment but also the renunciation of a legally enforceable proprietary claim to a person or object. He concludes, therefore, that this factor leads to an

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{84} John Strong, "The God that Ezekiel inherited," 24-54.

understanding of these verses as a legal acknowledgment that YHWH has renounced his legal claim to the land and withdrawn his oversight. Kemp does not say if this divine withdrawal of legal claim over the land means divine absence from the land.

Literature on the vision of the Return of the  

This section will analyze literature on the third vision of the  

YHWH (Ezek 40-48). The focus will be on the return of the  

to the temple. In his commentary on the departure of the  

Greenberg suggests that, the vision of the future temple and the return of the  

are indications that YHWH will take a place among the people again as sign of reconciliation.86 A year later, he further argues that the legislations about the future temple and the revisions of certain Israelite institutions are designed to maintain the sanctity of the temple precinct and to right past misconduct in relation to it, so that it (the temple) would never again be abandoned by the deity (chaps. 43:13-48). Thus, Greenberg concludes that the program of the vision of the return of the  

is restoration of the people and the cult in holiness.87 Greenberg does not say anything on what the deity's return means for the city and the people in relation to its previous departure and the locus of divine presence.

Craigie analyzes this third vision, looking at the relationship between the restored temple and the return of the  

He asserts that the

86 Greenberg, 200.

reconstruction of the temple preceded the return of the kāhōd (glory) to emphasize that the temple remains a mere building without the symbol of the divine presence, the kāhōd (glory), the very essence of Israel's religion. 88 He further adds that the nature of the temple and its innermost sanctuary in Ezekiel's vision maintains a balance between the transcendent God and the immanent God. God is indeed present in the world, but that presence should not be recognized casually; it is a holy presence, an extraordinary privilege. It must be treated with appropriate awe. 89 If the presence of the kāhōd (glory) YHWH is what defines a temple, how then can one explain the presence of the kāhōd (glory) YHWH in an unclean land (in exile)?

Stuart echoes almost exactly the thoughts of Craigie that the temple is nothing without God's presence. 90 This, for him, has two implications for both the exile and the remnant community in Judah. First, it is a message of hope: hope in spite of the depressing realities of captivity, hope based upon the revealed plan of God to move the people into a new age of blessing and close relationship with YHWH. Second, the temple without God's presence creates concerns around holiness, highlighting the importance of God's people being pure, obedient and capable of living in his presence. 91 Also Stuart does not mention how this motif of divine departure and return affects Israel's understanding of the locus of divine presence.

For Blenkinsopp, the return of the kāhōd (glory) marks the climax of Ezekiel's vision narrative. The water flowing from inside the temple is the direct consequence

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88 Craigie, 286.
89 Ibid., 288.
90 Stuart, 374
91 Ibid., 375.
of the return of the čabod to the inner sanctuary (Ezek 43:1–5). Blenkinsopp argues that this bespeaks new life for both the city (Jerusalem) and the people. As a consequence of this renewed state, the city will bear the symbolic name YHWH šammah, "YHWH is there." Blenkinsopp observes that this extremely terse description of the Jerusalem of the future is different in some important respects from the preceding account. In the latter, Jerusalem is not part of the sacred enclave, and therefore YHWH is not there. For Blenkinsopp, this serves to explain why the city was destroyed in the past—YHWH was not there. Blenkinsopp does not explain what he means by YHWH's absence from Jerusalem. What is the correlation between divine absence and Jerusalem's destruction?

For Allen, the third vision is oriented toward the theme of the temple. It reflects priestly concerns already evident earlier in the book. The prophetic thinking of Ezekiel moves within a strongly religious orbit, and this trait appears in the literary complex. This common concern enables the section to function as a reversal of earlier temple-oriented material. The vision of chapters 8–11, in which both temple and city are destroyed finds here a positive counterpart with the return of the čabod (glory) to the temple. Allen observes a similar note of contrast, which is struck by the deliberate mention of changes in temple layout and organization. There is a new emphasis on divine transcendence that results in a conscious endeavor to reflect it in the areas of topography and personnel. What was good enough for the old temple would no longer do (cf. Ezek 43:10, 11). The holiness of God is to be a paramount

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92 Blenkinsopp, 230.
93 Ibid., 238.
principle, and its outworking is to permeate both the structure and the procedure of the temple. Allen rightly notes the changes in the temple layout and organization, but he does not say how this affects Israel's original notion of the temple as the locus of divine manifestation.

Vawter and Hoppe interpret the return of the *kôhôd* (glory) in Ezek 40-48 from a liturgical perspective. For them, the prophet chooses to speak about Jerusalem's future by recasting imagery deriving from the ancient Near Eastern mythic motif of the "cosmic mountain." To do so, Ezekiel's rhetoric fuses three Israelite versions of that motif: Eden, Sinai, and Zion traditions. For them, what the prophet actually describes in the vision is the kingdom of God. It is to replace the historical reality that was Israel. The principal focus of the vision is the relationship between God and Israel and the service that Israel owes to its God. This final vision understands that service to be liturgical. Vawter and Hoppe claim that Ezekiel wishes the new Israel to replace the historical entity that existed before the exile and was unable to render proper service to God. Vawter and Hoppe concentrate so much on the cultic aspect of the vision as it relates to Israel and her relationship with God. However they do not comment on what the return of the *kôhôd* (glory) means for the city, the temple and Israel as a people.

Five years later, Lind disagreed with every cultic and liturgical interpretation of the third vision of the *kôhôd* (glory) in the book of Ezekiel. Contrary to the popular

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95 Ibid., 214  
96 Vawter and Hoppe, 185  
97 Ibid., 185  
98 Ibid., 186.
interpretation at the time, Lind interprets the vision from a political perspective. Ezekiel's vision is a competing claim through which, according to promise, the nations will acknowledge not their powerful gods but rather the Lord, God of the exiled Israel, who rules from the temple as the One who determines history.\(^9^9\) Just as the first and second visions assure Ezekiel of the divine presence in his land of exile, this third assures him of God's rule over the nations.\(^1^0^0\) With respect to the city, Lind held that Ezekiel's vision marks a division between the secular and the Holy. The territory of the city is not included within the holy oblation, nor is the temple any longer within the territory of the city (cf. Ezek 48:10, 15, 18). The city is named *The Lord Is There*, not because the temple is now regarded as within the city, but rather because the city acknowledges its secularity; it does not intrude upon the authority of the Holy but subjects itself to the Holy.\(^1^0^1\) Assuming Lind's claim is true, how do we reconcile the divine presence in the land of exile (where there is no temple) with the Lord who rules from the temple? More so, Lind does not tell us how the city acknowledges its secularity. His analysis creates a dichotomy between the temple and the city with reference to where God is found.

Biggs wrote his commentary the same year as Lind, however, he does not toe a political path as Lind does. For him, the plan for the new temple, regulations for its ordering and the return of the *kāḇôd* (glory) to the new temple emphasize the centrality of the temple and its cult in the life of the restored people of Israel.\(^1^0^2\) In addition, Biggs observes that the vision of the new temple (Ezek 40:1-43:12) is a

\(^{99}\) Lind, 324.

\(^{100}\) Ibid., 332.

\(^{101}\) Ibid., 360.

\(^{102}\) Biggs, 133.
counterpart to the vision in Ezek 8-11. In the earlier vision, the abomination of the people, especially as related to the temple, culminates in the kābōd (glory) YHWH leaving the temple, the sign of God's rejection of the people. Similarly, in this later vision, the prophet is shown the sign of the new temple and witnesses the return of the kābōd (glory) YHWH, a sign that God would be with the restored people when they return from exile.103 Biggs does not say anything about what this return of the kābōd (glory) means with respect to where God is found.

Kalinda Stevenson proposes the genre of territorial rhetoric as hermeneutical principle. The expression "territoriality" derives from human geography and refers to "the control of space for social purposes. Access to space is a power issue."104 The text itself functions to delimit area, communicate boundaries, and stake a claim for control of access. The envisioned temple, having admitted the glory (kābōd) of the presence of God after its long absence during Israel's exile (Ezek 43:1-7), becomes the center of both holiness and of the transformed nation. All the measurements and laws serve as a spatial means of protecting the holiness of Israel from further profanation, so that YHWH in turn may protect and bless the land. YHWH is the "power holder" in this human geography, all others being "power subjects," literally subject to YHWH's claiming of the territory.105 Access comes in two forms: access to holiness and access to land. Both are by inheritance and are granted by YHWH. In

103Ibid., 133-34.


105Ibid., 49.
this scheme, all citizens of Israel have access to one or the other. Stevenson maintains that there was a period when God was absent in Jerusalem during Israel's exile. But was God really absent in Jerusalem? She does not say how this return of the kābōd (glory) redresses Israel's understanding of divine presence.

Block, like other scholars before him, acknowledges this vision as the climax of the kābōd (glory) visions. He partially echoes Vawter and Hoppe by suggesting that Ezek 40-48 blends both Zion and Sinai traditions. Further, Block argues that it seems best to interpret Ezek 40-48 ideationally. He argues this in contrast to Stevenson's territorial interpretation. The issue for the prophet is not physical geography but rather spiritual realities. The observation of the abominations in the temple and the consequent departure of the divine kābōd provide theological justification and rationalization for Nebuchadnezzar's razing of Jerusalem (Cf. Ezek 8:1-11:25). Ezek 40-48 should be interpreted along similar lines. Ezekiel's final vision presents a lofty spiritual ideal: Where God is, there is Zion. Where God is, there is order and the fulfillment of all his promises. Where the presence of God is recognized, there is purity and holiness. Block's conclusion concerning Ezek 40-48 will be true if we read 40-48 in isolation from Ezek 1-3 and 8-11. Ultimately, Block does not tell us how to reconcile the divine presence in the land of exile with the return of the kābōd (glory) in Ezek 40-48.

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106 Ibid., 66.
108 Ibid., 503
109 Ibid., 504
110 Ibid., 505
Renz is heavily influenced by Stevenson. He argues from rhetorical perspective and sees the main rhetorical import of this last vision as the separation of the sacred from the profane.\(^{111}\) He notes that after the new temple had been defined, YHWH's kāḇōd (glory) returns (Ezek 43:1-12) and claims territorial ownership that sacred space: "... this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel forever" (Ezek 43:7). Renz interprets this as YHWH holding the power of the new society, which will have the altar of burn offerings as its center.\(^{112}\) Renz also does not say anything on how to reconcile the return of the kāḇōd (glory) to the temple with divine manifestation in exile.

The temple that Ezekiel sees is impossible, according to Tuell:\(^{113}\) a structure completely out of proportion and character. There is no earthly way that it could be built. Secondly, Tuell argues that there is no command to build the temple. Ezekiel experiences a tour of the heavenly temple and the river that flows from it, and this is where the text leaves the prophet and the landscape that he sees in heaven. Corresponding to this point, Tuell argues that the vision of 40-48 should be read alongside the visions of the kāḇōd (glory) YHWH in chapter 1, and the initial temple vision in chapters 8-11. Both these visions, Tuell argues, describe a static reality, not a future yet to come. In the same way, then, the temple vision of Ezek 40-48 should be read as a present reality, not as a plan for the future. And so, turning to the purpose of the report of Ezekiel's vision, Tuell concludes that by means of Ezekiel's report of his vision the exiles could share in this extraordinary experience, seeing in their mind's

\(^{111}\)Renz, 121.

\(^{112}\)Ibid., 124.

\(^{113}\)Cf. Steven S. Tuell, 97-116.
eye the heavenly temple that Ezekiel saw. Though the earthly temple was no more, the heavenly temple would stand forever. Through Ezekiel's words, the community of exiles was given access to this eternal, cosmic reality. In this way, Tuell understands Ezek 40-48 as evidence of Ezekiel's break with the older Royal Theology of the Jerusalem temple cult, constructing a new access to the divine presence.  

Tuell's claim that Ezekiel's words are the access to divine presence for the exile, as plausible as it may seem, diminishes the place of the kāḇōḏ (glory). Secondly, if Ezekiel's word is the access to divine presence for the exile, then what implications does this have for the community in Judah? Are they excluded from accessing the divine?  

In contrast to Tuell, Wright believes the main program of this last vision is restoration. He argues that the implication of previous divine desertion of the sanctuary in Jerusalem is that God is no longer dwelling with his people, for that is the prime purpose of the temple. Thus, the point of the last vision is the restoration of the dwelling place of God in the midst of his people. However, Wright adds that this goes beyond the physical temple and points to the restored relationship between God and the people in holiness. Here again, Wright does not tell us how this affects Israel's traditional understanding of the temple as the locus of divine presence.  

Odell interprets the vision of the return of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH in relation to chapters Ezek 8-11. She argues that Ezek 43:7b-9 affords a clear reference to cult statues. YHWH identifies the central abuse leading to the abandonment of the temple and demands that the house of Israel put an end to these practices. In Ezek 8:3-6, the

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114 Ibid., 97, 106.
115 Wright, 327.
116 Ibid., 329.
117 Ibid., 338.
statues in question have been the "image of jealousy," while in Ezek 43:7b-9, the offensive objects are described in Hebrew as *piyger malkhehem* (cf. Ezek 43:9). This Hebrew phrase is rendered as "corpses of their kings." But Odell argues that it should rather be understood to refer to statues commemorating offerings to the deity, and more specifically *mlk*-offerings. For her, both revolve around themes of drawing near and distancing. What the people have done in Ezek 8:3-6 to draw near to the deity has prompted the departure of the divine, while in Ezek 43:7-9, the deity's return involves a reversal of those earlier conditions. Odell does not say anything on how this departure and return of the divine impacts Israel's understanding of divine presence.

In Joyce's approach to the text, he separates chapters 40-42, the tour through the temple with the measuring reed, from chapter 43, the vision of the return of *khabôd* (glory) YHWH. This separation is a crucial step for Joyce. Joyce, contra Tuell, argues that there is indeed a command to build a temple, found in 43,10-11: "Write it down in their sight, so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances" (NRSV). This command in Ezekiel compares to the command to build the tabernacle in Exod 25,8-9: "In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle ... so you shall make it" (NRSV). But Joyce points to an important distinction in vocabulary between the two texts, with Ezek 43:10 presenting the word *toknîṯ*, whereas in Exod 25:9, that word is *tabnîṯ*. The term used in

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118 Odell, 497.
119 Cf. Ibid., 496-500.
121 Ibid., 29.
Ezekiel, 

Ezekiel, token, alongside the other unique vocabulary, is a rhetorical technique used to convey the heavenly, ethereal, indescribable nature of Ezekiel's vision and experience. token then, is specific vocabulary used to distinguish the heavenly structure envisioned in Ezek 40-42 from the future earthly structure to be built. In this way, Joyce, like Tuell, is able to leave the temple of chapters 40-42 in heaven, separated from earthly reality. Joyce does not tell us what the return of the kâbôd (glory), whether to the heavenly or earthly temple, means to Israel's understanding of the locus of divine presence.

For Nielsen, the vision of Ezek 40-48 signals order and stability. Thus, she concludes that the book of Ezekiel uses both aspects to describe YHWH as a God who is able to change the situation of the exiles and ensure future stability. Nielsen asserts that both the inaugural vision and that of Ezek 40-48 are concerned with YHWH making his entrance into the earthly world. While, according to Nielsen, the inaugural vision signals chaos, the vision of the return of the kâbôd (glory) brings order. As such, the chaos of the prologue is resolved in the epilogue (Ezek 40-48). She sees this as a clear motif in the book of Ezekiel, evidenced from its ending, Ezek. 48:35, where the temple city receives a specific name: YHWH Shammah, that is, "YHWH is there" to restore order and stability to the situation of the exiles. Nielsen associates divine presence in Ezek 40-48, particularly the concluding verse of this section, Ezek 48:35, to the exile. However, she does not tell us how it applies to the exile, as the city referred to in that verse is believed to be Jerusalem.

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122 Ibid., 29.
124 Ibid., 111.
125 Ibid., 111.
With respect to Ezekiel's final vision on the return of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH (Ezek. 40-48), de Vries argues that the message is that the heavens will come down to the earth. The temple described in Ezekiel 40-42 has a heavenly character. But it is not removed from the earth as Joyce and Tuell claim. The aim of worship is to connect heaven and earth. Both the structure and worship within the new temple reflect the holiness of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH. As such, the return is the crown and climax not only of the final vision but also of the book as a whole, since the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH will never leave the temple again. de Vries does not say how the return of the divine presence, the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH, affects Israel's traditional understanding of the temple as the exclusive space for the manifestation of the divine, bearing in mind the fact that the same kāḇōḏ was found earlier in the unclean land of exile.

Strong challenges the commonly held thesis that, in Ezek 40-48, the prophet sought to reform the theology of the Jerusalem temple cult. He argues instead that the vision account actually supports the Royal or "Zion" Theology. Contrary to Joyce and Tuell, Strong reasserts previous studies by scholars such as Levenson and Greenberg, who understood Ezek 40-48 to be a program for restoration in some sense. He argues that the foundational vision of the temple, the river, and the division of the land in Ezek 40-48 is written for the purpose of being archived for later study by the post-exilic community. With respect to the temple, Strong argues that the text

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126 Cf. De Vries, kāḇōḏ Yhwh in the Old Testament, 36-42.
127 Ibid., 36.
129 Ibid., 210.
indeed declared that the heavenly temple was to have an earthly counterpart, and that this text itself was both a first installment of the founding of the temple and a reference document for the post-exilic generation to study when the time came to build the actual, physical counterpart to YHWH's heavenly abode, with the intent of explaining the theological significance of the future Jerusalem temple. If Strong's claim about the future temple being an earthly counterpart of the heavenly temple is true, will it remain the exclusive abode for the kābōd YHWH?

Adriane Leveen argues that the particular physical environment of Babylon—with its preoccupation with and valorization of monumental structures and the repair of those structures might have exerted a powerful influence over Ezekiel and shaped the content of the prophet's vision of a restored temple. Such concerns might have shaped and even exacerbated Ezekiel's preoccupation in the prophecy with identifying his "own" building— the temple— in its own space—the promised land. Those preoccupations took on a further poignancy since the priest who found himself in a foreign land simply could not relinquish the only sacred space, for which his vocation has prepared him— the temple. The resultant text promotes an experience of a tangible material building meant to exist outside of that text. A building in which the priestly class can resume its functions on behalf of God. It seems Leveen read into the text what one may call the "perspective of Ezekiel" in which she implies Jerusalem as the only sacred space—the only locus for divine presence. But it is the same Ezekiel that saw the kābōd in a foreign land in the earlier vision.

130 Ibid., 210.


132 Ibid., 390.

133 Ibid., 390.
Unlike common assumptions, as is the case with the argument of Leveen, Soo J. Kim argues that the new city in Ezekiel 40-48 is not pre-designated either as holy or as profane but rather shows its dual characteristics in relation to the holy dedicated area (*terumah*). 134 In other words, Ezekiel 40–48 has three distinctive categories in space recognition, not only the two categories of holy and profane. The City fits in this third category as a transitional space and functions even as a gateway to the holy presence of YHWH. This explains the theological rendering of the city as: *YHWH Shammah*. Kim pursues this unique dual characteristic of the city by examining three significant facets of the city described in Ezekiel 40–48: the identity of the city in terms of its holy dedicated area (*terumah*), the structure and shape of the city in relation to the temple, and the theological meaning of the name of the city, *Yhwh Shammah* (Ezek 48:35). 135 However, Kim does not say what these three significant dimensions of the city in relation to the temple hold with respect to Israel's understanding of the *locus* of divine presence.

Four years later, Wojciech Pikor gave, in my opinion, one of the most comprehensive accounts of the theology of divine presence in Ezek 40-48. For him, YHWH's presence constitutes the foundation for the restoration of the temple, temple worship and the land of Israel. 136 This, in addition, indicates the soteriological value of the land of Israel, which is an outcome of the sanctifying presence of God in the land, 137 thus restoring the sacredness of, not only the temple, but also of the land. This explains the theological rendering of the city as *Yhwh Shammah* (Ezek 48:35).


135 Cf. Ibid., 187-207.


137 Ibid., 231.
However, Pikor does not say if this vision of the sanctifying presence of YHWH in the land of Israel overrides the earlier vision where the same divine presence is manifested in the unclean land of Babylon.

5. Summary and Conclusion

This literature review has considered a selection of publications on Ezekiel's vision accounts from the 1980s onward, in view of their synchronic or holistic analyses. All the scholarship analyzed above are unanimous in understanding the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH as representing the divine presence, but differ in their interpretation of this presence. Most of the scholars interpret the departure or the abandonment of the kāḇōḏ (glory) YHWH from the temple as a divine absence from the temple and the city. Additionally, a majority of the scholars interpret the visions independently from each other or, at best, make a passing reference to the other vision, especially from the structural perspective of the book or from the correlation of departure and return. Some scholars reviewed above recognize the novelty in the divine manifesting itself in a foreign land but do not delve into the implication of this for Israel's understanding of the locus of divine presence. Furthermore, the publications reviewed show that few studies focus on the deliberate interrelatedness of the vision accounts; even though it is undisputed that this is a prominent feature in Ezekiel. There is scarcely an extended work specifically on the divine presence in Ezekiel's vision of the kāḇōḏ (glory) as an interconnected text corpus, particularly from a synchronic perspective.

These publications study the divine presence in Ezekiel from the point of view of YHWH's kāḇōḏ (glory) but hardly expand the notion of divine presence as
associated with קָדָם (glory) in Ezekiel to show how the activity of YHWH's רוח (spirit) and יָד (hand) adds new dimension to the theology of divine presence.

Furthermore, none of the scholarship above applies Ezekiel's theology of divine presence to the relationship that exists today among the world's religions. None, still, interpret the exile space from the point of view of the modern Critical Spatial Theories. Therefore, this study will attempt to fill in that gap. It will try to demonstrate that a study of the visions of the divine presence in Ezekiel as an interrelated narrative will clarify the dichotomy of the divine as either present or absent. This dissertation will attempt to shed light on the locus of divine presence, with particular reference to the "exile space" as a thirdspace.
CHAPTER THREE

THE VISION OF THE \textit{kābōd} BY THE RIVER CHEBAR (Ezek 1-3)

1. Introduction

Ezekiel's vision of the \textit{kābōd} comes in the context of his call to prophetic ministry. Thus, in effect, this vision sets the tone for what will eventually define his ministry as the prophet who saw the \textit{kābōd} \textit{YHWH} and the book of Ezekiel as the book of the visions of the \textit{kābōd}. This may explain why Kristen Nielsen holds that the \textit{kābōd} that Ezekiel saw during his call to prophetic ministry is an anticipation of the vision of the \textit{kābōd} in Ezek 40-48,\textsuperscript{1} thus forming an \textit{inclusio} to the entire book.

Even though the vision in this literary unit (Ezek 1-3:27) of the book of Ezekiel comes in the context of the calling and initiation of Ezekiel to prophetic ministry, the dominant theme is the presence of the divine manifested to Ezekiel in a foreign land "by the river Chebar." Thus, this chapter will begin an exegetical discussion, not only of the motif of divine presence in the book of Ezekiel but also of the question regarding where \textit{YHWH} is present. It will do this through a close reading of the description of the divine manifestation in Ezek 1-3, noting the repetition and the crescendo with which it is described until the divine manifestation is eventually named as \textit{kābōd} \textit{YHWH} of Israel. While Ezekiel's description of the \textit{kābōd} has a lot

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in common with earlier traditions, it also shows a shift from these traditions.² This chapter will note this shift and highlight the novelty in Ezekiel's theology of the kābōd, as described in this inaugural vision.

Through a close reading of the description of the divine manifestation, this chapter will highlight the divine activity through the ru'ān and yad YHWH, and show how this adds a new dimension to the understanding of the theology of divine presence in the book of Ezekiel. But before this, it will be pertinent to justify Ezek 1-3 as a literary unit and establish the structure of this inaugural vision.

2. Delimitation and Structure of the Text

Walther Zimmerli and Leslie Allen argue that Ezek 1:1-3:15 forms the literary unit of the inaugural vision of the book of Ezekiel.³ They base this argument on the formula of "rising up" and "going to a different place" which is one convention for marking the end of a narrative segment.⁴ Thus, for these scholars, Ezek 3:16 marks the beginning of another unit, with a new introduction of an event that takes place seven days later. Moshe Greenberg, on the other hand, sees Ezek 3:22 as the beginning of another unit which ends in 5:17 with the interruption in Ezek 6:1.⁵


though these positions have their merits, I would rather agree with Daniel I. Block. Block suggests that "it seems best to fix the terminus ad quem at the end of chapter 3, the conclusion of YHWH's personal instructions for the prophet. The shift in style, tone, and substance in Ezek 3:16–21 makes these verses seem intrusive in the narrative. Nevertheless, the chronological note at 3:16 suggests that it is to be interpreted in the light of the preceding experiences of the prophet."\(^6\) Contrary to the position of Greenberg, Block holds that chapters 4-7 clearly describe the sins of the people that led to the departure of the kāḇôḏ in Ezek 8-11. Thus, Ezek 4-7 is a bridge or transitional passage between Ezek 1-3 and Ezek. 8-11. This, therefore, makes Ezek 8-11 a separate literary unit. Furthermore, Ezek 3:22-27 is the conclusion of the inaugural vision (Ezek 1-3:15)."The adverb šām ("there" v. 22) ties the paragraph to the foregoing, and several motifs in the text echo what has been described in 1:4–3:15."\(^7\)


There are five main segments of this first vision of the kāḇôḏ:

- Introduction to Ezekiel's vision of the kāḇôḏ (1:1-3).
- The vision of the kāḇôḏ YHWH (1:4-28b).
- The Calling of Ezekiel with specific directives (1:28c-3:15).
- Ezekiel's appointment as a "watchman" (3:16-21).


\(^7\) Block, 77.
The reaction of the prophet (3:22-27).

3.1 Introduction to Ezekiel's Vision of the kāhôd (Ezek 1:1-3)

In 1:1 the book opens with an introductory formula in the Hebrew text, wayhêf ("And it came to pass"). This formula is typical of biblical narrative. It is also used to begin some books of the Hebrew Bible.⁸ Here, it gives us some information surrounding Ezekiel's call, namely the date that the inaugural vision took place and the circumstances surrounding the call of the prophet.⁹ A waw consecutive in a Hebrew sentence often implies that a particular sentence is a continuation of a previous sentence.¹⁰ However, Horace D. Hummel observes that "the usage had long since become fossilized, and so the waw consecutive frequently is used at the beginning of an entirely different narrative or even at the beginning of a book, as here."¹¹ Ezekiel situates this vision "in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month" (1:1). The reference to the "thirtieth year" is very problematic, evidenced in the divergent opinions among scholars.¹² But it suffices here to quote the

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⁸ Six other OT books begin with וַיֹּלְךָ: Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, Ruth, and Esther.


¹¹ Ibid., 33.

¹² Vawter and Hoppe, echoing Feinberg suggest that the thirtieth year refers to Ezekiel's age at the time of his call, see C. L. Feinberg, The Prophecy of Ezekiel (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 17; Bruce Vawter and Leslie Hoppe, A New Heart: A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel. (Grand Rapids; Edinburgh: Erdmans; Handsel Press, 1991), 25. Howie sees it as a reference to the elapsed time since the beginning of the exilic period in 605 B.C., see C. G. Howie, Ezekiel, Daniel (London: SCM, 1961), 21–22. The rabbinic interpretation of the thirtieth year was that it referred to the elapsed time since the
honest admission of H. H. Rowley: "I know of no wholly satisfactory solution."  

What is pertinent for this study is Ezekiel's location when he experienced this vision—he was "among the exiles by the river Chebar" (Ezek 1:1). According to Pieter de Vries, "the Chebar was a canal near the city of Nippur and was part of an extensive system of irrigation channels that distributed water from the Euphrates and Tigris to Nippur and the surrounding district." It is probably not without significance that YHWH first calls Ezekiel beside a river. In fact, de Vries further notes that "the countries beyond Israel were regarded as unclean (cf. Ezek 4:13; Amos 7:17). So Israelite exiles preferred to seek communion with God in the vicinity of flowing water, to which cleansing power was attributed (Lev. 14:5, 50; 15:13; Num. 19:17)."

The psalmist succinctly echoes the exiles' connection with the rivers of Babylon in these words of lament:

By the rivers of Babylon-- there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the poplars there we hung up our harps. For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How could we sing YHWH's song in a foreign land? (Psalm 137:1-4 NRS)

last observance of the Year of Jubilee, which Moses ordered to be observed after seven sabbatical years (Lev 25:8-17), cf. S. Fisch, Ezekiel, SBB (London: Soncino, 1950), 1. For Block, Ezekiel, far removed from Jerusalem and the temple, the privilege of priestly service would have seemed a hopeless dream. But YHWH has not forgotten him. Suddenly, on the fifth day of the fourth month of his thirtieth year, at the time he would normally have been commissioned for temple ministry, God breaks into this exile's life and calls him to an alternative, and perhaps even higher, service, see Block, 83. Some modern exegetes, however, believe that the most likely possibility is that it refers to the date of the discovery of the law in the temple and the beginning of the reforms of Josiah (ca. 622-621 B.C.). Ezekiel was called to his ministry in the fifth year of the exile (v. 2), which would have been 593/592 B.C., thirty years after the discovery of the law and the reforms of Josiah, see Cooper, 59; Allen, 39-40; Greenberg, 39; Zimmerli, 40ff.


15 Ibid., 236.
It is significant, therefore, to realize that it is in this same unclean land, in which the song of Zion cannot be sung, where Ezekiel experiences the *marʾōf ʾēlōhīm* ("visions of God"). In both the Priestly and the Zion theologies, the *kāhōd* functions as a technical expression of God's presence. The place in P (*priestly*) where God's glory descends is the Tabernacle. In Exod 40:33b -35, we see how the Tabernacle is constructed and completed. But more importantly, the text provides us with information about the relationship of the *kāhōd* to the Tabernacle:

Thus Moses finished the work. Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the *kāhōd yhwh* filled the Tabernacle. But Moses was not able to enter the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud settled upon it and the *kāhōd yhwh* filled the Tabernacle.

After the experience in Sinai, the Tabernacle itself "becomes a mobile sanctuary, a place of rendezvous for Moses and the *kāhōd YHWH*." However, even though the Tabernacle is a mobile sanctuary, it has no self-locomotive ability. The *kāhōd YHWH* is housed in it, fixed and carried by its bearers until it has its final resting place in the temple as the primary *locus* of divine presence for Israel.

Kutsko observes:

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16Kutsko, 83.

17 except for the pre-Tabernacle texts in Exodus 16 and 24.

18Ibid., 82.


20Kutsko, 82.
the ideology that characterized Zion theology of divine presence, especially during the monarchic tradition, is represented by the divine epithet \( \text{y}h\text{w}h \) (אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהִים) \( 
abla \text{שָׁבָּהָא} \) \( 
abla \text{יְהוֹעֵד} \) \( 
abla \text{הָקְנֹת} \), that is, the "YHWH, the God of host who sits enthroned above the cherubim" (cf. 1 Sam 4:4; 2Sam 6:2).\(^{21}\)

The transfer of this ideology to the Temple of Solomon, according to Kutsko, "championed a theology of God's election of and permanent presence in the Jerusalem Temple (2 Kgs 19:15)."\(^{22}\) Thus, Ezekiel's \( \text{מַרְדוֹת} \) \( 
abla \text{אֱלֹהִים} \) ("visions of God") in a foreign and unclean land demonstrates a shift in the status quo. It fashions an image of God who is not restricted to the temple and provides an effective image of God's presence in exile.

### 3.1.1 Towards an Understanding of Ezekiel's \( \text{מַרְדוֹת} \) \( 
abla \text{אֱלֹהִים} \)

\( \text{מַרְדוֹת} \) \( 
abla \text{אֱלֹהִים} \), translates to "visions of God." However, some scholars argue against this translation. Block, echoing Zimmerli,\(^{23}\) argues that in Ezekiel \( \text{יְהוֹעֵד} \) \( 
abla \text{אֱלֹהִים} \) usually functions as an appellative, "divinity," rather than a proper noun.\(^{24}\) Thus, if the prophet had intended "visions of God," according to Block, then "he probably

\(^{21}\)Kutsko, 83.

\(^{22}\)Ibid, 83.


\(^{24}\)Block, 84.
would have written *mar'ōt ʾādōnāy yhwh.* Block concludes that the phrase is best interpreted as "divine vision." Greenberg, alluding to the authority of Paul Joüon, states categorically that "*mar'ot* is not a true plural but what Joüon calls 'a plural of generalization' (cf. Joüon§ 136 j) often to be rendered as a singular." Hence, he concludes that what Ezekiel saw is "a supernatural vision, one no mortal eye could see without divine help." Hummel agrees completely with Greenberg and Block and adds that *mar'ōt ʾēlōhîm*, in relation to the phrase "the heavens were opened," indicates divine purpose: "the heavens were opened (purposefully by God) so that Ezekiel could see a *divine vision.*" However, Millard Lind sees it differently. For him, this opening designates Ezekiel's entire visionary experience (1:4–28a), in contrast to that which he hears (cf. Ezek 1:28b-2:7; 3:4-11).

The position of H. Van Dyke Parunak seems more appealing because it not only demonstrates the interrelatedness of the three visions but also adds more credence to a synchronic reading of the visions. For Parunak, certain features identify the three visions as related. Only these three visions of the *kābōd* YHWH (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48) are identified as *mar'ōt ʾēlōhîm,* ("visions of God"). Also, it is only in the

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25 Ibid., 84.

26 Ibid., 84.

27 Greenberg, 84-5.

28 Ibid, 85. See also Allen, 22, who added that this is a fixed phrase in Ezekiel, occurring also in Ezek 8:3; 40:2, in contexts where divinely given visions are in view.

29 Hummel, 33.


31 Cf. Ezek 1:1; 8:3; 40:2.
context of the *kābōḏ* visions that the *rū'āh* ("spirit") is the subject of *nāšā* ("lift up") and that the prophet, Ezekiel, is the object (cf. Ezek 3:12,14; 8:3; 11:1,24; 43:5). Parunak further notes that "although fourteen pericopes in the book are introduced by elaborate date formulas, only in these three does a date formula coincide with the note that the *yad* ("hand") of the Lord was upon the prophet." Thus, this study will retain and interpret *mar'āṯ ʾêlōhîm* literally as "visions of God" — an allusion to the three visions of the *kābōḏ* (Ezek 1-3; 8-11; 40-48).

Ezekiel pegged the first of these visions, specifically, "in the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin" (cf. Ezek 1:2). The first supernatural experience Ezekiel has is an experience of the activity or act of the divine upon him through the *yad* (hand) YHWH. This idiomatic expression, *yad* (hand) YHWH has been interpreted differently among scholars. For Stuart, the expression indicates, in part, the divine approval of Ezekiel. However, its central emphasis, according to him, is that "God was in charge of Ezekiel, supervising his experiences and directing his life."  

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33 Cf. Ibid., 61-74.

34 Jehoiachin was exiled in 598 B.C. (2 Kin. 24:8-17) and replaced with a puppet king, Zedekiah, by the Babylonians who conquered Jerusalem in that year (2 Kin. 24:17-18). The Jews in the first exile (the one of 598 B.C.) in Mesopotamia, of whom Ezekiel was a member, refused to recognize the puppet Zedekiah as their king. They considered Jehoiachin to be the last legitimate Judean king, even though he had reigned only three months before being deposed and exiled (2 Kin. 24:8). Thus Ezekiel dates his prophecies according to the amount of time that had elapsed since Jehoiachin had left Jerusalem in 598 B.C. This practice of dating from the beginning of Jehoiachin's reign is adopted throughout the Book of Ezekiel. See Douglas Stuart, *Ezekiel*. PCS 20 (Nashville, Tennessee : Thomas Nelson Inc, 1989), 25; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*. INTERPRETATION (Louisville, Ky. : J. Knox Press, 1990), 16.

35 Stuart, 26.

36 Ibid., 26.
Abraham J. Heschel sees it as "the urgency, pressure, and compulsion by which the 
prophet is stunned and overwhelmed."\(^{(37)}\) For Hummel, however, it represents a divine 
influence and a revelatory formula, particularly when it is used with the preposition יָּֽהָ (יִֽהָ) 
or יָּֽהָ(יִֽהָ).\(^{(38)}\) Like Hummel, Nancy R. Bowen interprets the expression יָּֽהָ(יִֽהָ) as a revelatory formula, but adds that it is primarily used in Ezekiel's vision report to 
designate the "disastrous manifestation of the supernatural power."\(^{(39)}\) Allen opines that 
the idiom refers to "divine possession as the means of divine-human communication. 
In this case, the physical pressure of the divine hand is the harbinger of an experience 
of a supernatural vision."\(^{(40)}\) Garnering from the above scholarly opinions, one may 
conclude the expression יָּֽהָ(יִֽהָ) of YHWH denotes the divine compulsion of the 
call of God on the prophet. Just like the רֻֽעָּ (רוּֽעָּ), it has a connotation of power — 
the power of YHWH upon the prophet. It occurs seven times in Ezekiel (cf. 3:14, 22; 
8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). Block had written that:

Although others like Elijah had been gripped and energized by the hand of 
God (1 Kgs 18:46), "in Ezekiel the hand of YHWH gains complete 
mastery over his movements" so that he can be described as "a man seized 
by God." This more than any other quality distinguishes Ezekiel from the 
other prophets. It accounts for his mobility and immobility, the apparent


\(^{(38)}\) Hummel, 36. In contrast, most passages that speak of the "hand of Yahweh" with the 
preposition יָּֽהָ (יִֽהָ) (meaning "against" someone) refer to Yahweh striking or destroying enemies (e.g., Ex 
9:3; Deut 2:15; Judg 2:15; 1 Sam 7:13).

\(^{(39)}\) Nancy R. Bowen, Ezekiel, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), xii; cf. Jimmy J. 

\(^{(40)}\) Allen, 24. Greenberg also sees the expression as a state of divine possession in which the 
prophet received his supernatural revelation. See Greenberg, 41-2.
lunacy of some of his actions, and his stoic response to rejection, opposition and grief.⁴¹

In sum, the expression *yağ* (hand) of YHWH denotes the manifestation of divine power (cf. Ex. 9:3; Deut. 2:15; 1 Sam. 5:9; Is. 41:10). When it comes upon a person, in this case, a prophet, he or she is permeated with an unusual strength (cf. 1Kgs. 18:46) or enters into a prophetic trance by the staggering realization that he is being spoken to by YHWH (2 Kgs. 3:15).⁴² In Ezekiel, we see the combination of both. The hand of YHWH is associated in Ezekiel not only with strength but also with prophetic trance.

Thus, the superscription ends with the divine coercion formula that accounts for the prophet's mobility and immobility. It is an indication that the agency of this vision lies solely in the initiative of the Holy One. Ezekiel, who is merely an instrument, will see only that which God wants him to see, and hear only that which God wants him to hear. No wonder Block says, "more than any other prophet, Ezekiel is a man possessed."⁴³

³.2 The vision of the *kähôd* YHWH (Ezek 1:4-28)

The vision is described in twenty-five verses (1:4-28). The five paragraphs of 1:4-28 are tied together through the use of qualifiers: *something like* (1:4), *a likeness of* (1:5), *like* (1:7), *the appearance of* (1:10), *something that looked like* (1:13), *appearance was like* (1:16), *something like* (1:22), *something like, like the appearance*...  

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⁴²Pieter de Vries, 238-9.

⁴³Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 89.
These qualifiers point to the fact that this marʾôt ʾelōhīm cannot be captured exactly by human language. As the vision progresses, so too progresses the prophet's understanding of what he sees, until verse 28. The first verse:

*And I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud, and fire taking hold of itself, and brightness was round about it, and from its center, something like a glowing amber from the center of the fire (1:4)*

and the last two verses:

*And from above the platform which is over their heads something like a sapphire stone, a likeness of a throne; and on the likeness of the throne: a likeness of human appearance was on it from above. And I saw something like a shining amber, like the appearance of a fire enclosed around it, from the appearance of his loins upward; and from the appearance of his loins down I saw and brightness was all around it. Like the appearance of the bow (rainbow) that is in the cloud on a day of rain (rainy day), so was the appearance of the brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking (1:26-28);*

describe the appearance of the kāḇôḏ YHWH, thus forming a chiastic inclusio for this unit. In between the first verse and the last two verses, we have three paragraphs that describe the living creatures (1:5-14), their relation to the wheels beside them (1:15-21), and their relation to the firmament or platform above them (1:22-25)."The last

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44 Parunak, 63.
two of the three paragraphs in between pick up themes introduced in the first paragraph and develop them (with 1:9,12, cf. 1:17,20; with 1:9,11, cf. 1:23).45

In this vision, the first features that catch Ezekiel's sight are the phenomenon that accompanied the vision.46 Ezek 1:4 describes a storm, surrounding brightness (חָנֹר הָיוֹת לא סַבִי), and the קַשֶּׁן 하ַהַשְּנַל ('something like a glowing amber'). These features come from the north. Even though scholars like Block believe that the direction of these features has no special significance,47 other scholars believe the contrary. Hummel links the direction of the wind with judgment since "north" (נְוֶן) is "often the direction from which evil — especially military invasions — comes upon Israel and Judah in the judgment oracles of the prophets."48 For Cooper, the north is the direction from which Judah was invaded. In other words, Cooper is saying that the great storm from the north (1:4) represents the direction from which the Babylonians came, with their military might, to invade and destroy Judah and Jerusalem.49 For G. A. Cooke, the idea of the divine coming from the north, if significant at all, shows that God has no local dwelling-place, thus hinting at the transcendence of God.50

I would agree with Stuart that the storm coming from the north is very significant. It has theological importance. "It hints that this storm has something to do with God, since one symbolic way of describing God's abode in Bible times was to

45Ibid., 63.
46Ibid., 63.
47See Block, 92.
48Hummel, 57.
49Cooper, 64.
depict it as being in the north (cf. Ps. 48:2; Is. 14:13)."51 In fact, de Vries takes this a step further. He notes that the north is the highest point of the vault of heaven in Ancient Oriental mindset.52 Thus, he concludes, "it is not unlikely that this is a reason why Ezekiel states first that the heavens were opened, and only then mentions the north: YHWH comes from His own dwelling place, and that is nothing less than heaven."53

Storms and clouds are often associated with theophanies in the Bible (for example, Is. 29:6; Job 38:1; Ps. 29:3–9; 104:3).54 The whirlwind, the cloud and the fire that Ezekiel beholds are symbols of divine manifestation. YHWH repeatedly appears in a cloud. He leads His people by a pillar of cloud and of fire (cf. Ex 13:21-22). Sinai is enveloped in a thick cloud and YHWH descends upon it in fire (cf. Ex 19:18).55 Thus, these features, coming from the north, are indications that something theophanic is happening. In the storm, the prophet sees a cloud and tells us that the cloud contains fire. From the center of the fire is something like a glowing amber (יוֹתִין). So what did the prophet see exactly amidst these luminous appearances?

3.2.1 The Living Creatures (Ezek 1:5-14)

From the center of this luminous appearance is what the prophet describes as "a likeness of four living creatures" (cf. Ezek 1:5). Their description is chiastic. The

51 Stuart, 27.
52 de Vries, 240.
53 Ibid., 240.
54 Stuart, 27.
detailed description of the creatures' faces in Ezek 1:10 serves at the centerpiece of
Ezek 1:5-14. The four living creatures have four wings and four faces apiece: a man's
face at the front, a lion's face to the right, an ox's face to the left and an eagle's face to
the rear. Parunak also observes that Ezek 1:8-9 corresponds to Ezek 1:11-12,
especially regarding the orientation of the wings and the repetition of the phrases "and
each went straight ahead" (cf. Ezek 1:9,12) and "they did not turn as they went"(cf.
Ezek 1:9,12). Also, the brilliance of the living creatures described in Ezek 1:13
corresponds to the *koεn* (*something like*) phrase of 1:7.

Thus, in these verses, especially in 1:5-8, Ezekiel describes the primary features
of the living creatures he sees. Note that this is still not clear to him, hence the use of
the *koεn* phrases or the qualifiers. The likeness of these four living creatures, their
faces, wings, bodies, etc., represents, according to Block, "the transcendent divine
attributes of omnipotence and omniscience." In other words, their images and
attributes bespeak something divine: not any kind of divinity, but the omnipotent,
omniscient one. Hummel toes the same line as Block. While he calls for cautiousness
in assigning specific significance to all the individual features of the vision, he agrees
that the implications of the features of the living creatures are clear. In his words:

While the living beings are creatures, some of their features point to
attributes of the God whose throne rests upon them. Their four faces
looking simultaneously in all directions certainly suggest God's
omniscience and omnipresence. The specific forms of the faces seem to
represent the crown of four aspects of God's creation: man is the crown of

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56de Vries, 242.

57Parunak, 63.

58Block, 96.
all creation; the lion and the ox are supreme among the wild and the
domestic animals, respectively; and the eagle is preeminent among birds.
The calves' hooves are of uncertain significance, but if they are round (see
the second textual note on 1:7), they may suggest God's omnipresence by
their ability to move in any direction.59

Cooper sees them as angelic creatures:

divinely appointed guardians of the holiness of God. Their mission was to
prevent anything unholy from coming into the presence of a holy God.
They were indicators of the presence of YHWH, the holy God of Israel, in
the storm cloud who manifests himself as a sign of his concern for the
exiles in Babylon.60

More interesting, however, is de Vries' observation about the portrayal of the
living creatures in Ezekiel. He notes that it shows similarities with portrayals in
Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Syrian iconography, where four-winged beings depict
kings' throne-bearers.61 "In the ancient Near East, lions, oxen and eagles, on their
own or in combination, served as bearers of footstools for gods."62 But this is not the
case in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel's vision, the animals referred to are not throne-bearers;
they do not carry the throne directly but rather are located under the platform.63

59Hummel, 57.
60Cooper, 64.
61de Vries, 243.
62Ibid., 243. Also see ANEP Fig. 472-475, 486 (lion); Fig. 500, 501, 531, 835 (ox); Fig 523
(winged lion with ox's head).
63Ibid., 243.
Brandon Fredenburg stretches these similarities even further by comparing Ezekiel's "living creature" with the Babylonian gods. Fredenburg concludes that Ezekiel's location (Babylon), the iconographic representations of Babylon's gods in the reliefs of the Ishtar Gate and other typical features of ancient Near Eastern artistic depictions of various gods suggest that Ezekiel's living creatures are representations of these gods in subservient roles to Israel's God, YHWH.64

Without downplaying the polemics of Fredenburg, it suffices to say that Ezekiel takes "the heritage of the culture in which he finds himself and accords its attributes a different role."65 The living creatures are not divine beings in Ezekiel but rather creatures that bear and tow the throne-chariot of the Holy Presence.66 Even though there are many images of these "living creatures" that are distinctly Babylonian,67 their brilliant appearance — burning coals of fire, torches and flashes of lightning — is not unfamiliar to other biblical figures. Flame amidst clouds of smoke describes YHWH's presence with Abraham in Gen 15:17. In Ex 13:21-22; 40:34-38 it depicts God's presence guiding the Israelites as they journey in the wilderness. Likewise in the text under consideration, it surely represents YHWH's presence.

64 Brandon Fredenburg, Ezekiel, NIV Commentary (Joplin, Mo.: College Press Pub. Co., 2002), 41. For example, a sculpture from Carchemish dated roughly to 1000-500 B.C. shows an ancient Near Eastern deity standing on a platform carried by two lions. Later representations depict throne-bearers with upper bodies having humanoid features and lower bodies with bovine features. Also, four-faced minor gods are known from at least 18th-century-B.C. Assyria. Cf. Allen, 26-33; Block, 97; Greenberg, 55-57; Othmar Keel, "Iconography and the Bible," ABD, 3:358-374; idem, Jahres-Visionen und Siegelkunst, Stuttgartter Bibelstudien 84/85 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977), 125-273.

65 de Vries, 243.

66 ibid., 243.

67 They are like the half-beast, half-human monsters called karibu by the Mesopotamians. In plastic art the karibu served as guardians of sacred places and the sign of divine presence. Vawter and Hoppe believes it is reminiscent of the cherub guarding the mythological "garden of God" in 28:14, 16 and Gen. 3:24. See Vawter and Hoppe, 26.
It is worthy to note that, at this point, the prophet does not refer to the "living creatures" as Cherubim, perhaps because they are unlike the figures that he remembers in the temple at Jerusalem. He simply identifies them, vaguely, as hayyōth, "living creatures." It is not until chapter 10 that he finally identifies the hayyōth as Cherubim. This may explain why, at this stage of the vision, he continues to use analogies. Even these analogies feel inadequate to the point that he uses the word likeness fifteen times to describe what he sees.68

In the present passage, the emphasis is not really on their appearance, even though "appearance" and "likeness" are words used often in the context. Rather, according to Joseph Blenkinsopp, the focus is on the transcendent nature of the God of Israel. The priest Ezekiel tries "to find a way to speak about God that combines presence with transcendence."69 But how can the transcendent God, for who, according to the Pentateuchal tradition, to see is to die, be present to his elect and be known to be present?70 This will become clear when Ezekiel finally names the reality of the divine presence as kābōd, an indication that it is a mediated presence.71

Blenkinsopp describes this to be "the recto of which the face of God is the verso."72

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68 Cooke, 11.

69 Blenkinsopp, 19. Blenkinsopp believes that the symbolic and highly figurative language employed is not couched in our idiom, but its logic is not difficult to grasp. He paralleled it to the experience of Moses in which the prophet per Excellence asks for the assurance of seeing the divine effulgence and is permitted to glimpse not the face but the back of God (Exod. 33:18–23).

70 Ibid., 19.

71 Although at this point Ezekiel is yet to name what he sees as the kābōd, we have to wait till verse 28.

72 Blenkinsopp, 21.
Blenkinsopp further observes that, in Ezekiel's description of the divine presence, one notices what prophecy and poetry have in common, namely:

the extraordinary and ultimately mysterious amalgamation of traditional themes and imagery with intense personal experience, an alchemy from which emerges something genuinely new which nevertheless retains its links with the past. The vision came to Ezekiel in a state of ecstasy or trance. In an expression borrowed from an older and more primitive type of prophecy, "the hand of YHWH was upon him" (cf. I Kings 18:46; II Kings 3:15). The description of what he saw when the heavens were opened borrows from different sources: priestly lore, ancient poetry, visions experienced by prophetic predecessors (e.g., I Kings 22:19–22; Isa. 6:1–8).73

One unique aspect of the divine presence described in this part of the inaugural vision is the mobility of the Holy Presence. Unlike the divine presence in the ancient Near Eastern texts, Ezekiel's hayyōth "living creatures" have a self-locomotive ability. Despite the multiple components of the creatures, they all move in absolute unison.74 The locomotive power is provided by hārūḥ, the spirit (cf. Ezek 1:12). Here, Ezekiel only mentions the idea of the spirit as the locomotive power behind the wheels, which, literally speaking, could be a way to anticipate the topic in the following paragraph.

73 Ibid., 19.
74 Hummel, 61
3.2.2 The Wheels of the Living Creatures (Ezek 1:15-21)

As the vision continues to unfold, Ezekiel tells us that under the four living creatures are four "qəppannûm" (wheels). The wheels seem to be identical and extraordinary. "Like the creatures themselves, they are composite, for there appears to be one wheel within another." One cannot exactly envision what Ezekiel saw. Whatever the case, according to Block, it appears:

the prophet seems to envision some sort of four-wheeled chariot. The continuing interest in the number four speaks of their absolute ability to move everywhere, in all directions. One wheel within another enhances its capacity to move anywhere, without resistance. Freely and effortlessly the wheels keep pace with the four creatures. The wheels were magnificent to behold. They gleamed with brilliance.

The wheels appear to have their own locomotive power (cf. Ezek 1:19-14). Here we see an example of what Block calls "a typical Ezekielian rhetorico-literary practice of resumptive exposition." The text picks up the theme of the "spirit" from v. 12, and expatiates on its involvement in the locomotion of the chariot. It is the source of vitality for the wheels that propels the chariot. The prophet observes certain details about the wheel: first, the perfect synchronization of their movements and, second, the concordance between the wheels and the creatures (hayyôti), attributed to the spirit of

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75 Block, 100.
76 Ibid., 100.
77 Ibid, 101.
78 Ibid., 101.
life (rû'ah hahâyâyד). 79 De Vries notes that by speaking in terms of "the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels" (v. 21), "the text wishes to highlight the intimate connection between the wheel and the creatures. Between the wheels and the creatures there is no friction of any kind; they are perfectly attuned to each other." 80

Zimmerli gives another nuance to the import of the rû'ah in the manifestation of the divine presence for the exilic community. He observes that the glory of God can move vertically between heaven and the temple as God's dwelling places but has no horizontal movement. Thus, it requires a carrier vessel to be able to leave the temple and travel to the exilic community in Babylon. The final piece in this scenario is the spirit. Thus, Zimmerli concludes that while the cherubim carry the kâbôd -filled chariot, the spirit gives it direction. 81 The text reads:

When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up (too). To wherever it was the spirit would go, there they went: (where the spirit was going), and the wheels rose side by side with them because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels (Ezek 1:19–20).

This is an encouragement for Ezekiel and his compatriots. It indicates that not even the exile can keep God from acting or manifesting His presence. The Holy One can go wherever He wants. Just as He was with the ancestors in the wilderness journey, so too, He is prepared to be with the community in exile in Babylon. 9 God

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80 de Vries, 245.
had wheels! He was not limited. He could go anywhere anytime. This expands on the Israelite concept of divine presence, which was initially restricted to presence in Jerusalem and the temple. More so, as we see in the first chapter of this study, the gods of the ancient Near East had jurisdiction only over their own nations. But here is evidence of a different kind of jurisdiction. A universal jurisdiction of the God who travels the earth and controls it. No wonder the Psalmist says "the earth is the Lord's and all it holds; the world and those who live therein" (Psalm 24:1 NAB).

3.2.3 The Platform above the Living Creatures (Ezek 1: 22-25)

Parunak observes that "the living creatures, served by the wheels, are in turn only the servants of the platform above their heads (1:22-25)." So while there are wheels under the creatures, a platform rises up above them. Ezekiel hears two sounds at the movement of the chariot. First, he hears the sound of the wings themselves (1:24), a sound that he likens to the very voice of the Almighty. This is the voice that will eventually converse with the prophet in Ezek 2:1-3:11.

The renewed emphasis on the living creatures (ḥayyōt) in Ezek 1: 20–21 leads to a shift in focus on the rāqṣēṣ ("platform") above their heads. The living creatures appear to be holding up a platform. De Vries observes that this platform partially

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82 Stuart, 29.
83 Parunak, 64.
84 Ibid., 64.
85 The term is a double entendre: it represents both the "platform" or firm surface on which the divine throne rests (v 26) and the firmament of the sky (cf. Gen 1:6–8; Ps 19:2).
86 Allen, 34.
corresponds to the mercy seat above the Ark (cf. Ex 25:17ff). Thus, in Ezekiel, “this was no ordinary platform; its crystalline sparkle was awesome. But before Ezekiel elaborates on this feature, his attention returns to the creatures beneath it.” He observes something about their wings:

Under the platform their wings were stretched out (straight), one toward the other; and each had two wings covering its body (Ezek 1:23).

The extended wings of each living creature unite with the tips of the next pair of wings on both sides, as described in Ezek 1:9, 11. Cooke observes that “this is the same way the colossal Assyrian genii are sometimes represented with the upper edge of their wings in a straight line.” No further comment is made about the wings at this point; this creates a kind of narrative suspense, as the reader waits eagerly to know what this detailed description of the sound of the wings will mean to the prophet.

It is worthy to note for now that the motion of the wings is accompanied by a loud noise, which the prophet has difficulty describing (see 1:24-25). “He compares it in turn to the sound of many waters (mayim rabbîm), the thunder or voice of Shadday, and the tumult or commotion like an army camp.” In this context filled with sounds, it is not surprising to find that the first “sound from above the platform”

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87 de Vries, 246.

88 Block, 102. See also Othmar Keel, Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst: Eine neue Deutung der Majestatsbilderungen in Jes 6, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4 (Visions of Yahweh and Seal Art: A New Interpretation of the Majestic Portrayals in Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and 10, and Zechariah 4), (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984-85).

89 Cooke, 19.

90 Divine manifestation is sometimes compared to “the sound of many waters” in the Bible (see Psalm 93:4; Ezek 1:24; 43:2; Rev 14:2).

91 A highly ancient term for God that we encounter in the patriarchal theophanies.

92 Block, 103.
(1:25) has only now become audible, probably due to the stilling of the creatures' wings. Now, the prophet perceives a different kind of sound (qol), which he has yet to identify as speech. Greenberg notes that "this notice does not mark a new stage in the narration but rather ends the account of nonverbal sounds. As yet mere sound, it did, however, draw the prophet's attention to what was above the expanse, which he proceeds to describe."

Furthermore, the constant repetition of when the living creatures "stood still, they let their wings down" (cf. Ezek 1:24-25) could be a hint that the loud sound of their wings will certainly come to an end in preparation for hearing the actual "voice of the Almighty, "which, prior to this point, had only been referenced analogously(cf. Ezek 1:24). Suddenly, the vision becomes clearer to the prophet. However, the voice will not be heard until Ezek 2.

Allen, intelligently sums this section in these words:

in this section, sight briefly gives way to sound. The new element of hearing in v 24 anticipates the subsequent auditory stage of the encounter that will begin in v 28b and serves to prepare the reader for it.

93 Greenberg, 49.

94 Greenberg, 49. LXX's omissions (as explained in the appendix), resulting in the unintelligible join of vs. 25a to 26a, are, in fact, best explicable on the basis of MT: one need only suppose that the eye of a copyist (probably of the Greek) skipped from the end of 25a to the identical words at the end of 26a. The omission of the entire verse from some medieval Hebrew mss. can be similarly accounted for: the copyist's eye skipped from vs. 24b to the end of vs. 25b (identical words). Such omissions are readily explicable on the assumption of the originality of MT; to try to account for MT—especially vs. 25a—on the assumption that the omissions are original is harder. The omission in (some texts of Syriac Peshitta) of vs. 25b probably has more to do with exegetical difficulty than with text history since Syriac Peshitta often simplifies hard passages by omission. As it stands, the repetition emphasizes the stillness of the apparition as the prophet focused on its apex, says Greenberg.

95 Hummel, 63.

96 Allen, 35.
3.2.4 The Throne and the Glory (Ezek 1:26-28b)

Here, Ezekiel's visionary sight shifts to the platform. But it appears that it is not the aforementioned crystal platform itself that catches his attention. No, he observes something above the platform. Something like a throne, very majestic and beyond his imagination. And above this throne is seated a glittery regal figure. The prophet compares the figure to the form of a 'ādām (a human being). The term here is הָאָדָם "a human," rather than יִשְׂרָאֵל ("a man, a male," as in Gen 18:2; 32:25; Josh 5:13), suggesting that this was no ordinary "man." What appears to be his upper body radiates with the brilliance of ḥašmal (amber), and his lower body seems enveloped in a dazzling, fiery glow. The whole form of this human figure is like fire. The prophet is still in the world of analogy. He cannot declare straightaway what it is that he sees. Rather, he reverently backs away from describing in detail the one who sat on the throne. He says only that he has "the appearance or likeness of a dazzling human."

Commenting on the dazzling nature of this figure, Block says:

the radiance of the image reminds the prophet of a rainbow, suggesting that the term hannōgah as used throughout this account describes much more than just a brilliant light. Like the fire referred to earlier (v. 13), whose flames often display a mesmerizing variation in color, this vision

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97 Block, 104.
has not come to Ezekiel in simple monochrome; its polychromatic splendor is breathtaking.\(^{98}\)

Finally, Ezekiel realizes that what he is gazing upon is "the appearance of the kāḇōd YHWH — "the glory of YHWH!"" (Ezek 1:28).\(^{99}\) This kāḇōd YHWH is the climax of all the analogies throughout the chapter. It represents an outward manifestation of the divine presence. It is what John T. Strong calls the "hypostasis of YHWH."\(^{100}\) S. Dean McBride has defined hypostasis as "a quality, epithet, attribute, manifestation or the like of a deity which through a process of personification and

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\(^{98}\)Ibid., 105. See also the note in the twelfth Sabbath Shirot from Qumran, "And there is a radiant substance with glorious colors, wondrously hued, purely blended" (4Q405 20 ii-21:10-11), as edited by Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, HSS 27 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 305-6.

\(^{99}\)Block, 105. Even though these images may help us to visualize what Ezekiel saw, some may object to appealing to extrabiblical analogues to understand the motif itself. Being of priestly stock, Ezekiel would have been familiar with the tabernacle tradition. According to Exod. 40:34-38, when the construction of the tabernacle had been completed, the Shekinah glory had entered the tent and taken its place between the cherubim over the ark of the covenant within the holy of holies (deḇōr; cf. 25:18–22). Centuries later this phenomenon, a symbol of Yahweh’s imprimatur on the project, would be duplicated upon the completion of Solomon’s temple (1 K. 8:6–11). But Ezekiel’s failure to link this vision with earlier movements of the Shekinah glory forces the reader to look elsewhere for antecedents to this theophany. The closest biblical analogues to this vision, according to Block, are in the poetry of Israel, specifically the Psalms, which describe Yahweh as rōḵē bāʿārāhōt, "the one who rides the clouds" (Ps 68:33) and yōšēb kērūbīm, "the one who is enthroned above the cherubim" (Ps 18:10). But Ezekiel seems not to have made this connection immediately either, perhaps because no one had ever dared to portray YHWH in human form, transported about on a visible throne by such strange creatures, to a foreign land. Vawter and Hoppe also observe that Ezekiel identifies this appearance as that of “the glory of the LORD.” This expression or its equivalent occurs often in Ezekiel, always to designate the visible, numinous appearance of the divine majesty. The Priestly writing uses the same expression for the “pillar of fire” that accompanied the Israelites in their desert wanderings. (The literary relationship between P and the book of Ezekiel is still a mystery.) This fire was visible only at night; during the day a “pillar of cloud” concealed it (Num. 14:14; Exod. 16:10). The Priestly writer, unlike Ezekiel, never represents the glory of the LORD in human form. Clouds, like fire, are a frequent concomitant of theophany (Exod. 19:16; Judg. 5:4), and Ps. 68:4, 33; 104:3 picture the God of Israel as riding in a chariot on the clouds. Ancient Israel borrowed this last imagery from Canaanite myth, which so represented the weather-god Baal. See Vawter and Hoppe, 29-30.

differentiation has become a distinct (if not fully independent) divine being in its own	right." 101 Thus, such a conception of the kābōd, says Strong:

gave the enthroned presence of YHWH greater freedom, and
consequently, Zion theology greater ideological flexibility. If the kābōd
was a hypostasis of God, whose location and duties were specifically
defined by Zion theology, then YHWH was never "dethroned." He could
remain permanently crowned as king, while at the same time preserving
his connection with the unclean regions of the cosmos. 102

As the vision reaches its climax in v 28, it becomes clear to the prophet that he
is beholding the presence of the kābōd YHWH of Israel in the so called unclean land
of Babylon. The vision account closes in v 28 with a recapitulation of the initial verb
"and I saw" (v 1) and with Ezekiel's response. When Ezekiel finally realizes what and
whom he is beholding, he adopts the only proper posture by prostrating himself in
abject worship: "When I saw, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking" (Ezek
1:28). Walther Eichrodt puts it well: "So the vision[s] of God attains its objective only
when, from amid the flames ablaze around him, the Lord of this world and of all
worlds speaks to the man whom he has reduced to such a state of dissolution." 103
Greenberg adds that:

the order of narration follows the order of perception in strict sequence;

although he saw hashmal right at the beginning, he did not perceive the

101 S. Dean McBride, "The Deuteronomic Name Theology" (Ph.D diss. Harvard University, 1969), 5.
102 John T. Strong, 72.
humanlike figure at that time. Therefore, only now did he fall on his face from dread of this overwhelming apparition.  

The throne vision makes clear to us the universal lordship of YHWH. Overwhelmed by the divine presence, the prophet falls upon his face. This reaction is also found in texts in the Pentateuch that speak of the appearance of the kābōd of YHWH (Lev. 9:24, Num. 16:22; 17:10; 20:6). In the rest of Ezekiel's vision, "falling upon the face" is always mentioned in the context of seeing the kābōd of YHWH (cf. Ezek 3:23; 43:3; 44:4). It is befitting for a human faced with the awesome presence of the Almighty.

3.3 The Calling of Ezekiel with specific directives (Ezek 1:28c-3:15).

This section begins with an introduction (1:28c-2:2) and concludes with 3:12-15. Structurally, we can say that, between the calling-vision and the renewed appearance of the kābōd of YHWH (3:22-27), the calling of Ezekiel with some specific directives (1:28c-3:15) and his appointment as watchman (3:16-21) are narrated. The expression wā‘ešmāʾ qōl mēdabbēr ("and I heard a voice speaking") of Ezek 1:28c becomes a bridge between the opening vision of Ezekiel and his calling to be a prophet. At the end of the introduction to this section, in Ezek 2:2, the prophet says: wā‘ešmāʾ ṣāt mēdabbēr ʿālāy ("and I heard someone speaking to me"). We encounter a similar expression again at the conclusion of the section, namely wā‘ešmāʾ ʿaḥāray

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104 Greenberg, 51.
105 See de Vries, 253.
106 Ibid., 253.
107 Ibid., 253.
qød ru’as gαdōl ("and I heard behind me the sound of great quaking") (3:12). This gives this section an envelope structure. Parunak adds another nuance to this envelope structure with particular reference to the activities of the spirit of the Lord, the rûah YHWH. He says:

In 2:1-2, when he hears the speech, the Spirit sets him on his feet. Similarly, in 3:12, he hears the last articulate words of the revelation (a doxology) and is "lifted up" by the Spirit (though this time he is raised not from his face to his feet, but from the ground to the air in preparation for the translation of 3:14-15).108

From a literary point of view, this section starts with the prophetic formula phrase wayyōmer ēlay, "And he said to me." When this phrase occurs in Ezekiel, the subject is always YHWH and Ezekiel is usually the person addressed, except on few occasions.109 The way that this expression occurs in the book is worthy of note. It reflects the one-way nature of most of the communication that takes place between God and the prophet. The instances where Ezekiel verbally responds are rare. For the most part in this vision, Ezekiel remains a passive recipient of God's message.110

108 Parunak, 64.

109 Block, 112. However, only 5 times is YHWH's name mentioned explicitly (4:13; 9:4; 23:36; 44:2, 5); and only 3 times is the person addressed someone other than Ezekiel (9:4, 7; 10:2).

110 Ibid., 112. For instances of the prophet's reaction see 4:14, in protest at being asked to eat defiled food; 9:8, in protest at YHWH's wrath poured out over the remnant of Israel in Jerusalem; 11:13, in protest, fearing the elimination of the entire remnant of Israel; 21:5, in protest over the cynical response of the audience toward him; 37:3, in response to YHWH's question.
In 2:2, the prophet is imbued with an energizing *rūḥ*\(^{111}\) that picks him up and sets him on his feet. Imbued with this spiritual strength, says de Vries, "the prophet can now stand before the *kāḇōd* of YHWH after all and can hear His voice."\(^{112}\) Block notes something very interesting about the connection between the sound of the voice and its reinvigorating effect on Ezekiel. He says:

The text notes that the raising of the prophet occurs simultaneously with the sound of the voice — "as he spoke to me." The phrase connects his invigoration with the preceding speech without explicitly ascribing it to God, but suggesting that this *rūḥ* may be the source of the word's dynamic and energizing power.\(^{113}\)

Even though YHWH is not mentioned explicitly as the source of the *rūḥ*, we can infer that YHWH is the power behind the scene. The *rūḥ* that energizes Ezekiel must be the same *rūḥ* that animates the wheels in Ezek 1:12, 20-21. Synthesizing the place of *rūḥ* in the prophecy of Ezekiel, Blenkinsopp says:

For Ezekiel, spirit is an energy originating in the divine sphere which manifests itself as a force that propels (1:12, 20–21), lifts up (2:2; 3:12, 14, 24), transports (8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1), and energizes and renews both individual and community (11:19; 18:31; 36:26–27; 37:14; 39:29). The

\(^{111}\) Hebrew *rūḥ* here is the divine power (spirit) that invigorates; or that has the sense of vigor or even courage, see 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), 925a.

\(^{112}\) de Vries, 254.

\(^{113}\) Block, 115.
spirit works with the raw material of humanity. Here and throughout the
book (ninety three times) Ezekiel is addressed as "mortal" (literally, "son
of man"), never by name. The reason may be that in his career, more than
in other prophetic careers, it is the office or function rather than the person
which is important.114

Ezekiel is simply called to be a prophet who allows the divine to act through
him and in him by the divine agency of the rûâh and yad YHWH.

Consider "the one speaking"—עֶת מִדְדַבֵּר. The Hebrew is uncharacteristic "in
having עֶת before an indefinite substantive, and in the vocalization of the participle as
reflexive (hitpaʿel) which literally translates as speaking to himself."115 Still
commenting on this peculiar representation of Hebrew grammar, Greenberg notes
that:

both appear to express reservations: the former — defining yet leaving
indefinite "the one speaking"; the latter — redirecting the divine speech
back onto the speaker. In this way, 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.116

114 Blenkinsopp, 24.
115 Greenberg, 62. Greenberg further notes that this reflexive vocalization 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" (middabber) to him; the speech can only emanate from the Majesty, but that
is not said explicitly. This passage with the one under consideration may be related to Num 7:89, the
only other passage in which the hitpaʿel of dbr occurs—the archetypal description of Moses’ regular
oracular hearing "the voice" — it is not said "God's voice"—speaking to him from the holy of holies.

116 Ibid., 62.
Alluding to Rashi, an outstanding Biblical commentator of the Middle Ages, Greenberg interprets this as "the Shekinah [the immanent divine presence] speaks in its majesty to itself; its messengers only overhear it."\(^{117}\)

In 2:3-5, the message of the divine speech is addressed to b'ne yisra'el ("sons of Israel"), otherwise known as "Israelites." No distinction is made here between exiles and those in the homeland. Thus, the message is both for the captives in Babylon and for those who remained in the homeland. What is interesting, though, is that YHWH refers to Israel as a nation (gôy).\(^{118}\) When the word is used with reference to Israel, it tends to carry a derogatory sense, "highlighting Israel's indistinguishable state from other nations because of their paša, ("transgression" v. 3)."\(^{119}\) Thus, apart from faith in and fidelity to YHWH, Israel is 'el-gôyîm hammôrgîm and not the usual covenantal qualification, 'et-sammî—my people (cf. Gen 17:7; Ex 6:7; Jer 7:23; 30:22; Ezek 34:24; 36:28).\(^{120}\) The sarcasm of describing "the house of Israel" as "'el-gôyîm hammôrgîm" the rebellious nations" (2:3) is comparable to the renaming of Beth-el, "house of God," as Beth-aven, "house of iniquity," by some minor prophets (Amos 5:5; Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5).\(^{121}\)

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\(^{117}\) Ibid, 62.

\(^{118}\) gôy is the word used in the Bible to describe non Israelite nations.

\(^{119}\) Block, 118.


\(^{121}\) Block, 120.
One notes that twice (2:3, 4), the verb šallāḥ ("to send") is used, a verb characteristic of a prophetic calling. "In both instances, the verb šallāḥ is preceded by the personal pronoun ʿānīf ("I"). It is telling indeed that ʿānīf is used in Ezekiel almost exclusively for YHWH,"¹²² thus emphasizing the calling of Ezekiel in the context of the inaugural vision.

Unlike the prophetic calls of Moses and Jeremiah, YHWH does not give Ezekiel any opportunity to respond. Rather, he is instructed about the attitude with which he is to approach the task ahead: do not be afraid.¹²³ Such divine instruction represents standard elements in prophetic call narratives.¹²⁴ However, as Block rightly notes, "the expected promise of divine presence, which often accompanied this admonition not to fear, is missing in this account. The only reward offered for his effort and grief is that when all is said and done, his people will recognize that a true prophet (nāḇī) has been among them (v. 5)."¹²⁵

Having been warned about the difficulty of the task ahead because Israel is an obstinate nation, the prophet is challenged to submit to God's will in obedience by eating what will be offered to him (cf. 2:8-10).¹²⁶ The extended "hand" holding the "scroll" is, in this case, presented as something visible. However, we do not know whether it is actually the hand of the LORD or simply a figure made necessary by the

¹²² de Vries, 255.

¹²³ Block, 120.


¹²⁵ Block, 122. "I am with you" occurs in the call of Moses (Exod. 3:12), Gideon (Judg. 6:12, 16), and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:8, 19). In the call of Barak, the prophetess Deborah functions as a stand-in for YHWH (Judg. 4:9). But not in Ezekiel.

¹²⁶ Cooper, 77.
visionary symbolism. Vawter and Hoppe, 31. The "outstretched hand" presented Ezekiel with a scroll, which, according to Vawter and Hoppe, "represents the word which Ezekiel is to proclaim." But Blenkinsopp sees it differently. For him, "contents of the scroll describe not what the prophet has to say but the effects of his message." I argue that the scroll can represent both views. As the scroll unrolls, we are told that it contains lamentsations, woes and dooms written on both sides and that Ezekiel is commanded to eat it.

This prophetic commissioning of Ezekiel ends with a short speech, introduced by a direct address to the prophet beginning from 3:10: "He said to me: Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you take (receive) in your heart, and hear with your ears..." Many of the ideas raised earlier in this section are reiterated. However, this time, the first audience is specifically identified: they are the exiles (haggôldî), the prophet's own countrymen in the land of Babylon.

Following the divine address, the prophet is lifted up off his feet by a rûâh (cf. Ezek 3:12-14). Block observes that "in contrast to the internal energizing activity of

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127 Vawter and Hoppe, 31.

128 Vawter and Hoppe, 31.

129 Blenkinsopp, 24. We can trace a certain development in this kind of ritual of prophetic installation. In what is generally taken to be the call of Isaiah, one of the "fiery ones" or seraphs cauterizes his mouth with a burning coal (Isa. 6:6-7). In the commissioning of Jeremiah, YHWH touches Jeremiah’s mouth and places his words in it (Jer. 1:9). The implications of this act are explained by Jeremiah in words that bear directly on the installation of Ezekiel: Your words were there, and I ate them; Your words were to me a source of joy and happiness (Jer. 15:16). However, what others describe in metaphorical word pictures Ezekiel experiences in his person. Like a child at the table, he is commanded to eat whatever God offers him. Once ingested, he discovers the taste to be pleasant (cf. Ezek. 3:3)

130 Block, 129.
the ruřah in 2:2, here the prophet is acted upon from the outside. But it is the same reinvigorating force in Ezek 2:2 that acts upon the prophet and lifts him off his feet. This is a subjective visionary experience. As he is "lifted," he also hears the sound of the wings of the creatures and the movement of the wheels, suggesting the movement of the chariot throne and the end of the vision (Ezek 3:13).

As Ezekiel is lifted up, he hears the sound of a great commotion behind him: the kłhłd YHWH lifting off the ground. In Ezek 1:28, the term kłhłd YHWH is used to describe the enthroned divine figure. But it seems to be "employed here as a literary shorthand to refer to the whole apparition." The scene closes with Ezekiel being escorted out of the divine presence.

The Spirit takes the prophet to the same location where the visionary experience began, "by the river Chebar" (Ezek 1:1). However, now we are given additional information: the name of the city, Tel Abib (cf. Ezek 3:15). Block believes that the transportation of Ezekiel back to the river Chebar raises a problem. He notes:

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Ibid., 133. Also cf. Block, "Prophet of the Spirit," 33–34. Here Block compares this to Ezekiel's being controlled by the hand of God (see on 1:3). He also argues for הַר here referring to the divine Spirit.

The transference of Ezekiel by the Spirit is the first of a number of such experience (8:3; 11:1, 25; 43:5). We find mentions of him being caught up by the Spirit in the three visions that mention the kłhłd of YHWH; see also the vision of the valley of dry bones in 37:1.

The parenthetical doxology in v. 12 is commonly considered foreign to the context. The first word הָבֻד ("blessed") usually is emended to הָבֶד ("as [the glory of the LORD] arose") on the basis of the similarity of ה and ב phonetically and graphically in Old Hebrew. See Emanuel Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Netherlands: Fortress, 2012), 247, 358.

Allen, 43.

Cooper, 82.
According to 1:1–3, the divine vision and call had come to him while he was at the canal. The need for the return is understandable if "by the Chebar canal" in the superscription is interpreted as a general designation for the area where the exiles resided. They need not have lived on the bank of the canal, nor does the account require that Ezekiel’s vision and commission occurred while he was beside the canal. The precise location of his call is not given. Presumably he was alone at the time, probably somewhere outside the village. By contrast, the location of his ministry is specifically identified: Tel Abib, the village where this exilic community lived. 136

However, this is a vision report. Vision reports are used in explicit and implicit ways, at different points in the narrative to achieve different purposes, and with differing effects. 137 In this case, the prophet is taken "out of himself" supernaturally; thus, by returning to the exiles, he comes back to himself, to the time and space where he had the vision. When the prophet is taken by the spirit, compelled by the "the strong hand of the LORD," he is distressed (cf. 3:14). We do not know the reason for his distress, but it suffices to note that the spirit is associated with a fresh experience of the "hand of YHWH." In literary terms, it echoes the visionary associations of Ezek 1:3b. In meaning, it could indicate that the prophet is overwhelmed by the weight of the mission that he has been assigned. 138

136 Block, 136.


138 Cf. Cooper, 82-83.
3.4 Ezekiel’s appointment as a "watchman" (Ezek 3:16-21).

Cooper notes that, structurally, this section has two main divisions: first, the call for the prophet to be a watchman (Ezek 3:16-17) and, second, the responsibilities and accountability of the prophet as a watchman (Ezek 3:18-21). After seven days, YHWH appears to the prophet and gives him the words he is to deliver to the people. Before now (cf. Ezek 2:4, 7; 3:4, 11), YHWH has repeatedly told Ezekiel that he is to deliver a divine message to the people, but He has not specifically given the prophet what to say. Ezek 3:16 is the first time we see the phrase "the word of the LORD came to me." Ezekiel’s prophecy will eventually become characterized by this phrase, which occurs fifty times in forty-one verses. Thus, this vision signals the beginning of what will characterize Ezekiel’s ministry. Peter C. Craigie puts it even better, noting that "fifty times, so we are told, God's word came to Ezekiel; for no other prophet is there a record of such sustained contact with the divine word, the very essence of prophecy."

The Holy One tells Ezekiel that He is sending him as a "watchman" to Israel (Ezek 3:17). This is described as a divine appointment (nātan). According to

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139 Ibid., 84.
140 Ibid., 85.
141 It is found elsewhere in the Old Testament only in Jeremiah (nine times) and Zechariah (twice).
143 nātan is often used in place of šām or ḥēqām, “to set, to appoint.” It is used of humans appointing leaders (rāʾšōn, Num. 14:4) and priests (2 K. 23:5), but usually it refers to divine appointments: Abraham as “the father (‘āb) of a multitude of nations” (cf. Gen. 17:5); Moses as “God (‘ēlōhīm) to Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1); David as YHWH’s firstborn (bēkolō) and the highest (‘elōyōn) of the kings of earth (Ps. 89:28), as “witness” (’ēd), “prince” (nāqād), “commander” (mēqawwēh) to the nations (Isa. 55:4); the Servant of YHWH as “light” (‘ōr) to the nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). Jeremiah’s self-consciousness as a divine appointee is reflected in his perception of himself as an “analyst” (bāḥōn) and “examiner” (mīṣār) among his people (Jer. 6:27), and as a "prophet" (nābî) to the nations (Jer. 1:5). Later Ezekiel will be appointed a wonder/sign (nōpēt) for Israel.

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Cooper, "although the concept is mentioned elsewhere (Isa 21:6; 52:8; 62:6; Jer 6:17; Hab 2:1) Ezekiel's divine appointment as watchman is unique, and only here are the duties and responsibilities specified." The prophet is to alert the wicked of their sins and of imminent judgment (v. 18). If the prophet does as he is instructed by God, then the responsibility for the message is upon the wicked person who has been warned. But if the prophet fails in his divine assignment, then both the prophet and the wicked would be culpable. The wicked would be judged and the prophet punished for failing in his assignment (cf. Ezek 3:19-21).

Recall that earlier (in 3:11) the prophet was sent specifically to the exiles (haggôld), but here he is appointed a "watchman" to the house of Israel, showing that the divine message is not just for the golah community, but is also for those that remained in Judah. So both the golah community and the community that remained in Judah are "el-göyîm hammôrdîm,"the rebellious nations" (see Ezek 2:3).

3.5 The Initiation of the prophet (Ezek 3:22-27)

Some scholars believe that this section should be understood as the introduction to Ezekiel's first prophetic assignment, connected more to 4:1–5:17, while others see it as the conclusion to the call and commission of the prophet in 1:1–3:21. I am inclined to go with the latter group. There is no reason to assume that this is a
different literary unit from the inaugural vision. It is, in fact, the conclusion of the inaugural vision as a literary unit. De Vries' observation with respect to the connection of the passage under review with the entire literary unit (Ezek 1:1-3:27) is stunning. He observes that:

After the prophet's watchman duties are explained in 3:16-21, in vv. 22-27 we have a description of his initiation as prophet. In 3:22, as in 1:3 and 3:14, we read of the *yād* YHWH. Thus, this expression marks both the first and the last appearance of the *kāhôd* of YHWH in the account of the calling of Ezekiel. The prophet is instructed to go to the valley.¹⁴⁸

The hand of the Lord upon the prophet in Ezek 3:22 suggests a visionary experience. This experience is a rational extension of the prophet's commission as a watchman. When Ezekiel moves to the valley (Ezek 3:23), he again encounters the divine presence, which he had seen in Ezek 1:3-28. He responds the same here as he does in Ezek 1:28. He falls facedown in worship and awe at the presence of the Almighty. The prophet again is reinvigorated by the Spirit and sets on his feet, as he had experienced in Ezek 2:2. Then, Ezekiel is given three restrictions. First, he is instructed to remain at home from now on (cf. Ezek 3:24). Second, the prophet must be bound with ropes, most likely to ensure his seclusion.¹⁴⁹ The third restriction is even more difficult than the first two. The prophet is to remain dumb and is, therefore, not to be able to speak. But how are these restrictive measures to be interpreted given

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¹⁴⁸ De Vries, 258.

¹⁴⁹ Cooper, 87.
that Ezekiel has earlier been instructed to *speak* to the "house of Israel"?¹⁵⁰ I lean toward the interpretation of Craigie. For him:

> the indication that Ezekiel would be bound with cords and rendered speechless is sometimes interpreted as a prophetic act as such. His inability to move and inability to speak would symbolize the manner in which an evil people had tied God by their actions and rendered him speechless. And the symbols of God's silence could be at least as terrifying as the substance of his speech.¹⁵¹

In the words of Walter Brueggemaan, "the prophet's muteness constitutes a prelude to the departure of the *kāḇōd* of YHWH. When his tongue is loosed again, it would serve as a harbinger of the return of the *kāḇōd* of YHWH."¹⁵² Therefore, the prophet's message is inextricably linked with his visions of the *kāḇōd* of YHWH. The symbolic actions taken without the accompanying words send a message of unmitigated doom. There are occasions when evil has run so rampant that only judgment can be foreseen. And though these symbolic actions do not represent the totality of Ezekiel's prophetic message, they do represent very accurately the gravity of the vision to come, namely "the departure of the *kāḇōd*" from the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 8-11).

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¹⁵⁰ For a full discussion on the various positions proposed, see Blenkinsopp, 31.

¹⁵¹ Craigie, 25.

4. Summary and Conclusion

Ezekiel is called to be a prophet while he is with his fellow exiles in Babylon. There, he experiences an opening of the heavens and he sees "visions of God" (mar'ôt 'êlôhîm). This vision is inundated with the language of priestly theophany, great cloud and fire. The divine entourage appears in the likeness of four living creatures in human form. Most astonishing are the descriptions of God, who also appears in human form (Ezek1:26b): "Upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness of the appearance of a man upon it." Ezek 1:27 redundantly emphasizes the fiery glow surrounding the divine presence. From the appearance of his loins upwards it is like ēn hašmal, like the appearance of fire; below his loins, too, is brightness like the appearance of fire. The opening theophany concludes in Ezek 1:28: "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH..." The repetitive use of qualifiers, such as something like (1:4), a likeness of (1:5), like (1:7), the appearance of (1:10), something that looked like (1:13), appearance was like (1:16), something like(1:22),something like, like the appearance of, represents the prophetic struggle to describe the divine presence.

In Ezek chapters 2 and 3, the divine presence directly addresses the prophet and commands him to speak God's words to Israel. "The commission ends with an exit as dramatic as God's theophanic entrance: the Spirit lifts the prophet and the hand of YHWH returns the prophet to his fellow exiles in Babylon."153

While ancient Near Eastern motifs may have been incorporated into the vision, "this strategy does not represent capitulation to pagan thought. On the contrary, the vision challenges pagan conceptions at every turn. The glory of YHWH cannot be

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153Kutsko, 89.
reduced to human definition or plastic art."\textsuperscript{154} The vision proclaims the presence of YHWH among the \textit{golah} community in a foreign land. God is with his people who are not defined in terms of residence within Israel. Contrary to prevailing Jerusalemite opinion (11:15), God's people are also in Babylon, far from their native land, Israel.

Therefore, the preceding discussion on the inaugural vision of Ezekiel demonstrates that, in Ezekiel, the presence of YHWH is experienced by means of the \textit{kābōd}. The \textit{kābōd} represents the presence of God as impermanent and in motion. The \textit{kābōd} travels and comes to the prophet in exile by the river \textit{Chebar} (chs. 1-3). The \textit{kābōd} theology at this point in the visions of Ezekiel can be regarded as a response to the situation of exile, a way of expressing divine presence that is not tied to any particular location,\textsuperscript{155} specifically to the sacred space. In fact, it is in this that Ezekiel differs most strongly from his priestly colleagues.

The most striking characteristic of the \textit{kābōd} in P is not, after all, its mobility, but rather its fixedness, its permanence. In the Priestly traditions, the \textit{kābōd} appears only in sacred spaces: first at the mountain of God (Ex 24:16, 17; 29:43; 40:34, 35; Lev 9:6, 23) and later at the tabernacle (Num 14:10, 21, 22; 16:19; 17:7; 20:6). The exception to this rule is Ex 16:7,10 — the incident of "manna in the desert." But even here, the incident is set in the immediate vicinity of the mountain of God (cf. Exod 17:6). More so, the reference to a jar of manna being placed "before the testimony"(cf.


Ex 16:33) suggests that this account belonged to the period after Sinai, in connection with the tabernacle and the Ark.\textsuperscript{156}

In Ezekiel's inaugural vision, however, the 
\textit{kāḇōd} does not appear in the confines of sacred space. Here, the \textit{kāḇōd} comes to the prophet in exile, in an unclean land. Little wonder, as Samuel Terrien observes, that Ezekiel's call begins with the heavens being torn open (Ezek 1:1): "As the member of a priestly family, the young deportee had doubtless believed that YHWH dwelt in Zion. He could not expect that YHWH would manifest his presence in a remote and totally alien land except through some shattering of the cosmic order."\textsuperscript{157} Is YHWH's \textit{kāḇōd} absent in Jerusalem by virtue of its presence in Babylon? This study will try to answer this question in the next chapter.


CHAPTER FOUR

THE VISION OF THE DEPARTURE OF THE kāḇōḏ YHWH FROM THE TEMPLE (EZEK 8-11)

1. Introduction

The problem of divine abandonment, especially regarding its impact on a deity's nation or city, is well attested to in the literature of the ancient Near East, as demonstrated in the first chapter of this study. This theme appears in Ezek 8-11, which describes the prophet's visionary journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. Upon his visionary arrival in Jerusalem, the prophet witnesses a series of four abominations committed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The first three abominations end with YHWH declaring some variation of the refrain "and you will still see greater abominations." The fourth abomination (Ezek 8:16-18) culminates in a declaration of divine judgment and God's refusal to hear the people. Following this, the deity summons "executioners of the city" to enforce a penalty upon the city and its inhabitants, except for those who have a mark on their foreheads (cf. Ezek 9:4-6). In Ezek 9:3, the prophet records the first movement of the kāḇōḏ YHWH of Israel in the temple away from the cherubim to the temple's doorway or threshold. Chapter 10 continues to describe the departure of the kāḇōḏ YHWH from the temple's inner sanctum (vv. 4 and 18) amid the movement of various celestial figures, most often identified as "cherubim." This pericope (Ezekiel 8-11) concludes with the final
departure of the kăḇōḏ YHWH from the temple (11:22-23) and the prophet's "return" to Babylon to proclaim to the exiles what he has witnessed (11:24-25).

Structurally, the vision of Ezek 8-11 is chiastically centered around Ezek 10. In Ezek 10 the vision is summarized: "the city will suffer and the presence of the Lord will abandon the sanctuary."¹ Mainly in chapter 10, but infrequently elsewhere in the passage, we see some elements of the inaugural vision (Ezek 1-3) introduced.² The motif of divine abandonment already introduced in the inaugural vision is imbedded in this second marʾôt ʾēlōhîm. But the use of the motif, as Van Dyke Parunak rightly observes, is completely different. He holds that, in Ezek 1-3, "there is no concern with a sanctuary and no need for Ezekiel to leave the land of captivity. The Lord is equipped to come to him!"³ Thus, the main theme of the literary unit under review is, in fact, the abandonment of the temple by the kăḇōḏ YHWH. This chapter will demonstrate that divine presence is not tied to the temple; neither is nearness to the divine directly proportional to proximity to the temple.

2. Delimitation and structure of the Text

In Ezek 5-7, we see clear indication that YHWH intends to bring his judgment upon the house of Israel because of their many misdeeds. In Ezek 5-7, YHWH has

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² Ibid., 66. See also David J. Halperin, "The Exegetical Character of Ezek. 10:9-17," VT 26 (1976): 129-41 has traced some, but by no means all, of these connections; Pieter de Vries, kăḇōḏ Yhwh in the Old Testament: with Particular Reference to the Book of Ezekiel (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 267.

³ Parunak, 66.
charged Israel with a catalog of sins. Brandon Fredenburg captures Israel’s sins very succinctly:

rebellion against His law (cf. Ezek 5:6), greater depravity than non-Israelites (cf. Ezek 5:7), idol worship (cf. Ezek 5:9), defiling the temple with images of foreign gods and foreign worship practices (cf. Ezek 5:11), arrogance (cf. Ezek 7:10), violence and murder of innocent people under the guise of the rule of law (cf. Ezek 7:11, 23), and desecration and destruction of temple property (cf. Ezek 7:20). 4

Given the above-mentioned sins, YHWH has to say, "basta! Enough is enough!" Israel had thought that the temple and an arrogant sense of election would guarantee them divine protection.

Ezek 8-11 is, therefore, a consequence of the preceding chapters. The transitional chapters, Ezek 4-7, serve as a bridge between the separate units, Ezek 1-3 and Ezek 8-11. The dating of Ezek 8-11 additionally shows it to be a separate literary unit. A new date marks the beginning of this section: "in the sixth year of the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month" (cf. Ezek 8:1). The basic themes of Ezek 8-11 link the whole unit, which is framed at both ends by an appropriate opening (Ezek 8:1-4) and a reverse, parallel closing (Ezek 11:22-25). In fact, according to Lamar E. Cooper, the repetition in reverse order in 11:22-23 of three elements from 8:1-4 — "Ezekiel’s audience (the exiles or elders), the Spirit lifting the prophet, and the kābōd YHWH God of Israel" 5 — suggests the unity of the vision.


The major themes, as observed by Daniel I. Block, seem to have been deliberately arranged in an artistic, chiastic order.

This framework is chiastic, in 8:1–4 and 11:22–25:

A 8:1a the context of the vision (date, location and audience)
B 8:1b the beginning of the vision (divine hand on him, he saw)
C 8:3 the transport to Jerusalem in divine visions.
D 8:4 the appearance of the divine glory.

D' 11:22-23 the appearance of divine glory
C' 11:24a the transportation from Jerusalem in divine visions
B' 11:24b the end of the vision
A' 11:25 the response to the vision (delivery to the exiles).6

Block further observes that the material between the two frames represented above is clearly composite, incorporating many different prophetic experiences.7 The material includes "a repetitious and graphic portrayal of idolatry in the temple (8:5–18) and three responses by YHWH to this defiling of His house (9:1–10:8; 10:9–11:15; 11:16–21)."8 Some scholars observe lack of continuity in this vision and,

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7 Ibid., 272.
8 Fredenburg, 88.
therefore, prefer to explain the incongruity from a redactional point of view.\textsuperscript{9}

However, Fredenburg rightly notes that "such discontinuities are most readily explained as part of the nature of a vision: not only are episodes not necessarily in chronological order, fantastic imagery and illogical events can happen. Visions are typically exempt from tight standards of chronology, rationality, and continuity."\textsuperscript{10}

3. Internal Structure of Ezek 8-11

For this study, I will structure the first vision of the temple and the departure of the $kâbhôḏ$ YHWH into six main segments:

- Prologue to the First Temple Vision (8:1-4)
- The Abominations in the Temple (8:5-18)
- YHWH’s Response to the Abominations (9:1-11)
- The Departure of the $kâbhôḏ$ from the temple (10:1-22)
- Judgment Upon Jerusalem and her Inhabitants (11:1-13)
- The Gospel of Hope (11:14-21)
- Epilogue to the Temple Vision (11:22-25)


\textsuperscript{10}Fredenburg, 88.
3.1 Prologue to the First Temple Vision (Ezek 8:1-4)

Block observes that the prologue of the second vision of the קַבֹּד opens with a prelude that serves three functions: first, it establishes the historical context of the prophetic experience. Second, it identifies the nature of Ezekiel's present prophetic experience; and finally, it provides a backdrop against which to interpret the following visionary events.¹¹

The time of the vision is placed as the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of Jehoiachin's exile (cf. Ezek 8:1). We also know the occasion of the vision: I was sitting in my house, with the elders of Judah (זִיקְנֵי יְהוּדָה) sitting before me.¹² It appears that, since the first vision, the prophet has been recognized and even respected as a prophet; no wonder the זִיקְנֵי יְהוּדָה extend a courtesy visit to the prophet, as they are likely waiting for an oracle. Horace D. Hummel notes that "Jeremiah too mentions the 'elders' in exile as among those who were recipients of the letter he sent (Jer 29:1)."¹³ These elders are possibly members of a ruling class established by the exiles while in captivity. Hummel observes that "the book of Ezra (5:5, 9; 6:7, 8, 14) indicates that this system of rule continued into at least the early postexilic period."¹⁴

Just as in the inaugural vision, we read that "the hand of the Lord" (Ezek 8:1) fell upon the prophet. Block notes that "the change from the conventional form, 'วาתייהו אָלָי יאָד 'אָדֹנָי יְהוָה ('and the hand of the Lord God came upon me'), to

¹¹See Block, 277-80.
¹²Block, 277.
¹⁴Ibid., 245.
the stronger γατίππαλ τ'άλαυ γάδ τ'αδόναγ γήλα, ('and the hand of the Lord God fell
upon me'), highlights the sudden and overwhelming nature of God's intervention
in
the prophet's consciousness." In this way, the vision of Ezek 8-11 resembles the
vision of Ezekiel 1-3.

However, as earlier observed, the expression "the hand of the Lord YHWH fell
upon me" (Ezek 8:1) is unique. With this expression, Ezekiel indicates the
suddenness of the onset of the vision and its overpowering nature (cf. "the hand of
YHWH upon me was strong" in 3:14; cf. also Is 8:11). The expression is more
dramatic than "the hand of YHWH was upon me" in Ezek 3:22.

In Ezek 8:2, the vision begins by saying "and I looked, and behold." In what
appears to be a repeat of the first vision, Ezekiel beholds a dazzling figure like the one
he had seen in the earlier vision (cf. Ezek 1:26–28). In a supernatural vision, this
figure removes Ezekiel from Babylon and brings him to Jerusalem. The figure is
described in language that is reminiscent of the description of the divine presence in
Ezek 1:27-28. Joseph Blenkinsopp acknowledges the parallels between the
description of the "mysterious being" in Ezek 8:2 and Ezekiel's experience of the
kāḇôḏ in Ezek 1:27-28, but Blenkinsopp ultimately concludes that the both
experiences cannot be the same, as the point of the former vision is to describe how
the deity removes himself from the temple, preparing it for destruction. However,
William A. Tooman observes that the link between Ezek 8:2 and Ezek 1:27-28 is

15Block, 279.

16 Only here in the OT is יָד, "hand," the subject of יָת, "to fall." In other passages Ezekiel says
that YHWH's "hand" (יָד) "was/came" (לָכַּי) upon him (1:3; 3:22; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1).

17 See Joseph Blenkinsopp, Ezekiel, INTERPRETATION (Louisville, Ky.: J. Knox Press,
1990), 51-53. Also see Walther Zimmerli, Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel,
created by a dense collection of identical locutions in the two passages. Ezek 8:2 replicates four locutions from 1:27-28. In 8:2, however, the locutions are inverted.\(^{18}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1:27-28</th>
<th>8:2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: like the appearance of a shining amber</td>
<td>D': like the appearance of a fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: from the appearance of his loins upward and</td>
<td>C': from the appearance of his loins downwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: from the appearance of his loins downward and</td>
<td>B': from the appearance of his loins upward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: like the appearance of a bow (rainbow)</td>
<td>A': like the appearance of amber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tooman then observes that biblical authors sometimes mark quotations of previous texts by reversing the elements of the evoked text. Elements from the source text as represented above (A, B, C, D) are repeated in reverse in the quoting text (D', C', B', A'). Thus, he concludes, and rightly so, that "the purpose of the inversion in Ezek 8:2 is to draw the reader's attention back to Ezek 1:27-28, identifying the mysterious being with the divine Presence."\(^{19}\)

Unlike the inaugural vision, in which the prophet is mostly a passive recipient of the divine message, here he is active. Block sees his active nature from three perspectives. An appearance of a \textit{hand} reaches out and grabs the prophet by the hair; then, a \textit{rūāḥ} (divine spirit) picks him up, causing him to levitate, obviously spiritually,


\(^{19}\)Ibid., 501.
and finally transports him in the spirit to the temple in Jerusalem.²⁰ Ezekiel must have been familiar with the scene in the temple, especially, since he is a priest and probably had served in the temple before the exile. Fredenburg notes that the prophet likely remembers that there, "in times past, had stood the idol that provokes to jealousy — likely the figurine representation of Astarte (Ishtar, Asherah), the popular Assyrian goddess, erected by Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:7) that was destroyed during Josiah's reformation (2 Kgs 23:6)."²¹

This explains why Ezekiel recognizes the three gates from the outer to the inner court of the Jerusalem temple that face north, east, and south. Douglas Stuart notes:

the northern gate was the one used by the king and was thus perhaps the most prominent. At that gate was some kind of idol, which Ezekiel here calls the "image of jealousy," that is, a rival to YHWH (cf. Ezk 8: 3). It may have been something like the image of the goddess Asherah that had stood in the temple during the days of Manasseh (2 Kin. 23:6) or perhaps a sculpture of an angel guarding the doorway.²²

We cannot tell with certainty what exactly the "image of jealousy" is, but one thing is clear: it was an abomination before YHWH. This is the first of the four abominations that the prophet will behold. The intention of the prophet's sighting of this initial abomination could be to place it in sharp contrast to the divine glory that he will see shortly after, in Ezek 8:4. This image is further qualified as "the jealousy that provokes jealousy." This is so emphatic as if aimed to evoke the passion that the object induces in God's heart. Block notes that "the phrase is deliberately chosen, alluding to

²⁰Block, 280.
²¹Fredenburg, 89.
the covenant bond between YHWH and Israel and the absolute claim he has on their devotion. Alluding to Deut. 4:15–24, which forbids all manners of idolatry, Block opines that "this claim is based among other considerations on YHWH's character as 'el qannā', Impassioned God."  

Furthermore, the prophet's attention is drawn to something else: "the glory of the God of Israel was (šām) there." Note the adverb šām. Its occurrence in both Ezek 8:3 and 8:4 appears to be a deliberate link of the two verses to bring out the glaring contrast between the "image of jealousy" and "the glory of the God of Israel." Obviously, YHWH and the idol cannot coexist šām (there) simultaneously! For syncretistic paganism, this might not be an issue. However, for YHWH, it was an absolute impossibility. YHWH of Israel does not share His glory with any god. The glory of the Lord, the visual representation of the Lord's majesty, belongs in the temple, his symbolic home for the children of Israel. Also, YHWH is the divine patron of Israel as a nation; hence, they have no business worshipping other gods. The temple is a place where His glory is made manifest, though not exclusively; hence, the introduction of other gods is simply a violation of sacred space.

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23 Block, 282.
24 Block, 282.
25 Hummel, 249
27 See Block, 282.
3.2 The Abominations in the Temple (Ezek 8:5–18)

Block rightly observes that the rest of the chapter "forms one of the most tightly
knit literary units in the entire book." A supernatural tour guide leads the prophet to
four shocking pagan rites. Ezekiel, at least at this point, does not explicitly tell us who
the guide is, but several features indicate that this guide is divine. In fact, Hummel
interestingly notes:

In Ezek 8:5, "the nearest antecedent to "he said to me" is the "God of
Israel." In 8:6 the sanctuary has a first person pronominal suffix —my
sanctuary, and in 8:17 the object suffix of "provoke" is also first person
("provoke me"). Finally, the conclusion in 8:18 repeats words ("my eye
will not pity, and I will have no compassion") we heard from the mouth of
YHWH before, in 5:11 and 7:4, 9. That illustrates a favorite Ezekielian
literary device, sometimes called "resumptive exposition."

There are four scenes in this section corresponding to four abominations: 8:5–6;
8:7–13; 8:14–15; and 8:16–18. Each of these scenes follows basically the same
format: "the location; the abomination; YHWH's question, 'Do you see, son of man?';
and finally, You will see even greater abominations' except for the fourth time, since
the fourth is the greatest abomination. The first two scenes start with a divine
command: "Son of man, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north" (cf. Ezek
8:5) and "Son of man, dig through the wall" (cf. Ezek 8:8). These divine commands
are followed by the prophet's obedience. The third scene is rather simple. It "involves

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28 Ibid., 283.
29 Hummel, 250.
30 Ibid., 250.
women joining in the fashion of bewailing Tammuz;” while the fourth scene "serves as a conclusion to all four scenes, announcing YHWH's resolve to pay no attention to any pleas for mercy."

Hummel notes that, in these four scenes, there appear to be crescendos in severity, "because the locations of the abominations seem to move progressively from the probable location of the first in the outer court closer and closer to the Holy of Holies." The fourth abomination is, ultimately, the climax. It bespeaks an insult to YHWH Himself.

In the first scene, two things are present when there should only be one. The glory of God is present along with the image of a deity other than YHWH. Like mixing oil and water, it is incongruous for YHWH to share the same space with another god. Peter C. Craigie notes from biblical point of view that "a true temple has room for only one god. If two are present, one or other will leave. If a false god remains the true God will leave; if the true God is to remain, the false god must be removed." Cooper suggests that "God is a jealous God who accepts no rival (Exod 20:5). To allow idolatry to continue in the temple area was a direct challenge to his authority and the veracity of his word."

As Ezekiel gazes upon the idol, he hears the voice of YHWH say "son of man, are you seeing what they are doing? The great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here ...?" (8:6). Millard Lind notes that "the word abomination (8:6) ..."
designates that which is ritually and ethically loathsome or 'abhorrent' to the Lord; here it is used of idolatry, as often elsewhere (cf. Deut.7:25-26;13:13-15; 17:4)."  
Through such acts, the inhabitants of Judah distance themselves from YHWH in His sanctuary. In other words, they make it impossible for themselves to experience the presence of the Holy One in the temple.

Tooman's grammatical insight is pertinent here. He observes that the translation of the clause in question יֹּרֶךְ הָגוֹהֶנֶחֶר mē'al miqdāši depends on how one understands the infinitive יֹּרֶךְ הָגוֹהֶנֶחֶר. Tooman argues that the common translation "to drive me far off from my sanctuary" is an incorrect rendering of the clause for two reasons. First, the Qal of lhq is intransitive: "to be far off." Second, "drive me far off" requires a different stem. Assuming the infinitive was Piel, Tooman notes that the sentence would be transitive and resultative ("with the result that I be far off") or causative ("to send me away"; cf. Ezek 43,9). But if the infinitive, on the other hand, is Hiphil, then the clause would be transitive and causative ("to cause me to be far off"). Tooman concludes that "as the text is pointed, however, the infinitive must be translated — to be far off, and the subject must be the house of Israel."  

The common translation "that I may be far off" supplies "I" (that is, God) as the subject of the infinitive. But this, according to Tooman, is also grammatically impossible. He notes that there are only three options for an unexpressed subject of an infinitive:

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37 See Tooman, 505.
38 Ibid., 505.
39 Ibid., 505.
(1) An infinitive may have the same subject as the main (finite) verb, in this case "house of Israel." (2) The agent of an infinitive may be the object of the main verb. (3) The agent of an infinitive without an expressed subject may be impersonal ("someone/anyone").

Thus he concludes that it is not correct, grammatically speaking, to supply the infinitive with a specific subject. Thus, the relative clause has to be translated: "which the house of Israel is doing in order to be far off from my sanctuary," and the functional subject of the infinitive can only be "the house of Israel."

In this translation, we see the irony of the passage. The Judahites commit many abominations within the temple precincts. As a result, they distance themselves from YHWH. Tooman observes that "this is not only an ironic evaluation of the people, it is a deliberate foreshadowing of 11:15-16." In these verses, the inhabitants of Judah claim that the exile community has distanced itself from God because the people have no temple in exile. This abomination has a double consequence: first, those who think that they have the monopoly on the divine presence are actually distant from that very presence and, secondly, the divine presence itself leaves the temple of its own accord because it cannot share its glory with the idols that provoke jealousy.

The divine pathos is implicit in this divine statement: "... which the house of Israel is doing in order to be far off from my sanctuary." H.A. Ironside notes that "God had been as a Father unto Israel: He had brought them out of Egypt and cared for them all through the ages. And now this was the return they gave Him: they

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40 Ibid., 506.

41 Ibid., 506.

42 Ibid., 506.
spurned His Word, and followed after other gods." This involves the recognition of
the profound pathos of the first part of the vision. The divine tone is one of grief. "The
people are distancing themselves from God, and in doing so, demonstrate that they
have forgotten entirely the very reason for the temple's existence." The literary
movement accelerates the vision toward its climax: You will see even greater
abominations (8:6b, 13, 15b, 17). This final statement of the first scene acts as a
literary bridge to the next scene, "preparing the reader for an intensification in the
scale of religious aberrations." 

The second stage of the prophet's tour is described in great detail. The scene
opens as the divine guard leads Ezekiel to the entrance of the inner court. Ezekiel
notices a strange hole in the wall. This is significant. "The worship here was more
clandestine than that of the image of jealousy." Ezekiel is ordered to dig through the
hole. "We may wonder how the worshippers enter the chamber if Ezekiel had to
enlarge the hole in the wall in order to get in." But again, this is a vision. The
visionary nature of this text removes it from the realm of realism or logical
consistency.

The usual pattern of the scenes is interrupted by an incident that looks more like
a clandestine ritual. Before now, in the first scene, we only have an indirect reference
to worshippers. But here, our attention is drawn directly to idol worship. We are told that the chamber holds all forms of creeping things and detestable beasts; these idols of the house of Israel line the walls. Surprisingly to Ezekiel, in front of these abominations are seventy of the elders of the house of Israel (with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing among them), each holding his censer in hand (cf. Ezek 8:10-11).

Hummel interestingly observes:

the worship of "creeping things" and "beasts" turns the order of creation upside down. In Genesis 1 God had created "creeping things" and "beasts." God then created man as the one who would rule and have dominion over these creatures (Gen 1:26–28). Here the human worshipers degrade themselves by submitting to these lesser creatures as their gods.

Now there is a full description. 50

The prophet is able to count seventy men whom he identifies as the zēqēnîm ("elders") of the house of Israel. De Vries believes that the term seventy is used here to evoke an association between the seventy elders that assisted Moses in Ex 24:1,9 and Num 11:16,24. 51 But unlike Moses' elders who are possessed with the spirit of YHWH and who assisted Moses in the administrative life of the people during their wilderness journey, these elders are involved in idol worship. In fact, Block notes that "in this context, however, the number of elders seems to have been determined by the number of images, rather than vice versa." 52

50 Hummel, 252.
51 de Vries, 271.
52 Block, 289. Block also observed that these elders(zēqēnîm) could be the lay leaders who had risen to prominence in Jerusalem after the deportation of Jehoiachin and his officials (2Kgs. 24:12–16). These were obviously important men in the city, probably including the šārîn, "officials," whose primary function was to offer counsel (כָּשָׁד, Ezek. 7:26) in the government of the community.
Again, Ezekiel notices an individual among the seventy elders who stands in their midst, presumably supervising them. Ezekiel recognizes him as Jaazaniah, which indicates that the prophet must have known him prior to his deportation to Babylon. In fact, Jaazaniah may have been a prominent man in Israel, which explains why Ezekiel would immediately recognize him. Jaazaniah and the other elders each stand "in front of his creature, holding his censer in his hand, the smoke of which wafted upward to be inhaled and enjoyed by the image." 53

YHWH's rhetorical question to the prophet adds another nuance to the theological aberration of the seventy elders:

Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of images? For they are saying, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has abandoned the land' (Ezek 8:12).

Commenting on this, Fredenburg says:

These elders are worshiping each at the shrine of his own idol, and their attitude is that YHWH does not see us; he has forsaken the land (cf. Isa 29:15; 30:1–5). Their ironic conclusion is premature: YHWH has not yet closed his eyes, shut his ears, or left the land (cf. v. 18). Yet, because of their sin, he will soon make their words come true. Ezekiel still will see things that are even more detestable than this. 54

The vision continues, and the prophet, like a tourist on a guided tour of the temple, is led by his divine guide to see two more serious abominations in the temple. Both scenes show how terribly syncretistic Israel's worship has become. At the

53 Ibid, 290.
54 Fredenburg, 91.
entrance of the gate of the sacred areas of the temple that faces north, Ezekiel sees a group of women who are sitting on the ground, weeping for Tammuz (cf. 8:14-15). According to Craigie, these women "were not possessed with simple human grief, but were engaged in one of the sacrificial acts associated with the Babylonian god Tammuz." For Lind, however, "the weeping of the women was a rite celebrated at the end of spring to counteract the loss of the power of the god and the waning of nature (See ANET: 84, 102, 492). This ritual mourning, censured by the prophets (cf. Judg. 11:38-39; Zech. 12:11; Hos. 7:14), illustrates how Jerusalem's political subjection to Babylon is affecting temple worship." Block's position seems more plausible. He suggests that:

Tammuz denotes a special genre of lament, rather than the deity himself. Since this scene follows immediately after the elders' assertion that YHWH had abandoned the land, it appears that these women have either equated YHWH with Tammuz or they are expressing their grief at their own deity's departure by adopting the Tammuz ritual. In either case, the people were replacing true worship of YHWH with a foreign lamentation.

Clearly, the people in Jerusalem are replacing the true worship of the living God with idolatrous lamentations. The scene closes with another reminder that Ezekiel's tour of the temple is not over yet; he is to witness even more atrocities.

The last and worst form of abomination follows (8:16-17). This abomination occurs in the "inner court," where the kâbôd YHWH is present in the Holy of Holies.

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55 Craigie, 62.
56 Lind, 79.
57 Block, 295.
Spence notes that "the prophet Joel marks this location as the place of public weeping before YHWH for national sins (Joel 2:17)." But here, instead of weeping for their sins, they turn their back on God. This last scene highlights three kinds of provocative actions. The first one has to do with physical expressions of homage to the sun. Twenty-five men are seen paying homage. They turn their back on the Creator to worship the thing He created. Block's comment on this is even more insightful. He notes that:

The verb *hištalāwād*, from the root *hw/hyh*, represents court language, denoting the physical gesture of prostration before a superior. In this instance the posture of these men sends a double signal. By turning their backs toward the temple and their faces toward the sun they have declared their rejection of YHWH in favor of the sun god, Shemesh/Shamash. The solar cult, along with all other astral cults, is expressly forbidden in Deut. 4:19 and 17:2–5.

As terrifying as these abominations have been, YHWH informs the prophet of his final evaluation: these cultic horrors are trivial matters compared to Judah's social evils, in terms of violence in the land. In a clear allusion to Genesis 6:11, where the world is destroyed by a flood, we read that the land has been inundated with violence and that the wrath of YHWH has been continually provoked.

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58 Spence, 146.
59 Block, 297.
60 Ibid., 297.
61 Fredenburg, 93. See also Block, 298.
In addition to sun worship and violence in the land, YHWH accuses the people of "holding out the branch to His nose." Some scholars see this as a cultic gesture. However, there is no scholarly unanimity as to the right translation of the phrase šōlāhīm 'et-hazzamōrah 'al-ḥappām (cf. 8:17). Literally, it translates as "holding out/sticking a branch to their nose," but there is no known religious practice in the ancient Near East that would have suggested this. So, it is not clear what the practice of "holding a branch to the nose" indicates. Judging by the context, I lean toward the position of Block. He suggests translating it as "holding out or sticking the branch up [YHWH's] nose," thus alluding to a sign that expresses divine anger. It serves to indicate how YHWH reacts to cultic and moral transgressions. Therefore, it is not out of place to say that the reference to "sticking the branch to the nose" appears to be an idiomatic summary of the entirety of the crimes of the house of Israel portrayed in the aforementioned scenes.

"Though they cry... God will not listen" (8:18). The final verse of this segment (8:5-18) anticipates chapters 9-10 through Ezek 9:1, "then he cried in my hearing."

This final verse, according to Allen, is "expressed in emotional terms of wrath and mercilessness that relate to the expressions of divine exasperation we have heard throughout the chapter." The normal biblical expression is "the Lord will hear the cry of the oppressed and of the poor" (Deut. 15:9). Fredenburg notes that this is a reversal of the care and concern that God is wont to show His people (cf. Ex 2:23-
25). However, this is not the cry of the oppressed, but rather that of the oppressors who are entrenched in their atrocities.

3.3 YHWH’s First Response: Death, Deliverance, and Defilement

(Ezek 9:1–11)

As the vision progresses, a new and horrific scene opens up before the prophet's eyes. Previously, we have seen a total breakdown of Yahwism. Now, the divine reaction to the desecration of the temple and the provocation of the ire of God is about to be revealed. In the preceding section, the abomination begins from the outer court of the temple and progresses to the inner court. Here, the movement is reversed. Judgment will begin from the inner court of the temple and progress outward to the city.

Shortly after the Holy One declares not to show any mercy whatsoever toward Israel (Ezek 8:18), the sound of a loud voice summoning the executioners to come forward catches the prophet's attention (cf. Ezek 9:1). These executioners are armed with instruments of destruction. The ambiguity surrounding the designation (pēquddōt hāʾēr), which I translate as "executioners of the city," leaves the prophet wondering, "Who are they?" We find the answer in the next verse (Ezek 9:2). Ezekiel

66 Fredenburg, 94.


68 Block noted that the verb pāqad has caused translators a great deal of trouble. The present context requires that pēquddōt be understood as a quasi-legal designation for agents who are charged with the execution of a sentence (See Block 303).
sees six men coming from the direction of the upper north gate. Hummel opines that the six "men" coming from the north may reflect the same motif that appeared in the call vision, where the divine glory came from the north (see 1:4). This suggests that these six men could be divine or supernatural agents sent to purge the city of its abominations.69 No further information is given about these men, save for the fact that each has a destroying weapon in his hand.

But Ezekiel notices something even more interesting. In the midst of the six men is a seventh figure dressed in linen with a writer's case in his hand. Block notes that "linen was the fabric used for the dress of priests (Exod. 28:29–42) and angelic beings (Dan. 10:5; 12:6–7), two classes of beings directly involved in divine service."70 However, from the text, it is difficult to determine whether the man in question is a priestly or angelic figure. But scholars like Fredenburg and Block opine that given the function of the seventh figure in chapters 9 and 10, it is most probable that he is an angelic figure or a mediator who stands on the gap between God and His people.71 This mediatory role fails because, eventually, in Ezek 10:2, 6–7, he will be the one responsible for executing the judgment.72

In deliberate anticipation of the departure of the kūbōš YHWH in Ezek 10:4, the prophet notices "the glory of the God of Israel, that he had previously mentioned in 8:4, moving from his seat above the cherub to the threshold of the temple

69Hummel, 272.
70Block, 304.
71See Fredenburg, 96; Block, 304.
72Lind observes that Israelite priests are to be clothed in linen (9:2; Exod. 28:42), as is an angel (Gabriel) in the book of Daniel and the angelic host in Revelation (Dan. 10:5; 12:6–7; Rev. 19:14). This seventh man, a heavenly scribe in linen, with a writing case at his side (9:2, 11; 10:2–7), compares to the Babylonian scribal god, Nabu, one of seven planetary deities (See Lind, 81).
According to Fredenburg, "this movement highlights where the command for destruction comes from — YHWH figuratively dismounts His throne and moves to the door of His house."™

In Ezek 9:3a when the first phase of the departure of the divine presence is described, the qatal form  ה is used. But in 9:3b, the narrative resumes its progress with a reversion to a wayyiqtol.™ The narrative resumes with the speaker being named explicitly for the first time as YHWH. With this, the author indicates that the sentence on the inhabitants of Jerusalem comes from YHWH.™

YHWH then addresses the seventh man in linen cloth. Before this point, we know neither the role of this seventh man nor the purpose of his writing kit, but this is about to be made clear. The man is tasked to use his pen and ink to mark the foreheads of those inhabitants of Jerusalem who groan and moan over the abominations practiced in the city. He is to mark them, literally, with the letter taw or "t," which in the old Hebrew script was written in the form of a cross or plus sign.™

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™Fredenburg, 96.

™Ibid., 96.

™ Hebrew verbal system can be categorized into tenses (the perfect and the imperfect, technically referred to as Qatal and Yiqtol respectively). The precise implication of these tenses is complex, but suffices to know that the Hebrew Perfect does not necessarily indicate tense (does not have tense or time of action) apart from context and issues of syntax. It rather signifies type of action (Aspect). It designates a verbal action with its conclusion envisioned in the mind of the speaker or writer. On the other hand, the Hebrew Imperfect, has a predominantly indicative meaning. It is used to denote incomplete action, whether in the past, present or future. This is to say that it also does not have tense or time of action apart from context and syntactical considerations. Giving this understanding, Waw -x-qatal without a finite verb gives antecedent information. The true and proper beginning of the principal line of narration comes with wayyiqtol, a verbal form that usually appears in chain and communicates coordinated information, normally subsequent to one another.

™Block, 306.

™Allen, 48. A vast interpretive literature has arisen around the mark that the scribe was to put on the foreheads of all who lamented Jerusalem's idolatrous religious pluralism and syncretism (detailed in chapter 8). Much of this literature is colored by polemic, either Jewish repudiations of any connection between the mark and the cross of Jesus Christ, or Christian polemic against secularizing interpreters who would completely disconnect this text from Christ's cross. The Church Fathers unfairly
This seems to be a protective sign, recalling the sign of Cain in Gen 4:15. In this context, it appears to be a mark that designates people who truly belong to God or are faithful to Him.

Even though the text is silent on whether the man in linen finds men and women who are faithful and deserving of the mark, his report in Ezek 9:11 that he has accomplished the mission suggests that he does find some faithful people.

Once the linen man has completed his task, the remaining six executioners are instructed to begin their massacre starting from the sanctuary (miqdāš). The temple, YHWH's own residence, at least from Israel's perspective, is the place where abominations are most visibly expressed (Ezek 8:5–18). Block notes that, probably, "this emphasis on the temple as YHWH's now uninhabitable house is conveyed by the switch from miqdāš, "my sanctuary," in v. 6c, to habbayit, "the building," in vv. 6d–7, although that latter term is commonly used for the temple throughout the OT." 79

Until now, the prophet has not said anything. He is mostly a spectator in the visionary drama. But, in Ezek. 9:8, "he takes on the prophetic role of intercessor, seeking to mitigate the finality of the LORD'S doom of Israel." 80 So far, we have seen three verbal communications in this chapter. The first two are by YHWH, and now

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78 Block, 308.
79 Block, 308. Mic 3:9-12, esp vs 12, when the prophet gave an oracle that YHWH was to destroy Jerusalem and allow the Temple mount be reduced to rubble, the word habbayit was used since its sacred significance was to be gone. This further adds credence to the theological import of Ezekiel's switch from miqdāš, "my sanctuary," in v. 6c, to habbayit, "the building," in Ezek 9:6d–7
YHWH's prophet is to speak. Ezekiel makes a prophetic plea to God. Ezekiel, the prophet, according to Allan:

Passionately projects himself into the visionary situation, as he is left alone (as the only person alive?) in the inner court to imagine the slaughter being perpetrated outside the temple area. This first half of the third part of the narrative picks up the key term "destruction" from vv 1 and 6 and incorporates it into his prayer of intercession.81

Ezekiel intervenes, saying "ah Lord GOD! Will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath upon Jerusalem?" This can be likened to Amos' prophetic intervention in Amos 7:1-6 or to Moses' plea to God that God relent from his anger in Exodus 32:30-33. While Amos82 and Moses are successful, Ezekiel is not. YHWH's response to the prophet is a reiteration of his divine will to destroy. Even Ezekiel's prophetic intervention cannot subside God's wrath. The divine answer to his plea, according to Blenkinsopp is:

Too late! Sin has reached its full measure, the land is full of bloodshed, the city is filled with impurity. As the scribe reports on the completion of his mission (9:11), the familiar theme is repeated: My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity (cf. 9:10).83

81 Allen, 149.
82 Amos succeeded at least in delaying God's judgment.
83 Blenkinsopp, 59.
3.4 The Departure of the קָבֹד from the Temple (10:1-22)

The departure of the glory of YHWH is the climax of the judgment that hits Jerusalem. Ezekiel chapter 10 describes this departure of the Holy extensively. De Vries cautions that "we should not read chapters 9 and 10 strictly chronologically; there is evidently some overlap. Ezek 10:1-7 describes the same events as Ezek 9:1-11, only from another perspective."\(^84\) However, barring any "hermeneutic of suspicion," we can divide this literary unit into two parts: 10:1-8 and 10:9-22. Each of these parts is introduced with the visionary formula "as I watched I noticed/behold" (10:1, 9).\(^85\)

The first part (Ezek 10:1-8) describes Jerusalem's imminent destruction from two perspectives: that of the earthly judgment of the city, represented by the actions of the linen cloth man, and that of the heavenly judgment, represented in the departure of the divine presence from the temple. Certainly, this section echoes a lot of previous texts, both within the second vision (Ezek 8-11) and within the first vision (Ezek 1-3). "The description of the throne above the platform held up by the heavenly chariot in Ezek 10:1 recalls 1:26, inviting the reader to interpret this chapter in the light of the inaugural vision. Ezek 10:4 contains obvious echoes of 9:3. Accordingly, 10:4 functions simultaneously as a flashback to and an expansion of 9:3."\(^86\) In the same light, Hummel notes that "these two verses in their contexts consider the same event with alternative accents. In Ezek 9:1-11 the accent is on YHWH's wrath on Jerusalem..."\(^86\)

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\(^84\) de Vries, 276.

\(^85\) Block, 314.

\(^86\) Ibid, 315.
with secondary consideration of his departure; in Ezek 10:1–8 the accent switches to his departure.\footnote{Hummel, 292.}

Previously, the prophet has seen the preliminary phase of the departure of the divine presence from the temple (cf. Ezek 9:3). Now, however, the rest of the story will play out, albeit in a slow-motion style, until the end of this second vision (Ezek 11:22-23), in which the glory of YHWH departs. Ezekiel observes the rest of the story, as the glory moves from the threshold to the throne vehicle (10:18), which then taxis it to the east gate (10:19). For the last phase of the journey, the reader must wait until the following chapter (11:22-23).\footnote{Block, 317.}

Let us return to Ezek 10:1. Block observes that "10:1 simply announces the appearance of the throne-chariot, without any reference to its function. But vv. 3–5 fill in these missing details through the narration of a series of dramatic events."\footnote{Ibid., 320.} After this digression, the narrative of the man dressed in linen (from 9:11 and 10:2) resumes in Ezek 10:6-8. "The command given in Ezek 10:2 is repeated in 10:6, followed by a more detailed account of its implementation."\footnote{Hummel, 287.} As the man dressed in linen enters and stands beside the wheel (presumably of the chariot), one of the cherubs extends his hand, picks a coal of fire, places it on his hand, the linen man takes it and exits from the scene.\footnote{Block, 322.}

At this point, the glory of YHWH is stationed at the threshold of the temple. Its radiance fills the courtyard of the temple. Greenberg sees this as a clear allusion to
Ezek 1.  Fredenburg, commenting on the cloud that fills the inner court, says "it is
the visible representation of YHWH's presence seen at the dedication of the temple by
Solomon (1 Kgs 8:10–12)."  De Vries also notes that "the appearance of the glory of
God from the Holy of Holies indicates, as it does in Pentateuch, judgment." This
judgment is evidenced by the man in linen, who prepares to go into the city to execute
the judgment of YHWH. Craigie details the theological significance of this part of the
narrative very lucidly. He says:

The ultimate privilege of religion is the presence of God, however elusive.
The most awful loss is the removal of that presence. But Ezekiel makes it
clear that the divine presence is not lost without cause, but only as the
consequence of the steadfast pursuit of evil.

From verse 9, the focus shifts to the cherubs, following the reference made to
their "hands under their wings" in verse 8. In what looks like an excursus, the
heavenly chariot is described at length. According to Block, "the description satisfies
the reader's curiosity about the appearance of the chariot, and more importantly
highlights the chariot's role in the coming events." 

The description of the heavenly chariot looks very repetitive because of the
similarities to the previous vision. But in literary analysis, repetition can indicate new
insights. In this instance, we can highlight one new revelation in this seemingly
repetitive description of the heavenly chariot. Craigie notes that "there is one element

92 Greenberg, 193.
93 Fredenburg, 100.
94 de Vries, 278.
95 Craigie, 71.
96 Block, 324.
of novelty in this portion of the text. In the vision of Chapter 1, the heavenly throne was accompanied by living creatures; but twice, in this context, the prophet goes out of his way to stress that the living creatures of the first vision were none other than the cherubim of the present vision.\textsuperscript{97}

This is not the first time that the Hebrew Bible makes reference to the cherubim (or cherubs). We encounter them notably in Genesis (3:24) and Exodus (25:17-22). Fredunburg observes that the attention given to the cherubim is reasonable based on their function in the Hebrew Bible. He notes that "the cherubim's basic function was to protect sacred areas; this is evident in the figure with the flaming sword protecting access to the tree of life in Genesis 3:24."\textsuperscript{98} Also, in Ex 25:17-23, we see another reference to the cherubim. Here, they are crafted into the "mercy seat" of the Ark of the Covenant. Fredenburg notes that "their outstretched wings provided protective cover for the sacred space in which the presence of YHWH met his people."\textsuperscript{99} So, in consonance with the above examples, the presence and emphasis on the cherubim are understandable. They are there to protect the holiness of God and the sacredness of the temple, which have obviously been compromised. Hence, they are ready to escort the divine presence away.\textsuperscript{100}

Fredenburg makes another compelling connection between the wheels, the cherubim and the divine presence. According to him:

The wheeled vehicle upon which the throne sits is able to maneuver in any direction. As in the first vision, the key to the wheels is their mobility:

\textsuperscript{97} Craigie, 72.
\textsuperscript{98} Fredunburg, 101.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 101.
YHWH is able to move anywhere, anytime. He is not confined to the temple. The dual focus on the cherubim and the wheels indicates that the guardians of YHWH's holiness and the means of taking him away are on alert and ready for their task. Now that the temple has been defiled (9:7), and the city is about to undergo a purging fire (10:7), it is time for the cherubim to perform their duty.\footnote{Ibid, 101-102.}

In Ezek 3:18, the narrative returns to the second phase of the departure of the glory of YHWH. "The prophet watches as the kabôd rises from the threshold, moves to the spot where the throne-chariot is parked, and comes to rest above the cherubim."\footnote{Block, 326.} Lind captures the stages of the movements of the Holy presence beautifully. He notes that the glory of God first moves "from the most holy place to the threshold (9:3), from the threshold to the cherubim on the temple's south side (10:3), and from there to the east gate of the temple and city (10:19)."\footnote{Lind, 84.} These stage-by-stage movements serve, according to Allen, "to draw attention to the departure. It is like the slowing down of the normal speed in a movie, so that each movement in a particular scene can be savored."\footnote{Allen, 158.}

Finally, Ezekiel tells us that this is the same divine presence that he saw beside the river chebar in the unclean land of Babylon (cf. Ezek 1-3). This is very instructive. Linking the two visions shows that when Ezekiel first saw the glory of God in the land of exile (Ezek 1-3), the temple in Jerusalem was still standing and the divine presence was still there. Thus, God's presence in exile is not an outright rejection of
the temple as the locus of divine presence. This will be clearer in the next chapter of this study. Secondly, the explicit connection between the two visions shows that the departure of the Holy One from the temple does not mean divine abandonment of the people. God detests evil; He punishes evil. But he never abandons his people no matter where they are located (cf. Isaiah 49:14-15). Israel believes that land, temple and people are inseparable; as such, the exiles see themselves as isolated, which is attested to by the remaining community in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 11:15). But they never know that their theology about God and how He manifests His presence is wrong, as we shall see as this study progresses. For now, it suffices to say that the temple and the city (Jerusalem), even though important, are not in themselves substitutes for the divine presence. For now, let us say in accordance with Nancy Bowen that Ezek 10 is a prelude to the kăbōd’s movement away from the temple, though not away from His people.¹⁰⁵

This vision reaches its climax in chapter 11. Ezek 11 demonstrates even more vividly that YHWH has left the temple. Margaret S. Odell notes that "in the ancient Near East where this vision was conceived, a city could not be destroyed unless its god had abandoned it. YHWH still remains in the vicinity of the temple, though his departure is imminent and his overseers are left to complete the mission."¹⁰⁶ But in the meantime, it is worthy to reiterate that the prophet is gaining a better understanding of what he sees. He tells us that the cherubim he sees in this vision are the living creatures that he has seen by the river Chebar (cf. Ezek 1-3). This suggests that as the vision progresses, Ezekiel gains a better understanding of what he sees.

¹⁰⁵ Nancy R. Bowen, Ezekiel, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 53.
¹⁰⁶ Margaret S. Odell, Ezekiel (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing 2005), 119.
Here, the prophet is moved to a new scene situated at the east gate of the forecourt. As in Ezek 8:16, we encounter a group of twenty-five men characterized as perpetuating social injustice (cf. Ezek 11:2). They have filled the city with the slain (Ezek 11:6). 107

For the first time since Ezek 8:3, the rūḥ (spirit) reappears. The spirit lifts the prophet to the east gate of the temple (cf. Ezek 11:1), which is the same place that the kāḥôd YHWH moves to in Ezek 10:19. Block opines that "this location will allow him to observe a new scene involving twenty-five men." 108 Again, Ezekiel recognizes two of these men, Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah. 109 These are leaders of the people. They are described as those who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel in the city (cf. Ezek 11:2). From the description of their sin, we can infer that they may be political leaders in the city. 110 Fredenburg suggests that the reference to "wicked counsel" could be alluding to them ill advising Zedekiah into forming alliance with Egypt. 111 Whoever these men are, one obvious thing is that they go against the will of God, misadvising the people.

In verse 4 we see a double imperative to the prophet: "Prophesy ... Prophesy son of man!" This indicates urgency and reflects the intensity of the offense. Fredenburg notes that "with this command comes both the means — the rūḥ of YHWH came upon

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107 de Vries, 280.
108 Block, 330.
109 The former is not to be confused with the Jaazaniah ben Shaphan involved in the cultic scene in 8:11, and he cannot be identified more specifically than as the son of a certain Azzur.
110 Kuschel, 56.
111 Fredenburg, 103.
me; and the message—This is what YHWH says." Here ruah of YHWH functions as an agent of prophetic inspiration.

Ezek 11:6 continues YHWH's charges against the leaders of the people. They are accused of filling the city with the slain. "It is difficult to decide whether verse 6 reflects past judicial murders by these haughty leaders (cf. 7:23) or whether it portends the certain outcome of their planned rise to power." Whatever it is, it is obvious that it has a devastating effect on Jerusalem. Many innocent people are slain, and the city is filled with violence (cf. Ezek 8:17; 9:3-7).

In Ezek 11:7-12, YHWH, by the mouth of the prophet, turns the words of the leaders on their heads. The men think highly of their own security; "this city is the pot, and we are the meat" (cf. Ezek 11:3), they boastfully say. But YHWH refutes their claim. Ezekiel repeats the leaders' own words from 11:3, but gives their proverb an application that is precisely the opposite of their own intents. These men are far from being the secure "prime meat," as YHWH will personally remove them from the metaphoric pot and expose them to death by the sword (cf. Ezek 11:7-11). These leaders are obviously living in a fool's paradise."They thought they were safe after the calamity that had befallen the city in the deportation of 597 B.C. They saw themselves as the elect and the untouchables. But the sword is in YHWH's own hand, as it were, poised to bring retribution in essentially the same way they had dealt with the disadvantaged within the city (11:6)."

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112 Ibid., 104.
113 Ibid., 104.
114 Block, 336.
115 Hummel, 314.
A closer look at the text shows how YHWH, in three phases, underscores the humiliation and death of the leaders in Israel: I will bring you out of the city to judge you at the boundaries of Israel, I will hand you over to foreigners, and I will inflict punishment on you (cf. Ezek 11:9-10). Fredenburg believes that "it is poetic justice that their executions happen within Israelite territory. These leaders thought the city and the land were inviolable. The leaders' expulsion from the city, capture, and death would cause them to reevaluate this axiom" and their theology of God. After observing these punishments, Israel will acknowledge that YHWH is, indeed, God (cf. Ezek 11:12).

While prophesying, Ezekiel witnesses the death of Pelatiah, son of Benaiah. Even though this leader is among those guilty of the abominations in Israel, Ezekiel's prophetic instinct is stirred, and "in desperation he gave vent to his dismay: will not even the remnant of Israel be spared? (cf. Ezek 11:13b)." This is the second time that we see Ezekiel's prophetic intervention. The first is in Ezek 9:8. This intervention seems to have opened the door of hope, not for the wicked, but rather for those who return to the Lord with all of their heart (cf. Ezek 11:16-20).

3.6 The Gospel of Hope (Ezek 11:14-21)

In this section (Ezek 11:14-21), the prophet receives an answer for his prophetic intervention. This answer brings hope to the exile. Hummel, alluding to Luther, notes that this section indicates that:

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116 Fredenburg, 105.

117 de Vries, 281. Also see Lind, 86.
God works *sub contrario*, that is, in a form contrary to what human reason expects. Here the issue is where the remnant—the true Israel, consisting of the legitimate heirs of God's promises—is to be found, whether among those who had experienced the exile with Ezekiel, or those still in Jerusalem who had escaped it. As powerfully proclaimed by his older contemporary Jeremiah,\(^{118}\) this vision insists that God's future lies with the exile.\(^{119}\)

But does this mean that those inhabitants of Jerusalem who are marked in Ezek 9 as a sign of their faithfulness are fictitious? To toe this line is tantamount to being too analytical of Ezekiel's prophecy. But it suffices to say, just as de Vries rightly observes, "there is going to be total destruction of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, but for the exiles there will still be hope ... a handful of Jerusalemites would survive the city's fall (cf. Ezek 6:9; 7:16; 12:16; 14:22ff)."\(^{120}\) Therefore it is not out of place to infer that there is also hope for the faithful people who identify themselves with the faithful in exile and who grieve and lament over the detestable things done in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 9:4).

However, the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not see the exiles as faithful. In Ezek 11:15, they share their opinion about the exiles. They say that "[the exiles] have gone far from YHWH; to us this land is given for a possession." In other words, the inhabitants of Jerusalem believe that the exiles are cut off from the Lord. For them, exile is synonymous with punishment and with being distanced from God. They think

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\(^{118}\) Jeremiah's message, like that of Ezekiel, is that Israel cannot escape judgment. The future of the people lies with those who go through the "death" of exile and the subsequent "resurrection" of return after seventy years (see especially Jeremiah 29).

\(^{119}\) Hummel, 316.

\(^{120}\) de Vries, 281-282.
of exile as abandonment by God, whereas Jerusalem is proof of nearness to God. They are proved wrong, as we shall see both in the next verse and more elaborately in the concluding chapter of this study.

In Ezek 11:16, YHWH responds to the theological position of the inhabitants of Jerusalem with respect to the exiles. They believe that YHWH has disinherited the exiles. But YHWH responds that He has not disinherited the exiles; rather, He will be for them a "miqdaš mîqṣāf" — a sanctuary in some measure. Some translate this as "a sanctuary in small measure." But no matter the translation, the basic point is that "YHWH will be accessible to the exiles in Babylon." Tooman notes that:

This statement builds on and clarifies God's comments about the Judahites we observed in 8:6: "Do you see what they are doing — great abominations, which the house of Israel is doing in order to be far from my sanctuary?" Ezek 11:15 echoes 8:6 by repeating the locution hirḥaqțīm ("far away"). Those who are near the physical sanctuary in Jerusalem are actually far off from YHWH. Those who YHWH removed far off will actually enjoy his presence.

God's presence is available for the exiles even without the institution of the temple. Although the exiles are far from the temple, they are not far from YHWH.

In a way reminiscent of certain patriarchal promises (cf. Gen. 15:18; Josh. 1:2) and the granting of the land to Israel under Joshua (Josh. 1:2), YHWH proclaims that after He has gathered His people from the nations in which they are scattered, He will

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121 Tooman, 507.
122 Ibid., 507.
grant (nātan) to them the land of Israel. He will give them a new heart (heart of flesh) and a new spirit so that they will live according to His statutes and observe and carry out His ordinances (cf. Ezek 11:17-20); Allen's insight on the theological import of the heart is worthy of note. He said:

the heart stands for the will: Israel's hearts had been hard and wanton (cf. Ezek 2:4; 3:7; 6:9). "Stone's hearts" refer to that which is unconscious, immobile, and so unresponsive to God (cf. Exod 15:16; 1 Sam 25:37). By contrast, "hearts of flesh" relate to that which is tender, yielding, and responsive. What was needed was a transformation wrought by God, replacing unresponsiveness with a new compliance to the will of God.

This message of hope for the exiles reaches its peak with YHWH's declaration that "they shall be my people, and I will be their God (cf. Ezek 11:20b). This sounds like a reversal of the message of judgment in Ezek chapter 2, where the house of Israel is described as 'ēl-gōyîm hammôrdîm — "the rebellious nations" (cf. Ezek 2:3). Now they will no more be "'ēl-gōyîm hammôrdîm," but 'ēf-‘āmmî — my people (cf. Ezek 11:20b). This statement evokes God's covenental promise with His people (cf. Gen 17:7-8; Ex 6:2-7). Block notes that it is a covenental formula that "expresses a relationship of commitment and intimacy."

This section concludes with a flashback, recalling the impious Judeans whose abominations characterized the preceding chapters. "Those whose hearts are devoted

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123 cf. Block, 351.
124 Allen, 165.
125 Block, 354.
to their vile images and detestable idols."¹²⁶ Hummel notes that this flashback could be a literary style meant to contrast the regenerated heart mentioned in Ezek 11:17-20; that is, the "eJ-sammi—my people" (cf. Ezek 11:20b), with the unregenerate hearts of the evildoers that only desire wickedness,¹²⁷ the "eJ-goyim hammôrdîm" (the rebellious nations).

3.7 Epilogue to the Temple Vision (Ezek 11:22–25)

Following the aforementioned structure of this literary unit (Ezek 8-11), this section concludes the second vision. In chapter 10:19 we see how the glory of God departs from the threshold of the temple and stands over the cherubim, who mount up from the earth and stand at the entrance of the east gate of the temple. We do not know anything further about the glory of God, whether it departs from the temple or not. This section concludes the movement of the divine presence in the second vision. This "conclusion consists of two parts, vv. 22–23 describing the final scene of the actual vision, and vv. 24–25 narrating the prophet's return to reality."

Ezekiel returns to the movements of the divine presence located last "at the entrance to the east gate of YHWH's house" (Ezek 10:19b). The cherubim, whose role is to protect the holiness of the Holy presence, now move the glory of the God of Israel away from the temple to the mountain east of the city. Some scholars interpret this eastern inclination of the kâbîd YHWH as divine absence from Jerusalem; and

¹²⁶ Fredenburg, 111.
¹²⁷ Hummel, 325.
¹²⁸ Block, 357.
an indication that the glory of God is pitching its tent with the exile.\textsuperscript{129} John F. Kutsko has an interesting position regarding the movement of the kāḇōd YHWH and its final location at the mountain east of the city. He argues that this final movement out of the temple "is a response to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who claims that the exiles have gone far from YHWH and assert that they are the rightful possessors of the land (11:15).\textsuperscript{130} This movement and the eastern inclination of the kāḇōd serve as a censure to the theological position of the remnant in Israel and confirm that YHWH has become a type of sanctuary for the exiles (cf. 11:16).\textsuperscript{131} Kutsko further adds that "in the interim between God's departure from the temple and God's expected return, the divine kāḇōd would be available to Israel in exile, as it was available to Israel in the wilderness."\textsuperscript{132} I partially agree with the position of Kutsko. It stands to reason that the eastern inclination of the Holy presence indicates God's favorable disposition toward the exiles. However, the Holy One is not absent from Jerusalem, although He is temporarily absent from the temple. In the interim, He is situated at the mountain that is in the eastern part of the city (cf. Ezek 11:23).

In a similar move, the spirit brings the prophet back to his fellow exiles in Babylon."Ezekiel had seen enough to supply him with an important message for his companion exiles."\textsuperscript{133} YHWH leaves the temple of His own accord because of the


\textsuperscript{130}Kutsko, 97.

\textsuperscript{131}Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{132}Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{133}Fredenburg, 112.
many abominations perpetrated by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Because the people distance themselves from their patron God through their abominable deeds, YHWH leaves the physical structure that the people hold as a symbol of His presence. His presence cannot be reduced to a structure built with human hands.

The departure of the divine presence from the temple marks the end of the theophany and further makes clear the theology behind the fall of Jerusalem. "His departure is not the consequence but the cause of the destruction of the temple." \(^{134}\) In the end, the prophet remarks "then the vision that I had seen left me" (cf. Ezek 11:24). With this, he draws the curtain on the visionary drama.

4. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated YHWH's stand on syncretism in the name of worship and religion. True religion calls for good ethical conduct and authentic worship — worship acceptable to God. Authentic worship "lets God be God on His own terms and submits to that divine self-definition. Anything else places the worshiper above the deity, which is the essence of idolatry." \(^{135}\) The leaders of the people and the women weeping the Tammuz seem not to understand the essence of true religion. They are wise in their own understanding, but their wisdom brings them nothing but destruction.

The scene of the executioners in chapter 9 with its destructive effects may seem offensive to the modern reader of the book of Ezekiel. How can God decree the outright elimination of His people? However, the wrath of God must be accessed vis-

\(^{134}\) de Vries, 285.

\(^{135}\) Block, 359.
à-vis his divine grace. Israel, from the point of view of biblical history, enjoys a
privileged position in the sight of God. God enters a covenant with them and promises
to be "their God and they His people" (see Ex 6:2-7). But instead of responding to this
spiritual privilege with gratitude and humility, they become arrogant, trusting in their
security (cf. Ezek 11:3) and taking God's grace and favor for granted. Block rightly
notes that "God will not be mocked. If he demanded the elimination of the Canaanites
because of their depravity, when the Israelites behave like Canaanites, they can expect
no other fate (Deut. 8:19-20)."136

Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated that, unlike the deities of the ancient
Near East, YHWH and His glory are not forced out of the temple. The Holy Presence
leaves the temple of its own accord. He is not tied to any particular location. His
inclination towards the exiles in Babylon also shows that His sovereignty is a
worldwide sovereignty. The sovereignty of the other ancient Near Eastern deities is a
restricted one. They have power only within their territory. But YHWH is the God of
all the earth.

In the ancient Near Eastern texts, particularly the ones analyzed in the first
chapter of this study, the departure of the deity, as evidenced in the spoliation of its
statue, is interpreted as divine absence. But in Ezekiel's vision, the kābōd is not
destroyed, and neither does it leave the city; therefore, it is never absent. Thus, it is
worthy to state that though the divine presence leaves the temple for reasons already
demonstrated in this chapter, it never leaves the city, because God is never absent.
YHWH's leaving the temple demonstrates that divine presence is not tied to the
physical material structure called temple, and the temple is not a substitute for the
presence of the Holy One.

136Ibid., 359.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE RETURN OF THE kāḥōḏ YHWH TO THE TEMPLE (EZEK 40-48).

1. Introduction

Ezek Chapters 40–48 is the epilogue of the book and the climax of the kāḥōḏ vision. In this literary unit, the prophet is taken in the power of the spirit to the restored temple in Jerusalem (cf. Ezek 40-42). In a series of detailed measurements of the temple and explanatory remarks, the construction of the temple is marked off for him, and he is instructed to relay everything he has seen to the house of Israel. However, the temple remains empty and unused until the glorious return of the kāḥōḏ YHWH (cf. Ezek 43:1-5). Leslie Allen notes that "this divine coming enables the temple to come to life, so that the text can move from an anatomical description to a physiological one."¹

Following this, the altar is dedicated so that the temple ritual can start and the holiness of the divine presence is maintained (cf. Ezek 43:13-27). In Ezek 44:5-46:18, there is a diversion from the visionary, as the focus of the text shifts to details on the running of the newly restored temple.

In the final part of the vision (cf. Ezek 47-48), the temple is put on a larger perspective that reveals the effects and benefits of maintaining the holiness of the returned kāḥōḏ YHWH to the temple. This is evident in the river that flows from the temple, bringing life and healing wherever it flows (cf. Ezek 47:1-12). Finally, the

¹Leslie C. Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, WBC 29 (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 212.
relationship between the divine presence and the land is revealed (cf. Ezek 48:30-35).

In this vision, just as in the ones studied so far, the primacy of YHWH is emphasized. Man's responsibility falls within the context of the sovereignty of YHWH.

2. Delimitation of the Text

Ezek 40-48 is a separate literary unit that concludes both the visions of the kabôd YHWH and the entire book. The book, considered as a whole, consists of four main sections: Ezekiel 1-24 (oracles on the judgment Jerusalem); Ezekiel 25-32 (oracle against foreign nations); Ezekiel 33-39 (restoration of the temple and the return of the exiles); and finally, Ezekiel 40-48 (vision of the restored temple). Thus, from the foregoing, Ezek 40-48 marks the epilogue of the book of Ezekiel.

From a literary point of view, three vision complexes punctuate the book of Ezekiel: chapters 1-3; 8-11 and 40-48. The central subject of all three is the kabôd YHWH: its appearance in Babylon (1-3), its departure from the temple (8-11) and its return to the temple (40-48). Thus, Ezekiel 1–3 functions as a prologue to the prophet's message, while the great vision of the new temple (40-48) is the book's epilogue. All these literary nuances point to the fact that Ezek 40-48 is a literary unit of its own. From the point of view of the kabôd structuring of the book, this final unit resolves the theological complication that arises from the departure of the kabôd (Ezek 8-11) and completes the movement of the kabôd that is started in Ezek 1-3. The temporal reference in Ezek 40:1("In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down ..."), is more evidence of the beginning of a new literary unit.
3. The Structure of the Text (Ezek 40-48)

While there are varieties of structural arrangements that have been suggested for these final chapters of Ezekiel, the focus on the "Holy Portion," as rightly observed by Pieter de Vries, invites the following arrangement:

A Overview of the temple complex (40:1-42:20)

B The return of the kūhôḏ YHWH to the temple from the east (43:1-11)

C Ordinances of the temple and cultic service (43:12-44:31)

D The holy portion (45:1-8)

C' Ordinances for the worship service (45:9-46:24)

B' The path of the river that rises in the temple flowing eastwards (47:1-12)

A' Overview of the division and the boundaries of the land and the gates of the city (47:13-48:35).

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4 Ibid., 301.
This arrangement makes evident the place of the kāḇôḏ YHWH in the literary unit. It shows that as the return of the kāḇôḏ YHWH "forms the codicil to the description of the temple complex, so the description of the stream rising in the temple forms the introduction to the description of the division of the land that follows it." Thus, we see the structural affinity between the return of the kāḇôḏ YHWH and the water that flows from the temple. Simply put, the return of the kāḇôḏ YHWH is the reason for the spring of water that brings life and healing.

3.1 Overview of the temple complex (Ezek 40:1-42:20)

Within the larger literary unit under consideration (Ezek 40-48), Ezek 40:1-4 serves as the preamble. Parunak observes that the wording of this preamble calls the reader to look at this vision from the perspectives of the previous kāḇôḏ visions in Ezek 1-3 and 8-11. He argues that this is so because "just as the motifs of 1-3 were adapted and imbedded in 8-11, so the temple tour motif of 8-11 is adapted (from a theme of judgment to one of blessing) and imbedded in 40-48." More so, the phrase, "visions of God," only occurs at the beginning of each of these kāḇôḏ visions (cf. Ezek 1:1; 8:3; and 40:2). Again, the dating formula also occurs only in these visions in conjunction with the divine activities expressed through the "hand" and "spirit" of YHWH (cf. Ezek 1:1-3; 3:12, 14; 8:1, 3; 11:1, 24; 40:1; 43:5).

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5Ibid., 300-301.


As earlier noted, the vision begins with a complex date notice containing some important elements. Worthy of note is, *the twenty-fifth year of our exile* (cf. Ezek 40:1). This relates the visionary experience to the prophet and his fellow exiles. By "year of our exile," Hummel notes that Ezekiel expresses his solidarity with his audience, the exile community. We cannot be certain of this, but there is considerable agreement among commentators that "the twenty-fifth year of our exile" is more than a simple chronological notice. According to Block, it alludes "to the midpoint of the Jubilee cycle. According to Israelite tradition, every fiftieth year on the Day of Atonement the horn (yôbêl) was to be blown throughout the land proclaiming release (dêrôr) to all enslaved Israelites." Accordingly, as the mid-point of the fiftieth year, the twenty-fifth year may have something to do with their future release from exile. This is probably a call for the exiles to look forward in anticipation of their release.

Just like in the previous *kâbôd* visions, "the hand of YHWH" here indicates a divine influence upon the prophet. The "hand of YHWH" lifts him up and brings him, in supernatural visions, to the land of Israel and sets him down on a very high mountain (cf. Ezek 40:1-2).

8Hummel, 1192.

9Block, 512.

10Ibid., 512. Block further observed that the application of the term *dêrôr* to the return from exile in Isa. 61:1 indicates that after the Babylonian captivity Jubilee language was appropriated for this event. The possibility that Ezekiel looked on the return from captivity as a Jubilee kind of experience finds support in his own reference to the year of liberty (*sênat haddêrôr*) in 46:17. More so, the liberty associated with the Jubilee, and the connotation of "twenty-five" as half of the way to it, might also explain why twenty-five and multiples of it appear so often in the rest of the book. Thus when the dimensions of the temple and its compound so frequently involve twenty-five (40:13, 21, 25, 29, 30, 33, 36) and its multiples (e.g., 40:15, 19; 42:16–20), and the sacred reserve of land is twenty-five thousand units (cubits?) long (45:1–6; see also 48:8–21).

11The "hand of YHWH" coming upon him, which echoes 1:3, is less forceful than the hand falling on him, seizing him by the hair, and carrying him off in 8:1. His conveyance (*hebêr*) to the site.
what seems like an impressive city being built right before him. Bruce Vawter and Leslie Hoppe see this "very high mountain" to which YHWH takes Ezekiel as Zion, which, according to them, compares to the "garden of Eden." Alluding to Ezek. 28:14-16, Vawter and Hoppe believe that it is the Garden of Eden that the prophet characterizes as "the holy mountain of God" (Ezek. 28:14). Like Zion, they opine:

Eden is a place where God is immediately accessible. In chapters 28 and 31 Ezekiel describes Eden as a place of great beauty, with astonishing mineral wealth, and with a miraculous river because God's presence blesses Eden. This imagery recurs in chapters 40-48 as the prophet describes the Zion of the future. In the prophet's mythic consciousness Zion and Eden merge. However, I see the position of Block to be more plausible. For him, the prophet's refusal to specifically identify the mountain and the city with any geographical location indicates "his continuing polemic against official Jerusalem theology, even though it had been discredited fourteen years earlier. At the same time, he invites the reader to associate this mountain and city with any mountain in the world from which peace and prosperity emanate."

Just as in Ezek 8:2, a divine guide accompanies the prophet on a tour. The first thing that catches the prophet's eyes is the divine guide's surveying tools. He has a

where Jerusalem had once stood, compares with 37:1, where he is carried off (hōšî́) to the valley of dry bones.

12 Ibid., 514.


14 Ibid., 189.

15 Block, 514.
linen cord and a measuring rod. The divine man said to him, "Son of man, look
closely and listen attentively, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you
were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the
house of Israel" (cf. Ezek 40:4). Here seems to lie the purpose of the vision. He is to
declare whatever he will see to the house of Israel.

Worthy of note are the four imperatives: look closely, listen attentively, set your
mind, and declare. Given the fact that the divine man is holding a measuring rod with
which he will measure the different parts of the temple, the first imperative, look
closely, is understandably more preeminent. The second imperative is for emphasis,
especially when the divine man comments on the details of the measurements. This
commentary on the details of the measurement is normally introduced with the
prophetic formula wayaqqabber 'elay—"and he said to me"(cf. Ezek 40:4; 40:45;
41:22), which obviously calls for the prophet to listen. The third imperative, set your
mind, is closely connected to the third and fourth imperatives. The prophet is called to
pay attention so that he might perform the last imperative, namely, to declare
whatever he will see and hear to the house of Israel. So he will declare, not only
YHWH's word, which is the primary duty of a prophet, but also YHWH's
architecture!16

Speaking of the temple's architecture, the prophet is first shown the outer wall
that surrounds the temple (cf. Ezek 40:5). The tour commences, as the divine guide
first measures the east gate. According to Allen, the east gate is singled out first "in
anticipation of its key role in Ezek 43:1–4."17 Having viewed the eastern gateway, the
prophet is brought to the outer court area with its chambers and pavement. From

16 Lind, 327.

17 Allen, 229.
there, the tour proceeds to the north gate (Ezek 40:20-23) and then the south gate (Ezek 40: 24-27). These three gates lead to a large outer courtyard that surrounds the temple's sanctuary on three sides: north, east, and south (cf. Ezek 40:17-27). A wall separates the sanctuary from the outer courtyard. According to Cooper, "the combination of walls and gates conveyed the idea of limited access. God was again making himself available to Israel, but the limits that were part of the tabernacle and earlier temples also were preserved in Ezekiel's temple. These limitations were designed to protect God's holiness."


After the measurement of the courtyard, the guide took the prophet with him to the rectangular vestibule of the temple: twenty cubits wide and 12 cubits long (Ezek 40:48-49). Block notes that "as a whole the temple conforms to the 'long room' architectural design with the entrance on one of the short ends, but since the entrance of this part is located on the longer side, the vestibule itself is a broad room" with a pillar either side of the entrance.

In Ezek 41, the tour of the temple continues. The divine guide leads the prophet to the next room, the hēkāl. Block notes that "this is the first occurrence of the term in the present vision, and only the third in the book (twice in Ezek 8:16)." In Solomon's temple, according to Vawter and Hoppe, this is the room where the Ark of

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18 Cooper, 360.
19 Block, 540.
20 The pillars of Solomon's temple were made of brass. Their purpose may have been to represent the pillar of cloud and of fire from the wilderness days (Exod 13:17-22). These pillars, according to Cooper, were signs of God's presence and preservation of his people (see Cooper, 364).
21 Block, 543.
the Covenant is housed. It contains the table of incense and the bread of the presence (cf. 1 Kgs. 6:20-22). Here, however, the text is silent on the contents of the room. It appears that the interest of the heavenly guide is on the details of the measurements in order to ensure the protection of the holiness of the divine presence. The architecture of the temple speaks to its special character. "Its holiness would derive not from the accoutrements of liturgical service but from the very presence of God within the new temple."23

In chapter 42, we see the final portion of Ezekiel's tour of the temple complex. Ezek 42: 1-14 describes the different sets of rooms for priests. In temples of the ancient Near East, these rooms had several functions. They served as storage areas that housed the kitchens where food was prepared for the priests as part of their recompense for priestly service. These rooms also contained wardrobes for priestly vestments. Priests would enter these rooms from the inner court after their duties, would remove their sacred vestments, and would put on their secular clothes before leaving the temple so that they would not desecrate the sacred vestments used for the service and cultic worship of the Holy One.

In Ezek 42:15-20, after the divine guard has finished measuring the inner court of the temple area, he brings the prophet out via the east gate and then takes the final measurement of all the limits of the court. He notes that the entire temple complex is five hundred cubits square: a perfect symmetry. The entire complex is set off by a wall to protect the sacredness of the house of God, sullied in the previous vision that led to the departure of the Holy Presence.24 De Vries notes that the term "holy" or

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22 Cf. Vawter and Hoppe, 191-192.

23 Ibid., 192.

24 Ibid, 193.
"sacred" in this context "is primarily not an ethical concept in Ezek 40-48 but a cultic concept. It is associated with spatial categories. Humanity belongs to the non-sacral domain and can come into contact with the $kābōḏ YHWH$ only by means of the *cultus*."\(^{25}\) The outer wall around the temple complex marks this division.

The detailed description of the renewed temple serves to indicate the conditions that make the temple a locus of divine presence for the house of Israel. The presence of God in the temple is meant to be taken seriously. The proper response to the presence of the divine is reverence. Hence, the detailed description of the measurement of the temple and its various area is meant to inspire a sense of awe and reverence to all. Ezekiel is meant to communicate this detail to the house of Israel so that when the divine presence returns to the temple, his holiness will be safeguarded against the abominations that led to its departure.\(^{26}\) However, it is important to note that throughout this description of the prophet's vision, no reference has been made to the actual presence of God in the temple. The building, despite its beauty, symmetry, and splendor, remains nothing more than an ordinary building. In the next section, Ezekiel describes the return of the $kābōḏ YHWH$ to the sanctuary.

### 3.2 The return of the $kābōḏ YHWH$ to the temple from the east (43:1-11)

Until now, Ezekiel's vision has been a tour of the restored temple. The heavenly guide has led the prophet on a tour so that he can see the temple and its measurements. In this section, however, the vision reaches its climax. The heavenly guide leads him to the gate that faces the east. "He does not enter through the normal means of going through the east outer gate and then the east inner gate. From now on,

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\(^{25}\) de Vries, 304-305.

\(^{26}\) Cf. Vawter and Hoppe, 193.
no one will enter through the east outer gate (see 44:1-2). at the gate that faces the east, Ezekiel sees the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east (cf. Ezek 43:1-2), supposedly, from the mountain east of the city. Recall that this is the last place where the glory of YHWH is located at the end of the second vision (cf. Ezek. 11:23-25). The return of the glory of YHWH sounds to the prophet like the sound of many waters. This expression links the vision of the return of the kôbôd YHWH with the inaugural vision, in which the prophet likens the manifestation of the divine presence to "the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army" (Ezek 1:24). Unlike in Ezek 1:24, here it is very clear to the prophet that he is beholding the glory of God. The prophet, in Ezek 43:3, expressly establishes a connection between what he now sees, what he saw when the glory departed from the temple (Ezek 8-11), and what he had seen by the river Chebar (Ezek 1-3). In the case of the former, the prophet says "like the vision I saw when he came to destroy the city" (cf. Ezek 43:3). Clearly, it is a reference to the scene in Ezek 9:1-11 where YHWH commissions the divine executioner to destroy all the evildoers in the city. But the closest link to the text is Ezek 10:4, 18-19 and 11:22-23, when the glory leaves the temple via the same east gate that is referred to at the beginning of Ezek 43:1. Let us take another look at how the prophet interprets the earlier vision of the departure of the divine presence from the temple. He interprets it, not as a departure of the Holy Presence from the temple, but as his arrival to destroy Jerusalem. According to Block, "the purposive infinitive, 'to destroy,' provides a specific link with the appalling response of the prophet in Ezek 9:8: Ah, YHWH God!

Fredenburg, 376.
Are you destroying (maḥāt) the entire inhabitants of Jerusalem?" 28 These allusions make evident the theological importance of the return of the glory of YHWH. Now, "YHWH's coming was not a summon to ministry (Ezek 1-3) or a sign of judgment (Ezek 8-11). It was a sign of his covenant love bringing blessings to his people that would never be taken away." 29

Again, like in the inaugural vision (Ezek 1:28), the prophet's reaction to the sight of the Holy Presence is one of reverence. "He fell upon his face" (Ezek 43:3). It is an overwhelming experience to behold the presence of God (cf. Ex 34:8). The return of the glory here is a promise of a reversal of that departure. Block notes:

This vision proclaims the glorious mercy of God, who invites sinners into a relationship with himself and provides the means whereby that relationship can be expressed, though without contaminating his own holiness. ... He comes to dwell among them, though without sacrificing any of his glory. 30

Hummel observes that the way that the vision progresses in Ezek 40-43, starting with the description of the sanctuary (cf. Ezek 40:1-42:20), then followed by the return of the kāḇōd YHWH (Ezek 43:1-12), is "the same pattern that God had followed for both the tabernacle (Exodus 25–40) and Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6–8)." 31 This shows, according to Douglas Stuart, "the temple itself, as a piece of construction, was nothing without God's presence." 32

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28 Block, 579.
29 Cooper, 376.
30 Block, 590.
31 Hummel, 1231.
All that has happened until this moment in the text is in anticipation of the divine speech that Ezekiel is about to hear. But just before the divine speech (Ezek 43:6-7), we have a circumstantial clause that seems to digress the narrative away from this important speech. The text reports the presence of a man standing beside the prophet. Who is he? How did he get there? Some suggest that "the man" is YHWH. Block identifies him with "the guide who has been dutifully measuring and orienting the prophet to the temple area." However, interpreting the subject of the divine speech as YHWH is not completely out of place. Hummel notes that "in Ezek 2:2, Ezekiel heard YHWH addressing him directly, with no intermediary present, but here he says that, literally, 'a man was standing beside me.' The syntax of the participle middabber followed by ħāyāh may have a circumstantial or temporal force: I heard someone speaking to me from the temple while a man was standing beside me." So, it could be that another heavenly figure was present as the Holy One speaks to the prophet from the temple. Hence, while before now, in this final vision, only the heavenly guide has spoken to the prophet, now the kāḥōd YHWH Himself addresses him from the temple.

We can divide the divine speech into two parts. Verses 7-9 is explanatory. The Holy One makes clear to the prophet what the temple entails. In the second part (vv 10-11), He charges the prophet to explain what he has seen to the house of Israel. The opening of the speech begins with a formal announcement: "This is the place of my

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33 J. Hermann, Ezechielstudien, BWANT 2 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), cited by Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, 415. Also see de Vries, 310.

34 Block, 580.

throne, the place for the soles of my feet" (43:7). The language clearly has some royal undertones.\textsuperscript{36} Fredenburg interprets this as "YHWH's sovereign, kingly declaration that he is once again the potentate over his temple and the people who dwell around it."\textsuperscript{37} De Vries observes that this royal description of the new temple is not said of the old temple in Ezekiel. "The only purpose that the old temple served in Ezekiel was to indicate Israel's despisal of YHWH in the desecration of His sanctuary."\textsuperscript{38} In the new temple, YHWH promises to dwell with the house of Israel forever. According to de Vries, this marks the high point of the literary unit. However, the return of the Holy One calls for responsibility on the part of Israel; they must never again defile His Holy name (cf. Ezek 43:7).\textsuperscript{39} The name of God is synonymous with His person. This is the first time in Ezekiel we are seeing the two in close connection.

The reference to "abominations" and other detestable practices in Ezek 43:8-9 is a clear reminiscence of the sins described in Ezek 8:1-18, where the prophet witnesses cultic abominations in the temple. This suggests, according to Paul M. Joyce, that Ezek 43:6-9 should be read as its counterpart.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, in Ezek 43:6-9, God issues a warning against polluting the place of His Holy presence through engaging in "idolatry" or ignoring the sacredness of the site. "He warns against placing the burial place of the kings too near the temple and thus defiling it. People in ancient Israel believed that the dead were a source of ritual impurity (Num. 5:2–4; 19:11–13)."\textsuperscript{41} In

\textsuperscript{36}Block, 580.
\textsuperscript{37}Fredenburg, 376.
\textsuperscript{38}de Vries, 310.
\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 311. See also Cooper, 377.
\textsuperscript{41}Vawter and Hoppe, 195. Also see Margaret S. Odell, \textit{Ezekiel} (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 497.
summary, to stay connected to the divine presence, Israel must end its abominable deeds.

Ezek 43:10-11 closes the narrative of the return of the glory of God to the temple. This is a message of hope to the house of Israel. Hence, the prophet is instructed to relay what he has seen and heard to the house of Israel. Block notes that the style of this closure is striking, especially for its choice of words.\textsuperscript{42} Even though it is a message of hope, it concludes with a very striking purpose clause: that they may be ashamed of their iniquities (43:10). When the people understand the message of hope that the temple structure represents, their eyes will be opened to the extent to which their syncretism has really been a sacrilege. Block puts it even better, holding that:

The purpose clause in v. 10b, involving the Niphal of klm ("ashamed") introduces a homiletical dimension to the vision. In challenging the people to consider their role in the desecration of the divine name through their iniquitous behavior (‘awōnōt), the word niklam shatters assumptions of worthiness and forces the audience to accept responsibility for the failure of divine-human relations.\textsuperscript{43}

It could be that this new temple is meant to remind Israel of the sin that has led to the destruction of the old temple and the exile of some of its citizenry. In other words, they are meant to know that they are the cause of the calamity that befalls them. The people of Israel should be ashamed of the sins that send them into exile and lead to the destruction of Solomon’s temple. Fredenburg adds another dimension to this sin to which Israel is to be ashamed. He opines:

\textsuperscript{42}Block, 588.

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., 589.
The sins of which Israel is now to be ashamed must certainly include its unbelieving refusal to embrace the promises given by YHWH in Ezek 34--39. YHWH stands in his new temple, in the midst of a renewed land, awaiting his prodigal son, Israel, to return to him and the temple he built so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations and thus fulfill its purpose.\textsuperscript{44}

This divine proclamation reveals to Israel its place with respect to its relationship with YHWH. God is inviting them again into His presence, not because of their merits, but out of His endless mercy. However, His mercy must not be taken for granted. A call to be ashamed is a call to repentance and spiritual renewal. Thus, "if the temple is truly to be a dwelling-place of the kāḇōḏ YHWH, then the laws and ordinances of YHWH must be observed, and purity and holiness must characterize the temple and its worship."\textsuperscript{45}

3.3 Ordinances of the Temple and Cultic Service (Ezek 43:12-44:31)

There is no scholarly unanimity as to whether Ezek 43:12 should be considered the conclusion to the preceding section or an introduction to the following section. I argue that it is more likely an introduction than a conclusion. It begins a section concerned with worship and saturated with laws and regulations that govern temple access and activities. With the return of the kāḇōḏ YHWH, the empty temple now comes to life, and activities can now begin. The legislation that follows serves to

\textsuperscript{44} Fredenburg, 377-78.

\textsuperscript{45} de Vries, 312.
guarantee divine presence in the temple.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, Ezek 43:12 is the preamble to regulations on worship in the temple. Ezek 43:11 anticipates this preamble with the reference to "all its ordinances and its entire plan and all its laws."

It is said that the temple and its whole surrounding area must be qōdeš qodšîm—"holy indeed" (cf. Ezek 43:12). Block notes that the expression "qōdeš qodšîm, in this verse must not be confused with qōdeš haqqodâšîm, "the holy of holies" in Ezek 41:4. The former speaks of the separation of the entire area from profane and secular touch,\textsuperscript{47} while the latter is more emphatic, thus, specifying the location of the Holy Presence. Therefore, the purpose of the laws in this section is to ensure the sacredness of the whole area of the temple.\textsuperscript{48} The temple law portrays the prophet Ezekiel as a second Moses, who not only makes law but also renews and adjusts it.\textsuperscript{49} Because of this, scholars like Jacob Milgrom and de Vries believe that this section of the book of Ezekiel is greatly influenced by the book of Deuteronomy.\textsuperscript{50}

"Outside the Pentateuch, Ezekiel is the only Old Testament book containing legal texts. More than is the case with the priestly code in the Pentateuch, the legislation in Ezekiel focuses upon the holiness of the sanctuary in order to guarantee the permanent presence of the kāhôd YHWH."\textsuperscript{51} Thus, all the following laws are

\textsuperscript{46} de Vries, 313.
\textsuperscript{47} Block, 591.
\textsuperscript{48} Fredenburg, 379.
\textsuperscript{49} Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, AB 3 (New York: Yale University Press, 1991), 453. Milgrom describes the legislation in Ezekiel as the midrash of the priestly code of the Pentateuch.
\textsuperscript{50} de Vries, 313; Milgrom, 453.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 313.
intended, in various ways, to ensure that impurity remains outside the temple and holiness remains within it.

3.3.1 Instructions for the Altar (Ezek 43:13-27)

Ezek 43:13-27 contains instructions for the altar. These instructions can be divided into two parts. Verses 13-17 contain the factual description of the altar: its dimensions and constructions. Verses 18-27, on the other hand, contain the actual laws of the altar. They explain the procedures necessary for the purification of the altar before it is put into use.\(^52\) This is aimed at sustaining the relationship between God and the house of Israel.

Recall that the altar is earlier mentioned in Ezek 40:47 but is bypassed, probably because it has no use without the presence of the $\text{kabôd YHWH}$ in the temple. Now that the glory has returned, the altar can serve its purpose. Fredenburg notes, "in Ezekiel's and the exiles' ancient Near Eastern context, renewed interaction between a god and its people demanded blood sacrifice on the main altar to the deity."\(^{53}\) This may explain why the first element of temple worship that Ezekiel describes is the altar of burnt offering.

The temple law begins with its altar and its measurements (Ezek 43:13-17).

"The altar appeared to be built in four stages consisting of a base plus three stages."\(^{54}\) The base is one cubit high and one cubit deep: around the edges of the base was a rim of one cubit high (cf. Ezek 43:13). The border of the base is eighteen cubits. The lower edge is two cubits high and sixteen cubits on each side (v. 14). The hearth

\(^{52}\)See Fredenburg, 379-380.

\(^{53}\)Ibid., 380.

\(^{54}\)Cooper, 382.
of the altar is four cubits high. Extending from the top of the hearth are the four horns of the altar (v. 15). The hearth is a square, twelve cubits long and twelve cubits wide (v. 16). The upper ledge is also a square: fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide. The lower ledge likewise is a square: sixteen cubits long and sixteen cubits wide (v. 17). The perfect symmetry of the altar suggests its importance as a place of expiation and atonement. Fredenburg notes:

Such attention to detail serves two functions. First, it underscores one more time the high importance YHWH attaches to his relationship with his people. In this new temple, the altar is figuratively and structurally the focal point of the relationship. That is why its dimensions are given first in this new set of instructions. Secondly, the very measurements of this altar invite comparison with the more familiar Solomonic one.56

On a more theological note, Cooper observes that "the altar was a visible sign of the consequences of sin that encouraged people to confess and repent of deliberate sins,"57 a fact that seems to be echoed in the next segment (Ezek 43:18-19). Thus, after the description of the measurements of the altar, the following segment details its consecration and expiation (Ezek 43:18-27).

This segment begins with the messenger formula in v. 18: "Son of man, thus says the YHWH GOD. ..." Here, two functions of the altar are specified: it provides a

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55 Cooper, 382.
56 Fredenburg, 380.
57 Cooper, 382.
place for presenting whole burnt offerings to YHWH and for performing the blood-
sprinkling ritual (lizrōq ʿālāyw dām). 58 De Vries notes:

Whereas at 43:7 the kābōd YHWH spoke to the prophet, in 43:18, in the
color of the expiation of the altar, YHWH God is mentioned for the first
time (in Chapters 40-48) as the subject. It is in this manner that He
addresses the prophet. The last time that YHWH was called this was in
39:29, the very end of Ezek 1-39. 59

Thus, the divine name, YHWH GOD, appearing again for the first time at this
point of the final vision of the kābōd YHWH (40-48), could be very significant. It
could indicate that the promise YHWH makes in Ezek 39:29 (the last verse before
Ezek 40-48) about Him not hiding His face from Israel is coming true with the
expiation of the altar. 60 One notes that the expiation of the altar comes after the return
of the Holy Presence. But it is striking that the divine presence is not mentioned
during the expiation. The Holy One is only mentioned after the permanent closing of
the outer east gate (cf. Ezek 44:4). 61 Thus the description of the altar expiation "is
bracketed between the pair of announcements that the kābōd YHWH had filled the
temple" (43:5; 44:4). 62

The theological significance of the altar and sacrifices is an important concept
in Ezekiel. Gordon McConville considers this section on the altar to be the central

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58 Cooper, 383. In the Pentateuch, burnt offerings included all the five offerings in Lev 1-7.
"Sprinkling blood" was associated with priestly ordination (Exod 29:16, 20), burnt offerings (Lev 1:5,
11; 9:12), and peace offerings (Lev 3:2, 8; 9:18).

59 de Vries, 314.

60 de Vries, 314.

61 Ibid., 314.

62 Ibid., 314.
section ("midpoint") of Ezek 40-48. He observes that there is an "inward movement" in the chapters until this point. Beginning from here, he notes an "outward movement." According to him, there is a "change of idiom" in 43:13-27 so that rather than describing what Ezekiel sees, it describes the altar and its laws as the very words of God. 63 Cooper, commenting on this, sees the altar as a sign of God's presence among his people (43:27):

It was commemorative of a theophany (Gen 12:7; 26:24–25). It was associated with the idea of holiness, purity, and mercy, especially the horns of the altar (43:15, 20; 1 Kgs 1:50–51; 2:28). The sprinkling of blood on the horns of the altar was a rite of purification (43:18–21). 64

Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that the center of the temple as shown to Ezekiel is not actually the Holy of Holies but is, in fact, the altar. 65 Thomas Renz, in complete agreement with McConville, observes that the altar forms the exact midpoint of the temple. 66 De Vries notes that the position of the altar in this temple vision raises an issue on how to reconcile the relationship "between the Holy of Holies (where the presence of the kāḇōḏ YHWH is thought to be) and the altar." 67 The text does not explicitly make this clear. It suffices to say that the altar is the means of maintaining the purity of the temple and the purity of the people, who allow the ritual of the altar to translate into a lived experience characterized by purity of heart and

64 Cooper, 283-84.
65 de Vries, 315.
67 de Vries, 315.
obedience to God. In this way, the presence of YHWH in the Holy of Holies is not endangered.

In the text, the ritual of consecration and purification of the altar takes eight days. On the first day, the prophet is instructed to give a young bull as a sin offering to the priests who are of the line of Zadok (cf. Ezek 43:19). After the Zadokite priests have slaughtered the animal, the prophet is to take blood and put it on the four horns of the altar (Ezek 43:20). Then, the bull of the sin offering is to be burnt in a designated part of the temple, outside the sanctuary (Ezek 43:21). On the second day, another sin offering of an unblemished he-goat is to be offered to purify the altar in the same manner as the bull (Ezek 43:23). This routine is repeated for seven days (cf. Ezek 43:24-26).

When the seven days of the purification of the altar are over, the priests offer holocaust and peace offerings on the altar; then, says YHWH, "I will accept you" (Ezek 43:27). The "eighth day," according to Hummel, has some significant overtones. He suggests that "in biblical usage, this day can indicate a new creation, the start of a new era in God's work of redemption. Thus circumcision took place on 'the eighth day' (Lev 12:3; see also Gen 17:12)." Without leaning too much on Hummel, "the eighth day," in this context, could signal a new beginning.

3.3.2 Duties of the Prince and the Priests (Ezek 44:1–31)

This subunit can be divided into three segments: (1) the vision of the prince and the gate (44:1-3), (2) the return to the sanctuary (44:4-14), and (3) the Zadokite priesthood (44:15-31).

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68 Fredenburg, 381-82.

69 Hummel, 1261.
3.3.2.1 Vision of the Prince and the Gate (Ezek 44:1–3)

Again, Ezekiel's guide brings him back to the eastern gate of the inner court of the sanctuary. When they arrive, the gate is shut. The prophet hears the voice of the Lord declaring that the gate is to remain shut. The closed gate underscores the promises given in Ezek 43:7-9, which assure that YHWH will remain with His people forever. In other words, the presence of the Holy One will never again depart from the temple, as it had in Ezek 10:4, 18–19 and 11:22–23, as long as the people maintain the sanctity of the temple.70

Another intriguing aspect of the text is the reference to a נַשְׂפָה ("prince") who may sit in the gate to eat in the presence of YHWH. Some associate the "prince" with the Messiah, alluding to Ezek 37:25: "David my servant will be their prince forever." But, despite this reference, Cooper believes that the "prince" of Ezek 44:3 is not the Messiah.71 In our text, "the prince is not presented as a priest but has priests who minister for him. The Messiah is portrayed in the Old Testament prophecy as the coming Priest-King (Zech 6:13). The offices of priest and king are always kept separate because the Messiah is to be the only one in whom these two offices are combined (2 Chr 26:16–21)."72

The observation of Steven Tuell with respect to the נַשְׂפָה ("prince") in Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple is very pertinent here. Tuell believes that the term נַשְׂפָה is given messianic associations because of the "messianic hysteria" that surrounds the biblical appointment of Zerubbabel as the governor of the restored Jerusalem.

70 Hummel, 1265.
71 Cooper, 389.
72 Ibid, 389.
Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah are all identified as nāṣî, "governor" (see Ezra 5:14; Hag 1:1, 14). Thus, in the restored temple of Ezekiel's vision, the nāṣî has an important role in the temple as a patron of the liturgy. The nāṣî, as J. D. Levenson argues, qualifies as an apolitical leader: a godly representative of the messianic King. He will sit in the gate, commune with God, and serve as a guarantor of mercy, justice, and righteousness.

3.3.2.2 Return to the Sanctuary (Ezek 44:4–14)

The guide once again leads the prophet to the entrance of the temple in the inner court by way of the north gate, as the east gate has likely been shut. As he stands in front of the temple, the glory of God fills the sanctuary (v. 4). The text in 44:4 reads like in 43:3, when "the kāḇôḏ YHWH filled the house." Once again, the prophet falls upon his face (44:4; cf. 43:3). It is always an overwhelming experience for the prophet, each time he beholds the kāḇôḏ YHWH. Zimmerli states that the prophet's experience of the glory of God "filling the temple" does not necessarily mean that there are two separate fillings (43:3 and 44:4). It simply means that the glory had been there all along. For McConville, the repetition in 44:4 indicates that "the new

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75 de Vries, 317.

76 Zimmertl, Ezekiel 2, 444. Also see Cooper, 391.
reference to the glory of God simply makes clear that it is the return of God to the
temple that serves as a basis for the regulations to follow."\textsuperscript{77}

Again, just like Ezek 40:4, in Ezek 44:5, the prophet is instructed to pay close
attention to what he sees and hears. There are four imperatives in the divine
instructions given to the prophet in verse 5. Three are auditory ("pay strict attention
..." "listen intently..." and "be attentive ...") while one is visual ("look carefully"). This
tells us that the emphasis of this instruction is auditory — "pay attention."It is no
longer about the abomination he saw in the previous vision; now it is about the status
and law of the temple (Ezek 44:5b). Block sees this verse as a re-commissioning of
the prophet because of its link to Ezek 2:8.\textsuperscript{78}

Ezek. 44:6a is the only time in Chaps. 40-48 that the people of Israel are called
\textit{rebellious}. The first time is at the prophet's commissioning (2:5ff.). This obviously
confirms Block's argument that Ezek 44:5 is a mini re-commissioning of the prophet.
Hence, we can "view 44:4-6a as a reconfirmation of the prophet's mission, a
confirmation which like his original sending comes in the context of the appearing of
the kāḥōḏ YHWH."\textsuperscript{79}

Following this introduction (44:4-6a) comes a reiteration of the past cultic
offenses, namely the pollution of the holy space (44:6b-8). Now the text adds a new
dimension to the cultic offenses. It is not only the syncretism we saw in the previous
vision. Now the cultic offenses also include the bringing of those who are
uncircumcised and unqualified to minister into the sanctuary. As a result of this
offense, the sanctuary has become desecrated and the covenant of YHWH has been

\textsuperscript{77} McConville, 18.
\textsuperscript{78} Block, 620.
\textsuperscript{79} de Vries, 317.
broken (44:7). In 44: 7-9, the text makes reference to "foreigners who are uncircumcised in heart and flesh." The emphasis here is not on the fact that they are foreigners but on the fact that they are uncircumcised, especially in heart. Elsewhere in the scriptures, Israel is told to focus on the heart and not on the external (cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6; Joel 2:13). Thus, in the future dispensation, none who are uncircumcised in heart should be permitted a role in guarding the sanctuary (44:8). It also appears that the "detestable practices" consisted of employing priests unqualified to minister before YHWH.

As a result of these cultic offenses, the Levites are subordinated. They stray from their priestly responsibility when Israel departs from YHWH to pursue idols (cf. Ezek 44:10-14). Thus, the priesthood is now entrusted to the Zadokites, probably from their past faithfulness from which the Levites strayed. Despite their failings, the Levites are permitted a part in the temple service, though a subordinate one. They will never be in charge of the altar again (cf. 44:10-14).

3.3.2.3 The Zadokite Priesthood (Ezek 44:15–31)

In this segment, the care of the altar is entrusted to the Zadokites for their past faithfulness where the Levites strayed. Only the Zadokites may enter the sanctuary of YHWH, that is, the Holy of Holies. However, their status alone does not automatically grant them the privilege of entering the sanctuary. They must keep to certain rules and regulations. They must enter the innermost court in linen garments only. They shall have linen turbans on their head and linen undergarments on their loins. They shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat. When going out of the sanctuary to meet with the people, they must take off these clothing in one of

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80 Ibid., 317.
the chambers in the sanctuary and put them on again when they come to minister in
the sanctuary (cf. Ezek 44:17-19).

Fredenburg sees most of these regulations as adaptations of the Mosaic
instructions for priests (cf. Leviticus 21).⁸¹ He adds that "the fundamental purpose of
these regulations was to teach YHWH's people the difference between the holy and
the common and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean (cf.
Ezek 44:23; cf. Lev. 10:10, 11)."⁸² The Zadokites are also charged to be exemplary in
the holding of the feasts and Sabbaths (cf. Ezek 44:23). De Vries opines that "the
desecration of the Sabbaths had been one of the reasons why the judgment of the exile
had come and why the sanctuary had been destroyed (20:12 ff.; 22:8, 26; 23:38). In
the future, the Sabbaths will be no more profaned and the sanctuary no more
polluted."⁸³ It could be that these were part of the sins of the Levites; they were never
exemplary when it came to the Feasts and Sabbaths. They may have allowed the
people to approach the sacred Feasts and days of obligation the way that the people
wanted. Now, the newly promoted order of the Zadokite priesthood must ensure that
the Feasts and Sabbaths are no longer profaned. We may conclude that the summary
of all these regulations and the services of the priests stand in the context of keeping
and guarding the holiness of the sanctuary as a dwelling-place of the kūhôḏ YHWH.

⁸¹ Fredenburg, 386.
⁸² Fredenburg, 386.
⁸³ de Vries, 319.
Joseph Blenkinsopp observes that this segment of the literary unit "anticipates the full account of the allotment of land (47:13–48:29) and is excerpted from it, perhaps, because it leads into the regulations concerning the civic leader." Inside the land of Israel, there is a portion, a square territory of 25,000 by 25,000 cubits that is regarded as the "Holy Portion" because it is the special possession of YHWH. It catches the eyes that this sacred portion is called qôdes qâḏāśīm—"Holy ofHolies" (45:3; cf. 48:12). Is it the same with the most inner court of the sanctuary identified as qôdes haqâḏâśīm—"The Holy of Holies" (cf. Ezek 41:4)? Semantically, both are closely related; the only difference is that the latter has a definite article, denoting the place where the Holy Presence, the kâbôḏ YHWH, is located in the temple. To differentiate the latter from the former, most scholars translate the former as the "Most Holy Place," or what Blenkinsopp calls a "holy no-man's-land." This underscores the holiness of the temple and its environs. This sacred space is also a privileged place for priests, the ministers of the sanctuary. Within it, the priests are each given a strip of 25,000 by 10,000 cubits for their homes (cf. Ezek 45:4-5).

Parallel to the sacred space is a portion of twenty-five thousand by five thousand cubits which will be allotted to the entire house of Israel. It will be a property of the entire city (v. 6). The prince shall have a portion bordering on both sides of the sacred tract and the city property (v. 7). The prince shall receive another portion of the land (v. 8). The prince is given a double portion to prevent the

84 Joseph Blenkinsopp, Ezekiel, IB (Louisville: Knox Press), 222.
85 Block, 652; Cooper, 396; Fredenburg, 389.
86 Blenkinsopp, 222.
87 de Vries, 320.
experience of the past, when the kings of Israel and Judah oppressed the people and confiscated their lands (cf. 1 Kgs 21:1-16). The prince will also oversee the allotments of the land for all the tribes. 88

The prince, as we have seen, has a very limited access to the sanctuary. Only the priests enjoy more free access to the sanctuary. This is a kind of separation of powers, so that the previous abuses that led to the departure of the divine presence will be prevented. 89

3.5 Ordinances for the Worship Service (Ezek 45:9-46:24)

This segment (45:9-46:24) enacts laws for festivals and sacrifices, with accent laid on the prince’s responsibilities. Beginning with the prophetic message formula kōḇ-šāmār ʾādōnāy yhwh ("Thus says the YHWH God"), the princes are charged to enforce the law. In addition, we read that the princes are also charged to end violence and oppression and to do what is right and just. Alluding to the abuse of the tools of the market (cf. Lev 19:35; Deut 25:13–16; Prov 11:1; Amos 8:5; Mic 6:10–12; cf. Lev. 19:36), the princes are called to ensure the honest use of weights and measures (45:10-12).

Next, the levies that the house of Israel must pay to the prince are stipulated (cf. Ezek 45:13-17). These offerings are meant for the operations of the temple. Zimmerli notes that this is not a tithe, but rather a provision for the service of the tabernacle (Ex 30:11-16). 90 It shall be the duty of the prince to provide the holocausts, the grain

88 Cooper, 397. Also see Fredenburg, 390.


90 Zimmerli, 477.
offerings, and the libations for the Feasts of new moon and Sabbaths, on all the
festivals of the house of Israel. He shall offer sin and peace offerings to make
atonement to the house of Israel (cf. Ezek 45:17). 91

In 45:18–20, we see a description of an annual rite of purification for the temple.
On the first and seventh day of the first month, an unblemished young bull must be
used to purify the sanctuary. Then, the priests shall take some of the bulls’ blood (the
blood of the sin offering) and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners
of the ledge of the altar and the doorposts of the gate of the inner court. 92 On the first
day of the seventh month, the same ceremony is to be repeated for those who have
sinned through inadvertence or ignorance.

Regarding the date of the purification, Ezekiel differs from that of the priestly
code of the Pentateuch. In the Pentateuch, “the annual cleansing of the sanctuary is to
be performed on the tenth of the seventh month” 93 (see Lev 16 — Day of Atonement).
Despite the differences between the two calendars, they share a common assumption.
The prophet does provide for the expiatory rite connected with the Levitical Day of
Atonement (cf. Ezek 45:18–20. Also, in both Ezekiel and the Pentateuch, it is the
people who contribute to the maintenance of the temple. 94 However, in Ezekiel, this
annual purification of the sanctuary is brought into close connection with the Feast of
Passover. 95

On the fourteenth day of the first month, the feast of Passover shall be observed.
On that day, the prince shall offer for himself and on behalf of the people of the land a

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91 de Vries, 322.
92 Ibid, 322.
93 Ibid., 322.
94 Vawter; Hoppe, 203.
95 de Vries, 322.
bull as a sin offering (cf. Ezek 45:21-22). This is to last for seven days. During that week, no unleavened bread is to be eaten. Ezek 45:22-25 then stresses the liturgical obligations of the prince. While in the Pentateuch (Ex. 12–13) the victim for the sacrifice is an unblemished lamb, here, the victim is an unblemished bull on the first day. On the subsequent days, the sacrificial victims are bulls, rams and goats. Block, noting the theological importance in the difference between Ezekiel and the Pentateuch, argues:

Although Ezekiel retains the label of the ancient rite of Passover, his ordinance calls for a dramatic transformation of the festival. Like the original Passover (Exod. 12–13), Ezekiel's celebration has inaugural significance. Through this celebration the nation of Israel becomes the people of God. Whereas the function of the original Passover sacrifice was apotropaic (to ward off YHWH), however, Ezekiel's is purgative.  

This Ezekiel reform is preoccupied with holiness through the maintenance of the sanctity of the temple (v. 20) and the worshipers (v. 22) so that divine presence may be guaranteed. Through the Passover celebration, the temple complex becomes sacred space, and the Israelites become a holy people.

Recall that in Ezek 44:3, after YHWH's kāḇôd enters the temple, the eastern gate is shut on the principle of controlled admittance to God's holiness. Then, we are told that the prince is to eat bread before YHWH (cf. Ezek 44:3). But from every indication, there are other activities within the gate structure. In Ezek 46:1, we read that the gate towards the east of the inner court is to remain closed throughout the six

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96 Block, 667.

97 Block, 667.
working days. But on the Sabbath and the day of the New Moon, it shall be opened.

The prince will enter from outside by the way of the vestibule. He shall remain standing by the entrance of the gate as the priests offer his holocausts and peace offering. On these days (Feasts and Sabbaths), the people can also worship before YHWH at the door. The gate is to remain open until evening (cf. Ezek 46:1-2). This underlines the special significance of the Sabbaths and the feasts. However, it is still clear that access to the divine presence is limited. Blenkinsopp observes:

the lines are clearly drawn between the priest in the inner court and the laity in the outer court, with the secular leader in the gate acting as a link and go-between: both the bearer of the gift to the altar and the transmitter of blessing back to the people whom he represents.  

Nevertheless, this limited access to the divine is not a restriction on the divine Himself because the glory of His presence is inexhaustible; it fills the earth. It is meant to instill into the consciousness of the people the importance of maintaining holiness in order to access the divine.

Next, the sacrifices required to be brought on the Sabbath are described (46:4-7). This is followed by the modes of entry into the holy place. The prince will enter and depart by the vestibule of the gate. If the people of the land who come to the presence of YHWH to worship on the day of festivals enter by the north gate, then they shall leave by the south gate. If they enter by the south gate, then they shall leave by the north gate. Ultimately, the people will leave from the opposite direction through which they enter (cf. Ezek 46:8-10). Ezek 46:11 reiterates the sacrifices already stipulated for the festivals described in 45:18-25.  

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98 Blenkinsopp, 277.

99 de Vries, 323.
The prince in Ezekiel is able to own and increase his properties, similar to the pre-exilic kings (2 Sam 24:24; 1 Kgs 16:24). "The prince will exercise the same right of purchase and will be able to increase his land holdings by purchase of available property (v. 16)." If the prince gives a son property, then this property will be his in perpetuity. However, if the prince makes a gift of part of his property to one of his servants, then the servant must return it to him in the "year of release" (46:17; cf. Lev. 25:10). The prince is specifically prohibited from taking property that belongs to the people, evicting them from their properties (v. 18). Cooper rightly notes that "materialism is always a barrier to effective worship. The regulations concerning property and ownership were designed to discourage covetousness and encourage recognition of God's ownership of all things" (cf. Ezek 46:16–18).

From the foregoing, one may say that the prince in this last part of the book of Ezekiel is like "a mayor for YHWH. Ultimately, there is only one King, YHWH."

3.6 The Path of the River that Rises in the Temple Flowing Eastwards

(Ezek 47:1-12)

From a structural point of view, Ezek. 47:1-12 can be divided into two parts: vv. 1-7 and 8-12. While the first part is basically narrative in form, the second part is a divine speech. Ezek 47:1-12 can be classified as a vision report. As Block rightly

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100 Cooper, 404.
101 Cooper, 405. See also de Vries, 323-324.
notes, however, "YHWH's interpretation transforms the vision into a prophecy of salvation."\textsuperscript{103}

The scene begins with the prophet being brought back, supposedly by the heavenly guide, to the entrance of the temple, where he sees water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple towards the east. The water flows from the south of the altar.\textsuperscript{104}

The guide leads the prophet by the north gate, probably because the east gate is closed (cf. Ezek 44:1-3). Around the outside, under the wall of the south gate, Ezekiel sees water again trickling down (cf. Ezek 47:1-2).\textsuperscript{105} Block notes that the prophet describes "the trickling action of the water with a hapax, mēpakkīm, an onomatopoeic formation from pak, 'bottle,' conveying the sound of liquid gurgling out of a flask."\textsuperscript{106}

According to Blenkinsopp, and rightly so, "the extensive series of injunctions dealing with different cultic functions and actions (43:6–46:24) tends to obscure the logic of the narrative according to which the water flowing from inside the temple is the direct consequence of the return of the kabod YHWH to the inner sanctuary (43:1-5)."\textsuperscript{107} With the return of the kabod YHWH, the land is renewed by life-giving water.

"Just as the kabod YHWH illuminates the land in Ezek 43:2, so too the water of the

\textsuperscript{103}Block, 690.
\textsuperscript{104}Lind, 350.
\textsuperscript{105}Zimmerli, 511.
\textsuperscript{106}Block, 691.
\textsuperscript{107}Blenkinsopp, 230.
temple stream renews the land. Thus, the presence of God is the source of life-giving and healing waters, which flow from his sanctuary.

Starting from the east gate, Ezekiel is asked to wade through ankle-deep water, after a measure of a thousand cubits. The heavenly guide pauses at a thousand cubits intervals to measure another thousand cubits as he brings the prophet along. At the second measurement, the water reaches the prophet's knee. At the next thousand cubits, the water reaches his waist. The guide measures another thousand cubits, and the water becomes a river that the prophet cannot wade through (cf. Ezek 47:3-5). De Vries notes that the river is reminiscent of the river of paradise (Gen. 2:9-10), a symbol of the presence of God.

As the prophet follows the heavenly guide along the banks of the river, the guide asks him, "Son of man, have you seen this?" (v. 6). Ezekiel sees numerous trees on both sides. The trees bear beautiful fruits and their leaves are medicinal. The river flows into the eastern district and empties into the sea. Anything it touches brims with life and healing (cf. Ezek 47:7-12).

Cooper opines:

that it would be an error to regard this fertilizing, healing stream as a mere symbol of heaven. This would overstep the limits of the Old Testament since the Hebrews had no conception of a transcendent sphere of existence such as heaven. The final abode for humanity was considered

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108 de Vries, 325.
109 Ibid, 326.
to be still on earth. God came down and dwelt with humans; they were not
translated to abide with God.\(^{111}\)

However, the presence of the divine with humans on earth gives the earth the
attributes of heaven as evident in this text. In fact, Andrew Bruce Davidson,
commenting on this text more than a century ago, observes that, in these bequeathed
heavenly attributes on earth, representative of blessings, "the Hebrews saw in the
token and the sacraments, God's favor and presence with them."\(^{112}\)

3.7 Overview of the division and the boundaries of the land and the gates of the city

In the final part of Ezekiel's last vision of the kabod YHWH, national
boundaries and the actual division of the land are described. De Vries interestingly
suggests that "having been renewed, the land can now be divided."\(^{113}\) The divine
speech in Ezek 47:13-23 contains YHWH's first promise of a new land for his
redeemed people. In Ezek 47:13-14, it is specified that Joseph is to receive a double
portion, and the other tribes are to receive equal portions. The double portion allotted
to Joseph echoes Gen 48:5-6, 22. Interestingly, foreigners are granted the same status
in the new covenant as native Israelites: they receive an equal share of the
inheritance.\(^{114}\)

\(^{111}\) Cooper, 414.


\(^{113}\) de Vries, 326.

\(^{114}\) Hummel, 1350.
Cooper observes that four elements stand out in this allotment of lands. (1) God Himself will make the allotments (v. 13). This contrasts with the allotments of Joshua's conquest, determined by a casting of lots (Josh 14:1–5). (2) All allotments are based on original tribal names, thus reaching back into the earliest history of Israel and beginning to restore familial and clan identity (v. 13). (3) The allotments are made in partial fulfillment of the divine promise made to Abraham (Gen 12:1–3; 15:7–21; 17:1–14) and the promise of a double portion to Joseph (v. 14; Gen 48:5–6, 22). (4) And finally, the allotments of the land to the other tribes (apart from Joseph) are of equal size.  

The conclusion to Ezekiel's boundary list begins with a summary (v. 21) that reiterates the introduction of the allotment of land (vv. 13–14). Block believes that Ezek 47:22-23 represent Ezekiel's answer to Num. 34:13–15, but with a creative new twist. Whereas the earlier boundary list had been followed by a note on a fringe territory, the Transjordanian region occupied by the two and one-half tribes, Ezekiel concludes his description with a comment on fringe people within the Israelite community, the gērîm, (resident aliens).  

This suggests that the new division of lands bespeaks equity and eliminates discrimination against foreign residents, thereby making the presence of the divine open to all, and no longer the prerogative of the 12 tribes of Israel. However, Hummel notes that this inclusivity is based on unity of faith instead of on pluralistic indifference. What counts is praxis, or practical relationship with YHWH, not nationality or land. An Israelite in the land of Judah who does not show true faith in

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115 Cooper, 416.
116 Block, 717.
117 Hummel, 1359.
YHWH will be deprived of the privilege of experiencing the glorious presence of YHWH as demonstrated in chapter three of this study (Ezek 8-11).

Meanwhile, the instruction to allot the land equally among the twelve tribes in 47:13-14, 21 is finally realized in chapter 48:1-29. Block observes that "the new tribal allocations are arranged with the sons born from concubine handmaidens placed at the northern and southern extremes, while those born to Rachel and Leah are situated in an equal number closer toward the sacred precinct."\(^{118}\)

Ezek 48: 8-22 expands on the initial description of the sacred area in Ezek 45:1-7. Bearing in mind that repetition can hold new insights, we watch out for a new element that may be added to this repetition. While it looks like a repeat of the previous description, there is obviously something new. The people of Israel are to present this land grant, which emanated from YHWH, back to Him as a special gift. This shows that all land belongs to YHWH; the people are to possess it in trust and to live in accordance with the dictate of the divine Landlord.\(^{119}\)

Worthy of note again is the fact that in the old dispensation, the city where the kabod YHWH was tabernacled was an enclave of Judah. But now, in this new dispensation, the city will be at the geographic center of all the tribes (cf. Ezek48:19). But the temple remains insulated from the tribal territories to maintain the holiness of the divine presence. This, according to Allen, indicates "respect for the otherness of the immanent God."\(^{120}\) But, on a theological note, it shows that no one has a monopoly on the divine: not even the priests, who minister at the altar. Everyone has a share in the holy portion—each has access to the divine presence (cf. Ezek 46:2-3).

\(^{118}\) Cf. Block, 723-724.

\(^{119}\) Fredenburg, 404.

\(^{120}\) Allen, 286.
Ezekiel's last vision of the kabod YHWH concludes with an account of the City of God, which is described as a city of perfect proportions.\textsuperscript{121} Each wall on the four sides of the city is the same length (4,500 cubits), and each wall has three gates. Cooper believes that "the existence of twelve gates into the city places an emphasis on accessibility."\textsuperscript{122} Also, one notes that the gate is named after the ancestral heads and not after the tribes. This implies that access to God is based not on corporate identity, but on personal response.

The vision is brought to its theological climax with the renaming of the city. Note that in ancient times, the meaning of names tended to be closely linked with the reality of the person or thing that they designated. So here, why would God not identify the new city as Jerusalem? This likely indicates that, in the new dispensation of the covenant, the experience of divine presence is not confined strictly to Jerusalem. Rather, any city and people who show trust in God and obey his ways shall be called YHWH-Shammah — YHWH is there (Ezek 48:35). His presence is not limited to the holy of holies in the sanctuary. No, he also dwells in the city whose name preserves the promise, YHWH is there!

4. Summary and Conclusion

In the previous chapter, we saw the kabod YHWH depart from the temple to the mountain situated in the eastern part of the city. This left us wondering, "Was God rejecting the temple as the locus of divine presence?" If so, then, "Where is God found?" Ezek 40-48 is a response to this theological impasse. Ezekiel quite explicitly


\textsuperscript{122}Cooper, 423.
links the different episodes of the vision in 40-48 to that of 1-3 and, more specifically, to Ezek 8-11 when he announces in 43:3: "The vision is like the vision I had seen when YHWH came to destroy the city, the very same vision I had seen by the Chebar Canal." Thus, the divine departure from the temple in chapters 8-11 is resolved when God returns to the temple in chapter 43, which serves as the essence of the literary unit.

We saw how the heavenly guide took Ezekiel on a tour of the new temple and city with detailed instructions for the house of Israel (cf. Ezek 40:3, 4, 45; 41:4, 22; 42:13). At the end of the survey in chapter 42, the building remains unoccupied with no activities. But with the advent of the divine presence to consecrate the temple and the city, worship and cultic activities come to life.

The effect of the Holy presence is demonstrated in the final stage of the vision when the prophet sees the mystic waters flowing from the temple as a symbol of blessing reminiscent of paradise. This is confirmed at the end of the vision, as the generic city is qualified as YHWH-Shammah — YHWH is there (Ezek 48:35). Thus, the book ends in a magnificently theocentric manner — The Lord is there. Where? He is no longer restricted to the temple. Paul M. Joyce notes that "this rendition emphasizes the location of the Holy, but also diffusing and spreading it."123 What matters for Ezekiel in the final analysis is not the place, be it temple or city, but rather the Holy God who dwells in the midst of his people.

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CHAPTER SIX

THE THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATION OF EZEKIEL'S THEOLOGY OF DIVINE PRESENCE IN THE LIGHT OF SOME CRITICAL SPATIAL THEORIES

1. Introduction

Until now, we have studied Ezekiel's theology of divine presence starting from the understanding of the topic in question in the texts of the ancient Near East. This prepared the ground for our exegetical analysis of the aforementioned theology in the visions of Ezekiel. In the last three chapters, we saw how Ezekiel's *mar'òt ?êlôhîm* (visions of God) depict the *kāḇôḏ YHWH* moving from the scared space to the non-sacred space and back. These movements bring to the fore Ezekiel's novelty with respect to the divine presence. While the community in Judah considered those in exile as "other" because they had no temple and were not within the geographical location called "Judah," these movements of the *kāḇôḏ YHWH* have reconfigured the exile space such that the excluded become included and the outsiders become insiders.

Thus, this chapter will discuss the theological implication of the study so far. I will lean on the Critical Spatial Theories of Edward W. Soja and Wesley A. Kort, amongst others, to show how praxis and mobility in the visions of Ezekiel bridge the gap between the sacred and "non-sacred" spaces. This insight demonstrates that the divine cannot be restricted to one particular space and neither can God/YHWH be monopolized.
To achieve my objective, I will interpret the *exile* space as *thirdspace*. Since the exile motif is theologically rich and entrenched in the formation of Israel's self-consciousness, I will focus on the importance of space and memory, looking at the place of the temple/Jerusalem in the consciousness of Israel through the ages. Then I will turn attention to the significance of the exile space—in its *firstspace*, *secondspace* and *thirdspace* elements. In discussing the exile as *thirdspace*, I will show how praxis determines the presence or absence of the Divine.

The fruits of this study will subsequently shed some light on religion in our contemporary world, especially as it is practiced among the three *Abrahamic* faiths. The aim is to show how this study, on one hand, challenges the religious tension and religious *exclusivism* that characterizes our world today and, on the other, lends its voice to the efforts and progress made so far in the area of inter-religious dialogue.

2. Critical Spatial Theory

The present study is influenced by works published in the field of Critical Spatial Theory. These works have not only inspired biblical scholars, but in recent decades, the theoretical perspectives of this theory have been applied by scholars of biblical and religious studies in their respective works.¹ Liv Ingeborg Lied observes that in recent times, there has been a rise of theoretical interests in the human conception of space and place.² He further notes:

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²Ibid., 13.
This field of theoretical debate has primarily developed in the social sciences, but contributions have also come from other academic disciplines such as philosophy, architecture, and geography.3

Among the scholars who have greatly ignited the interest in space and spatiality are E.W. Soja and Wesley A. Kort.4 According to Lied, "the works of the French philosopher Lefebvre5 and the American geographer Soja6 have held a special position in the field of biblical and religious studies. This is likely due to the investment in their works by the scholars affiliated with the productive SBL-forum: Construction of Ancient Space Seminar."7

Soja and his master, Lefebvre, propose "a change of spatial epistemology."8 They do this in reaction to modern notions that interpret space as "passively-existing

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3Ibid., 13.


5Henri Lefebvre's La Production de L'espace (Paris: Anthropos, 1974) was published as early as 1974. It was however mostly unknown to the wider circles of scholars until it was translated into English in 1991 (H. Lefebvre, The Production of Space (trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).


materiality. For Soja, we create and form space by our practices. As such, space is not like an empty box; it is a cultural and social construct.

Another important contribution of Soja is his focus on lived experience and social praxis as the decisive aspect of human spatiality. Soja sees space as both material and as a product of imagination, and he describes the reconfiguration of both the material and the mental as *thirdspace*. According to him, this space "is a product of a *thirding* of the spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the material and the mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning." Kjetil Hafstad recognizes a "trialectics" perspective — a triple dialectic that is more inherently spatial in Soja's description of space. Lied's felicitous representation of Soja captures the idea even better. In his words, Soja sees space as the "comprehensive recombination of material perceptions ('Firstspace') and mental conceptions of space ('Secondspace') in lived experience ('Thirdspace')."

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9 Lied, 14.


11 Lied, 14.


13 Ibid., 11.

14 Ibid., 11.


Furthermore, Wesley Kort adds another nuance to Critical Spatial Theory. He observes that place-relations are often valued at the expense of mobility and the temporal associations carried by mobility. Indeed, this evaluation of place-relations over mobility often implies a contrast between attitudes that are in some way or to some degree judged as traditional and "sacred" in contrast to mobility and temporality, which are judged as modern and "profane" or "non-sacred." Kort further notes that "many studies and literatures have ignored the value of mobility, and have thus overvalued the less mobile by assuming that rootedness is morally and spiritually superior."

The high value currently placed on rootedness affects the status of the category of "sacred space." It becomes easy to pit "sacred space" against the "profane." Kort alludes to the work of Mircea Eliade as an example, holding that Eliade "continues to exert influence not because of the Idealism of his phenomenology of sacred space but because he posits sacred space as a contrary to modern history, which is profane." Eliade says in the beginning of his work, *The Sacred and the Profane*, that "the first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposite of the profane." Kort concludes that the theories of sacred space, if they are to regain substance, should be

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17 By "place-relations" Kort means human attitude towards a particular geographical location. This is what Soja technically calls "praxis." See Kort, 33-34.
18 Wesley A. Kort, "Sacred/Profane and an Adequate Theory of Human Place-Relations," 33.
19 Ibid, 34.
20 Ibid., 34-35.
based on a more adequate theory of positive place-relations rather than on history constructed as sacred space's negative contrary.\textsuperscript{22}

If we begin our investigation of sacred space from the concept of Soja's \textit{praxis} or Kort's positive \textit{place-relations} rather than the sacred/profane dichotomy, then we will realize, as Larry E. Shiner says, that "space is a homogenous continuum ... Homogeneity means that every point is of equal value to every other point, that no direction has any privilege over any other, that space is continuous and infinite."\textsuperscript{23} This does not mean that there are no places of awe. Places exist where we feel compelled to "take off our shoes" because of a perceived connection with the transcendent. However, it does not also diminish the possibility of a supernatural encounter in places that are not that awe inspiring.

It is important to admit, as Lied rightly observes, that "problems may also emerge when scholars apply spatial theories developed in the social sciences to discuss the spatiality of ancient texts"\textsuperscript{24} like the book of Ezekiel. Commenting on the problem that could emerge when using critical modern theories on ancient text, Elizabeth A. Clark notes that studies of ancient texts differ from studies of contemporary social processes.\textsuperscript{25} However, she adds that ancient texts can still benefit handsomely from critical theory.\textsuperscript{26} In consonance with this, Lied observes that "scholars of biblical and religious studies engage with ancient texts that are often

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22}Wesley A. Kort, "Sacred/Profane and an Adequate Theory of Human Place-Relations," 34-35.
  \item \textsuperscript{24}Lied, 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 8.
\end{itemize}
highly literary, theological, and philosophical works, and none of the ideas expressed in these works can possibly be untouched by language.\textsuperscript{27} But one thing that cannot be denied is the fact that the spatial theories from the social sciences give us some insights on how space can be negotiated and imagined. They tell us "how space was an integral part of the stories told and the rhetoric that promoted the point of view of the work, and of those who produced and engaged with it."\textsuperscript{28}

3. The Theological Implication of the Movements of the $\text{kab\text{\textbar}od}$ YHWH from the Sacred to "Non Sacred" Spaces in the visions of Ezekiel

To understand the theological implication of the divine movements from the temple in Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon in the visions of Ezekiel, it will be pertinent to understand, first, how the world of the ancient Near East saw and understood "exile" and second, the place Jerusalem and its temple held in the consciousness of the average Jew.

Dalit Rom-Shiloni notes that exile was a military punishment forced upon peoples, and usually designated the last stage in a war.\textsuperscript{29} According to Rom-Shiloni, "subjugating peoples and territories led the neo-Assyrian, and later on, the neo-Babylonian empires to rearrange daily life at both the center and the periphery of their

\textsuperscript{27} Lied, 15. Lied also observed that these texts (the works on Critical Spatial Theories) neither passively reflect social realities of antiquity, nor do they transparently bring us into contact with the once real world of that time.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 15-16.

\textsuperscript{29} Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Ezekiel as the voice of the Exiles and Constructor of the Exilic Community," \textit{HebrewUnionCollegeAnnual} 76 (2005), 1. Rom - Shiloni also observed that "exile" had become an international imperial policy in the neo-Assyrian period, mainly under Tiglath-Pileser III (745-72 B.C.E.) and his successors. Also see B. Oded, \textit{Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire} (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1979), 18-32,41-74.
domains in diverse ways. Exile in the ancient Near Eastern world was mostly partial. Not all the defeated and captured peoples were taken into exile. In most cases, some were taken into captivity while others remained in the homeland. With respect to this, Rom-Shiloni notes:

Deportations from Israel and Judah, reported in the biblical literature as occurring in the course of the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E., appear to accord with this international policy and the overall experience of peoples in the Ancient Near East (cf. 2 Kgs 15-17 and 24-25)

Historically, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah experienced a number of exiles. Worthy of note was the exile of 720 B.C.E., the exile of the northern kingdom of Israel at the hand of the Assyrians. Those exiled were supposedly deported and scattered throughout the empire, although biblical archaeology has shown that many migrated to the southern kingdom of Judah. Another important exile in the history of Israel as a people was the exile of the southern kingdom of Judah, otherwise known as the Babylonian deportations. In 597 B.C.E., the noble members of the society in the southern kingdom of Judah, including the prophet Ezekiel, were exiled during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. In 586 B.C.E., when the temple was

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30 Ibid., 1-2. Also D. S. Vanderhooft discussed the neo-Babylonian policy of exile, highlighting differences of interests and administrative organization (The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets, HSM 59 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 81-114.


32 Rom-Shiloni, 2.


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destroyed, a new batch of the Judean exiles arrived in Babylon. But there was a significant number of Judeans who remained behind in Judah.

Alluding to biblical sources, Rom-Shiloni observes that the event of the exile divided the Judean people into two communities, the Exiles with King Jehoiachin in Babylon on the one hand, and "The People who Remained in the Land" under King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 40:6), on the other. 35

For the exiled community, living in exile, outside their homeland, posed a theological crisis. A crisis that is poignantly captured by the Psalmist: "By the Rivers of Babylon we sat mourning and weeping when we remembered Zion. On the poplars of that land we hung up our harps. There our captors asked us for the words of a song; our tormentors, for a joyful song: "Sing for us a song of Zion!" But how could we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land? If I forget you Jerusalem, let my right hand wither. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy" (Ps 137:4-6, NAB). Thus, living outside the Promised Land without the temple was indeed a crisis of faith for the exiles. The ongoing existence of the temple and the daily life in Jerusalem advantaged the remnant community, who saw the exiles as the outcasts or better put, as "distant from YHWH" (Ezek 11:15). Following the Priestly and the Deuteronomistic concepts of exile, the community in Jerusalem believed the exile community was punished for their sins (Deuteronomy 4:25-28; 8:19-20; Leviticus 18:24-30; 20:22-24). In other words, the temple and Jerusalem became for them the sign of election, as exile represents for them a sign of divine punishment.

Unlike the exile space, Jerusalem, in the history of Jewish religion, is a holy city, a *locus sanctus*, or an *axis mundi*\(^{36}\) associated with historical events and eschatological expectations. It was the place for God to deal with God's people and to be a focal center of God's restored people.

Emile Benveniste, in his study of the ancient European languages, particularly Latin and Greek, observes that Biblical Hebrew does not differentiate the idea of the sacred from that of holiness, unlike Latin and Greek.\(^{37}\) In Hebrew, both notions are rendered solely by *qodeš* and words composed from that same root. In the semantic field of Hebrew, according to Francis Schmidt, sacredness is situated between the positive and the negative poles.\(^{38}\) In his words:

positively, *qodeš* refers to that which is in a relationship of belonging to
the divine, that which is consecrated to it. Negatively, *qodeš* is defined by
opposition to the profane, *tāmē*.”\(^{39}\)

Far from being an autonomous field, the sacred, in which holy objects or sanctified persons circulate, is only understood in relation to the profane.\(^{40}\) Thus,

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\(^{36}\)A perceived center of the world, where Heaven and Earth are connected.


\(^{39}\)Ibid., 90. One of the most characteristic formulations of this opposition is found in Lev 10:10 and Ezra 22:26; 44:23.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., 90.
sacred and profane are characterized by their *proximity to the Divine*. Jerusalem and its temple are sacred because, in the eyes of the biblical Jews, God dwells there.

The temple is believed to be the epicenter of holiness because it is the abode of the divine and the primary locus of divine presence. This understanding of the temple is evident in Jewish religious history. The first book of Maccabees recorded an event that happened around 165 BCE. The story was about Judas Maccabeus, son of Mattathias, a priest, who set up camp at *Mizpah* to the north of Jerusalem. He and his brothers fasted and wore sack clothes. Their faces were turned towards heaven: what were they to do since the abode of the Divine had been profaned? The foreigners had profaned the temple. These penitential acts show how important the temple was to them.

Also, in the book of Baruch, we read about the man, Baruch, who, "wasted from fasting, his clothing torn, climbs the steps of the temple mount and goes to sit before the doors that the sun lights up in the morning." He laments:

> Why from now on sow in the countryside? Why should the vine give wine? What good are the reservoirs for rain, of what use the heat of the sun? Why should the moon continue to set the sequence of months? Of what use are marriages and births? Since the Meeting Place with the Divine is destroyed, "how can they still speak of beauty, how can there still be question of grace!" (*2 Bar. 10:17*).}

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41 Ibid., 86. Cf. also 1 Macc. 3:46–59.
42 Ibid., 86. Also see *2 Bar.* 10:5–19.
43 Cf. Ibid., 86-87.
This lament of Baruch echoes the plight of the people of Israel because the epicenter of their relationship with YHWH has been destroyed. In fact, in the two examples above, the main theological question is: since the primary locus of divine presence is destroyed, where and how can we encounter the Divine?

The prophet Haggai expressed similar sentiment. In 520 B.C. the Jews who returned from the exile in Babylonia had encountered formidable obstacles in their efforts to rebuild the temple and re-establish Jewish life in Judah. Schmidt captured this sentiment while paraphrasing Haggai's words. Imagine, Haggai asks the priests, "that someone carries consecrated meat—that is to say a sacrificial portion—in the fold of one's garment. If that garment comes in contact with vegetables or bread or other food, do you think that these foods will be made holy? No, definitely not." Haggai made the same analogy, this time with respect to a man who is made unclean by contact with a dead body but goes ahead to touch food or meat. He asks if such a person will be made impure, and he answers in the affirmative. Thus, he concludes "well, so it is with this people. As long as the construction of the temple is not finished, their offering will be impure" (Hag. 2:10–14). In other words, "for holy things a sanctified space, separate from the profane, is needed." This means that without the temple one cannot worthily relate with the Holy One.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that both Baruch, Judas, Haggai, "each in his own language and each according to the circumstances peculiar to his own time, see in the temple an institution whose function is to prevent the mixing of orders," that is, the profane and the sacred. This understanding of the sacredness of Jerusalem and

\[44\text{Ibid., 88-89.}\]
\[45\text{See Ibid., 89.}\]
\[46\text{Ibid., 90.}\]
its temple informed the attitude of the remnant community in Jerusalem against the exile community in the book of Ezekiel. Ezek 11:15 reads: "son of man, your brothers, (even your brothers), your own kin, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'They have gone far from YHWH; to us this land is given for a possession.'” Thus the exile community is the impure that cannot be mixed with the pure, namely, the remnant community in Judah. The two spaces cannot meet in the eyes of the Jews.

3.1 The Exile as a Thirdspace

The exile space is not a neutral space but rather a contested one, or as Soja coins it, a thirdspace. For Soja, thirdspace encompasses firstspace and secondspace and is always vibrant, flexible, and open to (re)interpretation.47

Soja holds that Firstspace privileges objectivity and materiality. It aims at a formal science of space.48 Thus, first spatially, the reader is told where Ezekiel received his visions of God (mar'6J 'elohfm). He was "among the exiles by the river Chebar"(1:1). Here, the firstspace is his existential location. Ezekiel and his fellow exiles were in a susceptible and helpless situation. A situation that creates a crisis faith. It appears as if their patron God, YHWH, allowed them to be taken into exile: a reality that marked victory for Babylonian gods. Brandon Fredenburg captures this idea even better:

The Babylonian gods removed a contingent of leading Judeans for Judah's failure to meet its vassal duties. YHWH, the patron God of Israel, had


48Soja, Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles.75.
permitted their deportation. The "official" view of those in Jerusalem was that YHWH had finally cleansed the capital of its troublemakers and allowed the favored to remain (cf. 11:3). 49

Even though we do not know the exact location of the real space (Firstspace) of the exiles, the text tells us that it is beside the river Chebar. Daniel I. Block notes that the "Hebrew nēhar kēbār is the equivalent of Akkadian nār kabari/u, "Kabaru canal," which occurs several times in the 5th-century B.C. archives of the Murashu family in Babylon."50 It is a common opinion among scholars that nēhar kēbār is located in the vicinity of Nippur. 51 According to Block, the conduit of nēhar kēbār was "one of many branches of an elaborate canal system that distributed water from the Tigris and the Euphrates throughout the city and its environs." 52

It does appear that after the city was destroyed, the Babylonian king, at that time, "repopulated the region with deportees from many parts of the empire; among them were Ezekiel and his fellow Judeans."53 As earlier noted, we do not know for


50 Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 1-24. NICOT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 84. The archives, consisting of some 730 tablets, represent our main source of information on the population of the Nippur region at this time. Knowledge of the ethnic composition of the settlers is derived from the personal names that occur in these business records. For studies of these settlements see M. D. Coogan, "Life in the Diaspora: Jews at Nippur in the Fifth Century," BA 37 (1974) 6–12; idem, West Semitic Personal Names in the Marāštā Documents, HSM 7 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975); R. Zadok, The Jews in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1979); idem, On West Semites in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: An Onomastic Study, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: J. J. and Z. Wanaarta and Tel-Aviv University, 1978).

51 Block, 84. See also R. Zadok, "The Nippur Region during the Late Assyrian, Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods Chiefly according to Written Sources," IOS 8 (1978): 266–332.

52 Block, 84.

53 Ibid., 84.
sure if the reference to the Chebar Canal means that Ezekiel was physically beside the canal at the time of the vision, or if the expression functions as a general description for the region where the Judean exiles lived.\textsuperscript{54} In any case, it tells us something, even if only partially, about the existential reality of Ezekiel and his fellow exiles.

The exile's \textit{secondspace} would be the conceived or the mental space, which is culturally conditioned. According to Soja, "\textit{Secondspace} is entirely ideational, made up of projections into the empirical world."\textsuperscript{55} This viewpoint highlights the fact that the exiles are away from their native land, "removed from Jerusalem and the temple, the place from which YHWH's glory had emanated in the past."\textsuperscript{56} Thus, "the exiles' fate was looked upon as incontrovertible proof of divine rejection."\textsuperscript{57} Exile's \textit{secondspace} is thus a place of divine punishment (cf. Deuteronomy 4:25-28; 8:19-20; Leviticus 18:24-30; 20:22-24; Amos 6:7). This understanding creates a dichotomy between the exiles and the group that remained in Jerusalem, the latter saw themselves as superior and thus, the authentic "\textit{qahal YHWH}" (cf. 11:15).

This calls to mind the words of William Scott Green: "a society does not simply discover its \textit{others}, it fabricates them by selecting, isolating, and emphasizing an aspect of another people's life and making it symbolize their difference."\textsuperscript{58} In addition, Green points out the parody nature of definition by \textit{others}, "which concentrates on

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., 84.

\textsuperscript{55}Soja, \textit{Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles}, 79.

\textsuperscript{56}Block, 83.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., 83.

the life of the collective, and stereotypes the group according to one major
characteristic. Rom-Shiloni captured this sense with particular reference to the
tension that existed between the exilic community and the community that remained
in Judah. He said:

Defining "us" and "them" is thus founded on selection, isolation and
emphasis of one major divisive difference. In the conflict between the
exiles and those who remained, geographic location — residence in the
Land of YHWH versus foreign lands — has come to symbolize the
difference, and the theological consequences of this division are examined
in relation to the concept of God-People-Land.

"The land has been given as a heritage to us" (cf. Ezek 11:15) alludes to the
special rights of the Jerusalem community to possess the land, in contrast to those of
the exilic community that had been exiled from it. Rom-Shiloni traces the traditional
background of this argument to the Pentateuchal concepts of "the land." According to
him, "the concept that God gave the land to His people to inherit/to possess in
Deuteronomy is a major theme in Deuteronomy." However, the phrase, "the land
has been given as a heritage to us" (cf. Ezek 11:15), echoes more of Exodus 6:8. In
the words of Rom-Shiloni:

Exodus 6:2-8 builds the bridge between the patriarchs and the Exodus
generation; the land that was promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (w. 3-

59 Ibid., 49-50.
60 Dalit Rom-Shiloni, 6.
61 Ibid., 13
62 Ibid., 13.
63 Ibid., 13.
4) will now be given to the Sons of Jacob, who were saved from servitude in Egypt. This priestly unit emphasizes the pattern of promise and fulfillment.\textsuperscript{64}

These are probably the traditions the community that remained in Jerusalem alluded to when they claimed divine ownership of the land, and as such, gave a new interpretation to the theme of promise and fulfillment.\textsuperscript{65} Rom-Shiloni sums this argument as follows:

It is the inhabitants of Jerusalem (and only they) who continue to fulfill that ancient promise to Abraham; they are the true descendents of those Sons of Jacob, the true people of God. Thus, the inhabitants of Jerusalem rely on past traditions concerning the promise of the Land (whether embedded in the patriarch stories and the Exodus traditions or in its amalgamated form in Exod 6:2-8). Based on this interpretation, they present a theological argument of divine legitimacy for their continuing existence as against the spatial location of the exiles and its theological consequence, at least from their own point of view.\textsuperscript{66}

The thirdspace would be the refiguration of the physical firstspace and the mental secondspace of the exile. It is intrinsic to the narrative.\textsuperscript{67} It is a reconfigured

\textsuperscript{64}For the central position of Exod 6:2-8 in the Priestly redaction of the Pentateuch, see Martin Noth, \textit{Exodus}, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 56-62.

\textsuperscript{65}Rom-Shiloni, 13.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{67}With the work of Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote, and Maoz Azaryahu, narrative is once again extended to another field: geography. In their recent publication, \textit{Narrating Spacing/SpatializingNarrative}, Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu advance the argument that space is not is static backdrop for narrative events. They maintain that it serves other essential narrative roles: "It can be a focus of attention, a bearer of symbolic meaning, an object of emotional investment, a means of"
space where the excluded become included, and outsiders become insiders. It is an alternative space to the temple/Jerusalem space, where election and boundaries of purity and holiness, upheld by some Jews, precluded some people from full participation in community. As an alternative space to the temple, it becomes a locus of divine presence as attested by the words of YHWH: "I have been a sanctuary to them (in some measures) in the countries where they have gone" (cf. 11:16). In other words, YHWH has not disenfranchised the exiles. They are not excluded from the presence of the Holy. He will be for them a miqdâš ma'at (a sanctuary in some measure).

The thirddspace of the exile where Ezekiel saw the visions of God is best seen in light of the wilderness experience in Exodus, where Moses has a vision of the Holy despite the pains and testing of the wilderness experience (cf. Exod 3:1-17; Deut 8:2). From the thirddspace perspective, the exile space must not myopically be seen to be an unclean space nor the place of punishment, nor as Ezekiel would put it, "a valley of dry bones" (cf. Ezek 37). Rather, it is a place of possibilities, a place where the presence of the divine could be experienced. The temple and the land of Israel, in the consciousness of biblical Israel, carry the notion of separateness and exclusivity, distinctiveness and superiority, sacred as opposed to non-sacred. But in the visions of Ezekiel we are shown that divine presence cannot be restricted. Even the so-called

strategic planning, a principle of organization, and even a supporting medium. More so, Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu see that space intersects with narrative in two principle ways: It can be an object of representation (narrating space) and the environment in which narrative is physically deployed (spatializing narrative) (See Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote, and Maoz Azaryahu, Narrating Spacing/ SpatializingNarrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2016), 1-2.)
unclean exile space can become the *thirdspace* of divine presence and activities.\(^{68}\) In this space, the excluded become included, thereby bridging the dichotomy between the "privileged" remnants and the "faraway" exiles.

The exile as *thirdspace* has another significant purpose in the narrative. It is a space for the "visions of God — *mar’ôt* 'ĕlōhim." This seems aimed at challenging and changing the people's mindset toward the people who are in location other than the land of Israel, especially the temple religious leadership who thought it necessary to have a temple or to be in the land of Israel in order to experience the Holy One. These social realities and religious boundaries became an increasing problem that would undermine or restrict access to the divine to a selected "chosen ones." Thus, it is not surprising that Ezek 47:21–23 grants the *gerêm* ("resident aliens") in the new covenant the same status as native Israelites so that they receive an equal share in the inheritance. The new boundaries in the renewed city suggest that the new kingdom will preserve the laws of equity that eliminated discrimination against those residents, thereby making the experience of the presence of the divine open to all, not just the prerogative of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Gerhard von Rad rightly observes that one of the striking effects of Ezekiel's theology of divine presence is that of the divine mobility.\(^{69}\) For him, Ezekiel's innovation was the revival of an older *kāḇōd-* tradition that inserted an element of mobility and impermanence into the conception of YHWH's presence.\(^{70}\) Even in the

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\(^{70}\) Ibid., 42–43.
older tradition, the kābōd travels with the tabernacle as the tribes journey from place to place in their wilderness wanderings, while in Ezekiel the kābōd comes to the prophet in exile by the river Chebar (Ezek 1-3), "removes itself from the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 8-11), and finally enters the grand temple of Ezekiel's last, glorious vision (Ezek 40-48)."71 In Ezekiel we see, unlike in the older tradition, the self-locomotive ability of the kābōd.

Thus, the kābōd theology in Ezekiel, particularly its mobile characteristic, shows, contrary to popular opinion,72 that the divine presence cannot be boxed only within the four corners of the sacred space. This mobile characteristic of the kābōd is made manifest through the image of the wheels, which emphasize divine mobility (cf. Ezek 1: 15-21; 10: 9-17). Thus, the movements of the divine from the sacred space to the so-called unsacred space gives credence to the proposal of Kort on bridging the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane.73 Also, this further confirms the words of Shiner: "space is a homogenous continuum ... Homogeneity means that every point is of equal value to every other point, that no direction has any privilege over any other, that space is continuous and infinite."74

While the temple is the original site of divine presence, the accent on the mobility of the kābōd in the visions of Ezekiel demonstrates that the temple is not the exclusive locus of divine presence. God's presence can also be experienced in spaces

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72 In Priestly tradition, the kābōd appears only in sacred space: first at the mountain of God (Exod 24:16, 17; 29:43; 40:34, 35; Lev 9:6, 23), later at the tabernacle (Num 14:10, 21, 16:19; 17:7 [16:42]; 20:6).

73 Cf. Kort, 34-35

74 Shiner, 427.
like the exile.\textsuperscript{75} Hence for Ezekiel, "God's presence has no boundaries."\textsuperscript{76} The same 
kābōd YHWH that was \textit{tabernacled} in the temple, and departed from the same temple (Ezek 11:22-23), is the same divine presence that Ezekiel experienced in exile (cf. 
Ezek 1:1-28).\textsuperscript{77}

Walther Zimmerli has expressed this understanding while commenting on the 
opening vision of Ezekiel (Ezek 1). He observes that:

It is at least clear from Ezek 1 that the prophet, in his encounter with the 
glory of YHWH in the land to which he had been exiled, experienced 
something which shattered all his expectations and which also, of 
necessity, decisively determined his subsequent preaching. No vague 
presence of deity passed him by, but YHWH, the God of Israel, in the 
glory of the kābōd YHWH met him as he had met with Israel in the great 
events of the wilderness period and as he has always been experienced in 
the temple in the nation's past history.\textsuperscript{78}

Fredenburg notes that YHWH's relationship with Israel had always centered 
around Jerusalem and the temple.\textsuperscript{79} Israel's quest to be like other nations (1 Sam 8:5) 
probably led them to build a shrine in Jerusalem for their patron deity. But a closer

\textsuperscript{75}Kutsko, 91.

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 92.

\textsuperscript{78}Walther Zimmerli, \textit{Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet 

\textsuperscript{79}Fredenburg, 358.
look at 2 Samuel 7:5-7 shows that temple was not a necessity; YWHW only permitted it.\textsuperscript{80}

However, down through the ages, Israel came to deify this structure built by human hands. The destruction of the temple could be to shatter Israel's sentimental attachment to the temple as the primary \textit{locus} of divine presence and extend the possibility to spaces other than the temple. It is important to note here that Ezekiel's experience of the divine in exile is not because the temple was destroyed and the divine was homeless, and as such finds abode amidst the exile. No, "Ezekiel encounters the \textit{kābōd} YHWH in exile (cf. Ezek 1) while the temple was still standing."\textsuperscript{81} Thus, the departure of the \textit{kābōd} in Ezek 8-11 was not "a consequence of the temple's destruction, but a necessary precondition for that destruction."\textsuperscript{82}

Furthermore, the condition for the experience of the presence of the Holy One is not really about location. It is not about the exile or the temple: both possess equal opportunity for the experience of the presence of the divine. In the final analysis, what counts is what Soja calls \textit{praxis}, or in the words of Kort, human \textit{place-relations}. In other words, what counts is the lived experience of the people with particular reference to their relation with YHWH. Righteousness and faithfulness to the covenant (with respect to Israel), at any given time, determine one's experience of the divine.

Block rightly observes that "the repeated references to the evils being committed in Jerusalem emphasize that YHWH's abandonment of the temple is

\textsuperscript{80}ibid., 358.

\textsuperscript{81}Tuell, 102.

\textsuperscript{82}ibid., 102.
provoked by human action.” This is evident in the offenses described in Ezek 8:3-18: “the introduction of the idol of jealousy into the court of YHWH's temple, the worship of carved images of every sort, the women weeping the Tammuz, and twenty-five men paying homage to the sun.” YHWH accuses the people of social and moral crimes (cf. 8:7) – they have provoked the anger of YHWH by their sins. YHWH reiterates this accusation in Ezek 9:9. The text speaks of a land filled with blood and city filled with perversion. YHWH condemned these evils with the sharpest possible terms: abominable (Ezek 8:6a, 9, 13, 15, 17; 9:4), detestable (Ezek 8:10) and wicked (Ezek 8:9). As a result, YHWH's anger was provoked.

On two occasions, YHWH responds in a manner that makes evident the divine wrath owing to the unrighteous living of the people. In Ezek 8:18, the Holy One says:

"Therefore I will act in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in my hearing with a loud voice, I will not listen to them."

Also in Ezek 9:9-10 YHWH declares:

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84Most translations have them "weeping for Tammuz," however, Block suggests that Tammuz denotes a special genre of lament, rather than the deity himself. Since this scene follows immediately after the elders' assertion that YHWH had abandoned the land, it appears that these women have either equated YHWH with Tammuz or they are expressing their grief at their own deity's departure by adopting the Tammuz ritual. In either case, the people were replacing true worship of YHWH with a foreign lamentation. See Ibid., 37, The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 1-24, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI : Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 294-96.

85Ibid., 37.

86Ibid., 37. Block also observed here that "Sticking the branch to the nose" describes a physical gesture that is not only painful but also extremely insulting. See Block, The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 1-24, 297-300.

87Block, "Divine Abandonment," 37.
"The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity; for they say, 'YHWH has forsaken the land, and the YHWH does not see.' I also will not have pity, my eye will not spare, their wicked deeds (ways) I will bring upon their heads."

First, these texts show that God's presence leaves the temple in reaction to sinful actions. Second, they indicate" the divine presence was not a fixed quality of the Jerusalem temple, nor was the temple a permanent location for the presence."

On the contrary, God's presence is, as it were, free to go when the people refuse to live up to their religious responsibility as stipulated in their covenantal commitment with YHWH.89

Thus, it is righteous practice and faithfulness to the covenant, in the case of Israel, that guarantees the presence of the divine. Margaret Odell puts it even better in relation to both the Jerusalem community and the exilic community. She holds that "just as location does not ensure salvation for the Jerusalemites, neither does it guarantee salvation for the exiles. What matters is not location but orientation." Those whose hearts continue to turn toward idols and against YHWH will not experience the presence of the divine.

88 Lied, 43.
89 See Lied, 43-44.
90 Margaret S. Odell, Ezekiel, (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing 2005), 125.
4. The Implication of the Study to the Practice of Religion in our Contemporary World.

Here I do not claim to give a theological overview of the relationships amongst the world's religions, as that would be claiming too much and is definitely beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I intend to restrict my discussion in this section to the theological relationship that seems to exist among the three Abrahamic religions in our world today. A relationship that seems to pitch one religion as superior to the other, or worst still, declare "war" on others who are non-adherents to a particular religion, seeing them as infidels.

Victoria S. Harrison observes that "Judaism, Christianity and Islam provide their adherents with distinctive conceptual frameworks for understanding the world they inhabit; in other words, each of the Abrahamic monotheisms provides its adherents with a worldview."91 But despite the vast similarities that exist among these religions, their attitudes toward each other, particularly with respect to their view on God and the way they interpret and practice their respective faith, sometimes tend to create dichotomy instead of unity and understanding. We live in a world that has been bedeviled with religious conflicts and religious leaders' claims to the exclusivity of truth and a monopoly on God. According to Katayoun Kishi, in 2018 "more than a quarter of the world's countries experienced a high incidence of hostilities motivated by religious hatred, mob violence related to religion, terrorism and harassments."92

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This echoes the religious tension that existed between the exilic group and those that remained in Judah; particularly with respect to which of the two groups is the true qahal (assembly) YHWH (cf. Ezek 11:15-16; 33:25-29), as this study has highlighted repeatedly. Religious intolerance has become like a cankerworm that affects the fabric of virtually every religious group. An online report by a 2018 Minority Rights Group indicates that "mass killings and other atrocities are increasing in some countries (Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, India, Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh) all in the name of religion. Hostilities against Muslims and Jews also increased across Europe and the United States." These religions, which are supposed to promote peace, love and harmony by their very nature, have become so frequently connected with intolerance and violence toward one another.

Most times, intolerance and aggression are perpetrated by the dominant religion in a particular location against the minority, or by religion that perceives itself to be superior and more pure compare to the other. This was exactly the drama that played out in the vision of Ezekiel. The Judahites believed they were superior to the exilic community; and as such, they were the true qahal YHWH because they had the temple and the Land (Ezek 11:15). However, the movements of the kābōd YHWH from the temple in Jerusalem to the exile dismantle any form of religious triuphalism. The divine manifestation in the thirdspace of the exile challenges the status quo and demonstrates that no group should see itself as superior to the other. As such, just as Soja observes, thirdspace seeks to resist the dominant order, be it social or religious ideology, including its predetermined notions of pure and impure, holy and profane.

93 https://minorityrights.org/publications/peoplesunderthreat2018/

94 See https://minorityrights.org/publications/peoplesunderthreat2018/
insiders and outsiders. If we see every religion as having equal access to the divine, then this will go a long way toward curbing the religious intolerance that has bedeviled our world today; as a consequence, religious plurality would no longer be a challenge but rather a blessing to our world. Although each religion differs in its social and religious categories, each, like the exile space and Jerusalem temple, is a setting in which God can reveal Himself and relate with people. This understanding will help strengthen the strides made so far in inter-religious dialogue, especially among the three Abrahamic faiths.

The three faith communities hold a belief in "One God, maker of heaven and earth," especially in worship. Pope Gregory VII echoes this, even though partially, in his letter to King Anzir of Mauritania. The pontiff says that Christians and Muslims not only believe in the same God but also praise and worship Him daily as the creator of all ages and the sovereign of this world. Although they might express this belief in different manner from each other, it is still to the same God.

Michael Walzer has a theological equivalent to this argument. In his book *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*, he introduces "two different but interrelated kinds of moral argument — a way of talking among ourselves, here at home, about the thickness of our own history and culture ... and a way of talking to people abroad, across different cultures, about the thinner life we have in..."
common. 98 Amy Pauw, applying Walzer's argument to Christian relationships with other faith traditions, holds that the "intramural theological agreement among Christians will be thick," 99 that is, "richly referential, culturally resonant, locked into a locally established symbolic system or network of meanings." 100 Pauw further observes that "theological agreement across religious traditions is by contrast thinner, focused on convergence points""101 which are seen to be similar though expressed in different modes and reflected in different histories. 102 Thus, if not in other ways, at least in worship, the thin agreement around God as creator is rooted within the thick theological traditions of each faith community. 103 Pauw puts it even better. She holds that "this agreement among Jews, Christians, and Muslims that they worship the same God who is creator of heaven and earth is a theological minimum." 104 Consequently, it provides a foundation for these religions to come together. But, as Walzer also puts it, "by its very thinness, it justifies them to return to the thickness that is their own." 105

This theological minimum of Pauw, or what Walzar calls moral thinness, could possibly be likened to the divine expression in Ezekiel's second vision of the kâbôd YHWH with respect to the exilic community. There, YHWH says of the exiles: "I have been a miqdâš mōṣāf (a sanctuary to them in some/small measures) in the countries where they have gone" (cf. 11:16). This shows that despite the existential

98 Michael Walzer, Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), xi.

99 Pauw, 47.

100 Walzer, xi.

101 Pauw, 47.

102 Walzer, 17.

103 Pauw, 47.

104 Ibid., 47.

105 Walzer, 11.
peculiarities of each community of faith, there exists a *theological minimum*, a *small measure* that can form the basis of our experience of the divine who is the origin of the human race. *Nostra Aetate* puts it even more lucidly. It holds that the human race has in common what draws them to fellowship. First, their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. Second, their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all humanity, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.\(^{106}\) So everyone has the possibility of connecting with the divine. However, what we do with that possibility determines our actual experience of the presence of the divine.

Finally, Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple (Ezek 40-48), gives more credence to this possibility of universal access to the divine. In the conclusion of the vision, Ezekiel notes that the restored city shall be called *YHWH-Shammah—YHWH is there* (Ezek 48:35). Probably the lack of specification of the city has a deep theological importance. It opens the possibility of access to the divine to all. *YHWH is there* means God is present and can be anywhere he wants to be. He is present and accessible to any religion that seeks him with a sincere heart. Hence there is no need for the mutual hatred among the world's religions. No one religion has the monopoly on God. The Holy One is accessible to all. In his words: "When you seek me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with a sincere heart" (cf. Jer. 29:13). Therefore, this is a clarion call to all religions, be it Christianity, Islam or Judaism, to internalize how it sees itself and others and reevaluate beliefs and practices that create tension along

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\(^{106}\) *Declaration on The Relation of The Church to Non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate* Proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, no. 1.
the line of the universal accessibility of the divine to all; so as to foster solidarity and
a better understanding among different religions.

5. Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has shown that interpreting the exile as *thirdspace* and paying
close attention to the movements of the *kāhôd* YHWH in the visions of Ezekiel, could
help bridge the gap between the sacred and the non-sacred spaces. The manifestations
of the presence of the divine in both the sacred and non-sacred spaces have opened
the door for the possibility of the experience of the divine to all, irrespective of
location. The experience of the divine is not about location, and neither is it all about
religious affiliation. What actually counts is *praxis*—our lived experience with
particular reference to our relationship with God. Righteousness and faithfulness to
the dictates of the divine at any given time determine one's experience of the divine.
What matters is not location but orientation.\footnote{Odell, 125.} Those whose hearts continue to turn to
evil as opposed to good will not experience the presence of the divine. Hence, it does
not matter one's religious affiliation, and neither does it matter one's location. What
matters is *righteousness, justice* and *love* in obedience to the dictates of the divine
whom we call God, *Adonai, Allah* etc. These and other good acts guarantee the
experience of the presence of the divine. Sometimes we may think we possess the
fullness of truth as symbolized in the temple with its sacred adornments or as
contained in the *Torah*, the *Holy Bible* or the *Koran*. But the reality of the experience
of the divine does not necessarily lie in the one who possesses the truth, "for it is not
the possession of the truth that matters, it is how prepared we are to walk in the light of the truth that we possess. Only this guarantees the experience of the divine.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study began by demonstrating that Ezekiel's theology of the divine presence was not created ex nihilo. Our brief survey of the motif of divine presence and abandonment in chapter one showed that among the people of the ancient Near East, the statue of a god was perceived to contain the spirit of that divinity.¹ No experience could be more devastating psychologically than to lose the image. Without the god, the people were doomed. This was the experience of Israel, both of the exilic community and of the remnant in Judah, as a result of the exile and the eventual destruction of the temple. However, the temple in Jerusalem housed no image of YHWH. His presence was represented by his glory, the kābōd.² Ezekiel's visions bring out something new in the theology of divine presence. In contrast to the motif of the ancient Near Eastern texts is the fact that YHWH leaves of his own volition. Although the ancient Near Eastern accounts of divine abandonment generally created the impression that the gods voluntarily leave their shrines, Block notes that "enemy invasions and the spoliation of divine images lie behind these accounts."³ Even though departure of the kābōd YHWH can be linked with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, the temple contained no image of the deity. So it is not even possible

to speak of spoliation with respect to YHWH. On the contrary, Ezekiel highlights YHWH's independence at each stage of his departure.4

In the inaugural vision (Ezek 1-3), the glory of YHWH of Israel appears to Ezekiel in the valley of the river Chebar, in the land of exile. At this time, the temple in Jerusalem was still standing, thus the kābōd YHWH of Israel was not forced to leave. The Holy One comes to Ezekiel in exile of its own accord. But interestingly, in Ezekiel's inaugural vision, the kābōd does not appear in the confines of sacred space. Here, the kābōd comes to the prophet in exile, in an unclean land. Little wonder, as Samuel Terrien observes, Ezekiel's call begins with the heavens being torn open (Ezek 1:1): "As the member of a priestly family, the young deportee had doubtlessly believed that YHWH dwelt in Zion. He could not expect that YHWH would manifest His presence in a remote and totally alien land except through some shattering of the cosmic order."5 Thus, Ezekiel's inaugural vision, like the Sinai theophany, is a gracious self-revelation of the divine presence. This revelation was even all the more remarkable for taking place not on the mountain of God (as in Sinai), but beside the river Chebar in the land of exile.

However, as demonstrated in this study, the presence of the divine in the land of exile does not mean the absence of the Holy One in the land of Israel. As recorded in Ezekiel's second vision of the kābōd YHWH (Ezek 8-11), Ezekiel sees the kābōd in the temple before its eventual departure from the temple in Ezek 1:22-23. Unlike the ancient Near Eastern motif of divine presence and abandonment, in Ezekiel, the departure of the divine from the temple is not as a result of military threat or invasion. Rather, it is as a result of misdirected worship on the part of Israel.

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The second vision of the קָבָּד YHWH (Ezek 8-11) shows the failure of Israel's syncretism as represented in their misdirected worship. True religion is not only based on ethical conduct, it is also demonstrated in worship acceptable to God. Such worship lets God be God on his own terms. Anything outside this is tantamount to idolatry. It is worthy to note, however, that though the divine presence left the temple for reasons already demonstrated in chapter four of this study, it never left the city because God is never absent. YHWH left the temple to demonstrate that divine presence is not tied to the temple. Neither is the physical material structure called temple a substitute for the presence of the Holy One. But the big question remains: is the departure of the Holy One from the temple a sign of rejection of the temple as the locus of divine presence?

The fifth chapter of this study, which deals with the vision of the restored temple (Ezek 40-48), was a theological response to the above question. In this vision, the divine departure from the temple in chapters 8-11 is resolved by God's return to the temple in Ezek 43, which serves as the essence of the literary unit. The effect of the Holy presence is demonstrated in the final stage of the vision where the prophet sees the mystic waters flowing from the temple as symbolic of blessing and reminiscent of paradise. In fact, this is confirmed at the end of the vision, as the generic city is qualified as יָהֵשׁ שָּׁמָּה יָהֵשׁ is there (Ezek 48:35). Where? Not restrictively in the temple. In fact, Paul M. Joyce, answers even better. He notes that this rendition not only emphasizes the location of the Holy, but also diffuses and spreads it. What matters for Ezekiel, in the final analysis, is not the place, be it temple or city, but the Holy God who dwells in the midst of His people.

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It is so easy to equate the presence of the Holy One with something outward, like a temple, a church building, a mosque, or even a religion. YHWH's removal of His presence from the earthly temple reminds us that His presence is essentially a spiritual presence in the hearts and lives of people. If the Lord's presence is not in our hearts, if we have edged Him out of our lives, then He will not be in our temples, our church buildings, or our mosques. Only if God continues to live in the sanctuaries of our hearts will He continue to be present in the outward manifestations of our internal relationship. In other words, the material structures or physical religious organizations should be outward manifestations of an inward relationship with God.

Ezekiel sees beyond the torment of exile to a time in the future when people could experience God's presence in a most tangible way. This was amazing, especially, coming from someone who might have thought that God was absent as a result of the pains of exile. His faith overcame the pains of his experience and led him and his fellow exiles to experience God's presence in the land of their captivity, a space depicted by the remnant community as non-sacred (cf. Ezek 11:15). A reinterpretation of the exile space as a *thirdspace* has shown that even the land of exile could be a *locus* of divine presence.

Thus, in the final analysis, what counts is not necessarily our locations or our nationality. It is not our land or our temple or church or mosque that actually counts. What matters is our practical relationship with God and neighbor. This is not to say that temples, churches or mosques are not important. They are, but not in themselves

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without a relationship with the divine. An Israelite in the land of Judah who does not show true faith in YHWH will be deprived of the privilege of experiencing the glorious presence of YHWH, as demonstrated in chapter four of this study (Ezek 8-11). The same applies to a Christian, a Muslim or any member of any other religion on earth. In fact, Daniel Block rightly observes that the repeated references to the evils being committed in Jerusalem by the people (cf. Ezek 8:6a, 9,10, 13, 15, 17; 9:4) emphasize that YHWH's abandonment of the temple is provoked by human action.\(^9\) Those whose hearts continue to turn to evil as opposed to good will not experience the presence of the divine. It is our theological *praxis*—our orientation toward God, that counts.\(^{10}\)

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Finkelstein, Israel and Thomas Römer, "Comments of the Historical Background of the Jacob Narrative in Genesis." ZAW, 126, no. 3 (2014): 317-338.


———. "The Vision of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8-11: A Holistic Interpretation." Pages 141-147 in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human...*


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————. *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*. Assyriological Studies 12; Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1940.


Ezek 1:1-3:27

1:1 It came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, (while) I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 On the fifth of the month; it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin.

3 (The word of YHWH came to Ezekiel son of Buzi), the priest in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the YHWH was upon him (there).

4 And I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud, and (fire taking hold of itself), and brightness was round about it, and from its center, something like a glowing amber from the center of the fire.

5 And from its center: a likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: a human likeness was theirs,

6 And to each (is) four faces, and each of them had four wings.

7 And their legs were a straight leg, and the soles of their feet were like a calf’s foot’s sole; (and they sparkled like polished bronze).

8 And they had human hands under their wings on their four sides. And their faces and the wings of four of them:

9 (their wings each touched the other), they did not touch as they went; each went straight ahead.

1 The Waw has a temporal value, it introduces a temporal proposition, hence translated as "while."

2 The critical apparatus of BHS suggests that the infinitive absolute: יְנַפֵּשׁ that introduced the verse is a ditto-graphical error. It is possible that the original text does not have it.

3 As in other places throughout the book, LXX does not translate נַפֵּשׁ, it omits it as superfluous. This is why scholars like Zimmerli takes this word to be a later addition. See Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1-24, HERMENEIA, 4. However, like Leslie Allen, I would rather translate it as part of the text. See Leslie Allen, Ezekiel 1-19, WBC 28, 4.

4 "Fire taking hold of itself" (mišlāqgāḇaḥ), perhaps repeatedly. The phrase occurs elsewhere only in Exod. 9:24 in association with a hailstorm. The LXX interprets the phrase as fire flashing like lightning, but it is possibly a self-sustaining blaze of divine origin. The LXX also reverses the order of the descriptors, i.e., "light went around it and fire flashed like lightning within it."

5 BHS critical apparatus suggests that the last phrase: "and they sparkled like polished bronze" could be a later addition. However, I will suggest we retain it as it is.
10 And the likeness of their faces were human faces; and four had the face of a lion on the right side, and the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle.

11 (So were their faces). Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies.

12 And each went straight ahead; to wherever the spirit would go, they went, they did not turn as they went.

13 (And between the living creatures): a likeness of burning coals of fire, like an appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire had brightness, and from the fire came out lightening.

14 And the living creatures dashed back and forth like the appearance of lightning.

15 As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their construction was like (tarshish); and the four had the same form/likeness, and their appearance and their construction which is like a wheel within a wheel.

17 (To) any of the four directions they would go, as they went; they did not turn as they went.

18 As for their rims, they were high (and I looked) at them and they were terrifying; and their rims were full of eyes around, all four of them.

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6 LXX omits v. 9a. But Block observes that MT preserves the original (Block, Ezekiel 1-24, NICOT, 41) while Zimmerli prefers LXX as the lectio brevior. See Zimmerli, 5.

7 The MT has an additional word at the beginning of v.11, יְפַלֵּפֶת (yfelaphet, "and (so were) their faces"), which is missing from the LXX. Many scholars like Allen, Greenberg, Zimmerli opine that as the rest of the verse only applies to wings, "their faces" would have to somehow be understood in the previous clause. But this would be very awkward and is doubly problematic since "their faces" are already introduced as the topic at the beginning of verse 10. The Hebrew scribe appears to have copied the phrase "and their faces and their wings" from verse 8, where it introduces the content of 1:9-11. However, I would rather read yfnehem, as part of the verse 11 where the waw functions, syntactically, as an emphatic waw, thus, yfnehem could be translated as "So were their face." See Ronald J. Williams, Williams' Hebrew Syntax, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 155.

8 The MT reads "and the form of the creatures" (יהוה יהוה, ud'mat hakhayyot). The LXX reads "and in the midst of the creatures," suggesting an underlying Hebrew text of וַיִּשְׁלַחַו (wayikkhah chayyot). The subsequent description of something moving among the creatures supports the LXX. Greenberg, 46 and Zimmerli, 84 supports LXX, hence I will adopt LXX reading.

9 "Tarshish (stone)." The meaning of this term is uncertain. The term has also been translated "topaz" (NEB); "beryl" (KJV, NASB, NRSV); or "chrysolite" (RSV, NIV). Because of its uncertainty, I would rather transliterate it.

10 The object of the preposition יָצָא can be the indirect object of a verb, when this is the case יָצָא can be translated as "to." See Ronald J. Williams, 115.
19 When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up (too).

20 To wherever it was the spirit would go, there they went: (where the spirit was going), and the wheels rose side by side with them because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

21 (When they moved, they moved; when they stopped, they stopped); and when they are lifted up from the earth, the wheels are lifted up side by side them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

22 And over the heads of the living creatures there was an appearance (something like) of a platform, like a dreadful ice stretched over their head from above.

23 Under the platform their wings were stretched out (straight), one toward the other; and each had two wings covering its body.

24 And when they moved, I heard the sound of their wings, it is like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let their wings fall.

25 And there came a voice from above the platform which is over their heads; (when they stood, they let down their wings).

26 And from above the platform which is over their heads something like a sapphire stone, a likeness of a throne; and on the likeness of the throne: a likeness of human appearance was on it from above.

27 And I saw something like a shining amber, like the appearance of a fire enclosed around it, from the appearance of his loins upward; and from the appearance of his loins down I saw and brightness was all around it.

28 Like the appearance of the bow (rainbow) that is in the cloud on a day of rain (rainy day), so was the appearance of the brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking.

2:1 And he said to me: son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you.

2 And a spirit came into me, (when he spoke to me), and set me upon my feet; and I heard someone speaking to me.

11 The reading ἰδὼν ἀνώτατον ("and fear") does not seem to fit the context well, BHS observes that it is probably corrupted, and as such, suggests that we read it as LXX reads. The LXX reads καὶ εἶδον αὐτά, "and I saw" or "and I looked," which assumes ἰδέα ("ideas").

12 The LXX reads "when it went, they went; when it stood, they stood." MT reads "when they went, they went; when they stood, they stood." I will follow the MT's reading because it fits the context.

13 The MT continues "when they stood still they lowered their wings," BHS sees this as an apparent ditography from the end of v. 24. The LXX commits haplography by leaving out vv. 25 and 26 (some parts): skipping from פַּן (rosham) in v. 25 to פַּן in v. 26.
3 And he said to me, son of man, I am sending you to the sons (house) of Israel, to rebellious (nations) who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me until this very day.

4 And (they are) descendants of severe face and hardened heart. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the YHWH GOD."

5 And they, whether they hear or refuse (to hear), for they are a rebellious house, they shall know that a prophet was among them.

6 And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them, and their words do not fear, (even if) briers and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words, and of their faces, do not be dismayed, for they are a rebellious house.

7 You shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious.

8 But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat that which I give to you.

9 Then I looked, and behold a hand was stretched out towards me, and behold, in it was a written scroll.

10 And he spread it out before me; it had writing on the front and the back, and written on it were laments and moaning and woe.

3:1 And he said to me, son of man, (what you find eat); eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he made me eat this scroll.

3 He said to me, Son of man, make your belly and fill your stomach with this scroll which I am giving to you. Then (I ate it); and it became in my mouth as sweet as honey.

4 He said to me: Son of man, come, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them.

5 For not to people of unfathomable speech and heavy tongue you are being sent, but to the house of Israel

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14 The phrase "when he spoke to me" is absent from the LXX.

15 The Hebrew reads "sons of," while the LXX reads "house," implying the more common phrase in Ezekiel. In preparation for the characterization "house of rebellion," in vv. 5, 6 and 8, "house" is preferred (See Allen, 10 and Zimmerli, 564–65).

16 The particle 
here is concessive, thus, translated as "even if." See Ronald J. Williams, 158.

17 BHS suggests that MT adds this phrase ("what you find eat"), it is not represented in LXX.

18 BHS suggests that the ancient versions read "I ate it," which is certainly the meaning in the context, and indicates they read the he as a third feminine singular pronominal suffix. The Masoretes typically wrote a mappiq in the he for the pronominal suffix but apparently missed this one.
not to many peoples of unfathomable speech and heavy tongue, whose words you cannot hear. (Surely, if I sent you to them), they would listen to you.

But the house of Israel is not willing to listen to you, because they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel, they have a strong forehead and a hardened heart.

Behold, I have set (made) your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads.

Like a diamond, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not fear them or be dismayed at their faces, for they are a rebellious house.

He said to me: Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you take (receive) in your heart, and hear with your ears;

And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, "Thus says the YHWH GOD", whether they hear or refuse to hear.

Then the spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the sound of great quaking as the glory of YHWH (rose from its place).

And it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against each to another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, that sounded like a great quaking.

The spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went bitter in the heat of my spirit, and the hand of YHWH was strong upon me.

Then I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar; and there (where they were living), I sat among them for seven days, stunned among them.

At the end of seven days, the word of the YHWH came to me:

Son of man, I have set (made) you a watchman to the house of Israel; when you hear a word from my mouth, you shall admonish them from me.

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19 The MT שְׁמַע evidently means "surely," with a following conditional clause that lacks a conditional particle: "surely (if) ... " See Greenberg, Ezekiel, 69; Allen, 3. MT reads "if not" but most ancient versions including the LXX translate only "if."

20 This translation accepts the emendation suggested in BHS of בֵּרְעִים (bērūm) for בָּרַע (bārūk).

The letters mem (ג) was probably confused for kaph (ג). MT בָּרַע kēbōd yhwh, "Blessed be the glory of Yahweh," is reflected in all the versions (cf. LXX Εὐλογημένη ἡ δόξα κυρίου) and many modern translations (NIV, NASB, JB, NJPS). However, BHS, RSV, NRSV, NEB, and most scholars assume a scribal error, bārūk having replaced an original bērūm ("as [it] arose"). See Block, 134.

21 Kethib weʾēšer is problematic. Either it should be repointed as a normal conjunction, waʾēšer, or rewritten with Qere weʾēšeb, "And I sat." If Qere is accepted, the error may be attributed to scribal substitution of r for b prior to the adoption of the square script. LXX τοις ἔντον ἐκεῖ assumes ὅτα πού ἔατε, "where they were." Most understand MT to have conflated two variant readings, "who were living by the Chebar canal," and "where they were living." There is no agreement on which was original. See Block, 131.
18 When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you do not admonish (warn), or speak out to warn the wicked from their wicked way, in order to save his life, he, the wicked dies for his iniquity; his blood I will require from your hand.

19 But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness and from his wicked way, he, in his iniquity shall die; but you will have saved your life.

20 If the righteous turn from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I set a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds he had done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

21 However, if you warn the righteous not to sin, and he, the righteous does not sin, he shall surely live, because he was warned; and you will have saved your own life.

22 Then the hand of YHWH was upon me there; and he said to me, Rise up, go out into the valley, and there I shall speak with you.

23 And I rose up and went out into the valley; and behold, the glory of YHWH stood, like the glory that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell on my

24 Then the spirit (entered) came into me, and caused me to stand on my feet; and he spoke with me and said to me: Come, shut yourself inside your house.

25 And you, Son of man, behold, they have laid cords on you, and you shall be bound with them, so (that) you cannot go out among them;

26 and I will cause your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, and you will be unable to speak so you shall be to them one who reproves; for they are a rebellious house.

27 But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, "Thus says YHWH GOD"; (let the one who hear, hear; and let the one who refuse to hear, refuse); for they are a rebellious house.

Ezek 8:1-11:25

8:1 It came to pass (it was) in the sixth year, in the (sixth month)\textsuperscript{23}, on the fifth day of the month. I was sitting in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there.

\textsuperscript{22}Although the verbs are not jussive as pointed in the MT, but some modern translations like NRS and KJV translate them with a volitive sense: "let the one who listens (hears) — listen, let the one who refusess — refuse." I will adopt the volitive sense.

\textsuperscript{23}The LXX reads "In the sixth year, in the fifth month, on the fifth of the month." See Cook, Ezekiel, 89; Block, 276.
And I looked, and behold there was a figure like the appearance of a man; the appearance of his loins and downward was fire; and from his loins and upward, like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber.

And he stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes jealousy is located.

And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I had seen in the valley.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and behold, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy.

And he said to me, "Son of man, are you seeing what they are doing? The great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to distance me from my sanctuary? And you will still see greater abominations."

And he brought me to the entrance of the court; and I looked, and there was a hole in the wall.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, dig through the wall"; and I dug through the wall; and behold an entrance.

He said to me, "Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they are doing here."

So I went in and looked and behold, and behold all forms of creeping things and detestable beast; and all the idols of the house of Israel were on the wall all around.

And seventy of the elders of the house of Israel (with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing among them) were standing in front of them. And each had his censer in his hand, and the fragrant cloud of incense was going up.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of images? For they are saying, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has abandoned the land.'"

And he said to me, "You will see even greater abominations that they are doing."

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24 The MT reads "fire" rather than "man," the reading of the LXX.

25 The MT reads "from the appearance of his loins and downwards was fire." The LXX omits "the appearance," reading "from his waist to below was fire."  

26 The last half of the verse is missing in LXX.

27 Since this clause disrupts the flow of thought, separating 'ömēdim from its subject, it is often deleted as a gloss (BHS). However, if smoothness were a test of authenticity, most parenthetical clauses would be eliminated.
14 Then he brought me to the entrance of the gate of the house of the LORD that faces north; and behold, there, women were sitting weeping for Tammuz.

15 Then he said to me, "Have you seen, Son of man? You will see even greater abominations than these."

16 And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD; and behold, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs towards the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, and they were prostrating themselves to the sun toward the east.

17 Then he said to me, "Have you seen Son of man? Is it trivial for the house of Judah to do the abominations which they do here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger. Behold, they are holding out the branch to his nose!

18 Therefore I will act in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in my hearing with a loud voice, I will not listen to them."  

9:1 Then he cried in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, "Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand."

2 And behold, six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which turned towards north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand; among them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side;

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28 Some (Cooke, 99; Zimmerli, 221) follow 2 Hebrew mss. and LXX in reading "twenty," arguing that this represents a better approximation than "twenty-five." But Greenberg observes that "twenty-five" is a favored number in Ezekiel. Cf. 40:1, 13, 29, 45. See Greenberg, 172.

29 This phrase is often deleted as a variant gloss because it introduces a new subject (BHS).

30 The entire last sentence is missing in LXX and is often deleted as a premature anticipation of 9:1 (Walther Hirschroti, Ezekiel, 108). Zimmerli argues that the ideas fit better with Jeremiah's thought than with Ezekiel's. See Zimmerli, 222.

31 LXX follows MT in treating qārēbû as a Qal perfect, "they have come near." The imperative of Targ. and Syr. reflects qārēbū, "Come near," although the present vocalization of the Qal imperative does occur occasionally; see E. Kaufsch ed. Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar (GKC), (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2006), 124, §46d. Even so, the context seems to require re-pointing the word as a Piel imperative, qārēbû.

32 LXX τῆς βλέπουσας simplifies an unusual Hophal form, mopneh, "which is turned toward," by replacing the prefixed m with the article. Elsewhere Ezekiel tends to use either the Qal participle to indicate direction (8:3; 11:1; 43:1; 44:1; 46:1, 12; 47:2)

33 The sg. form, hakkērēb, functions as a collective (cf. 10:4), See Block 300; LXX reads pl.: τῶν θερσανίν.
and YHWH said to him, "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and (mark) the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in the midst of it."

5 And to the others he said in my hearing, "Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity.

6 Old men, young men and young women, little children and women you shall utterly destroy, but to no one who has the mark shall you come near. And begin at my sanctuary." So they began with the elders who were in front of the house.

7 Then he said to them, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go!" So they went out and slew in the city.

8 And while they were killing, and I was left alone, I fell prostrate on my face and cried out and said: "Ah Lord GOD! will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath upon Jerusalem?"

9 And he said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity; for they say, The YHWH has forsaken the land, and the YHWH does not see.

10 And I also will not have pity, my eye will not spare, their deeds (ways) I will bring upon their heads."

11 And behold, the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his side, brought back word, saying, "I have done as you commanded me."

10:1 Then I looked, and behold, above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, as the likeness of the appearance of a throne above them.

2 And he said to the man clothed in linen, "Go within the wheelwork underneath the (cherub); fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city." He went in my sight.

3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house when the man went in; and a cloud filled the inner court.

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34 The word translated "mark" is in Hebrew the letter n (tav).

35 wəyəsqū looks like dittography. LXX and Syr. translate this and the following verb as imperatives. MT is to be retained even though waw-consecutive imperfects would have been more natural as subsequent imperatives.

36 The LXX, Syr, Vulg, and Targ MSS read plural "cherubim" while the MT is singular here, "cherub." The plural ending was probably omitted in copying the MT due to the similar beginning of the next word. See BHS.
4 Then the glory of the YHWH rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house; the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the YHWH.

5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of (El Shaddai) when he speaks.

6 And it happened (came to pass), when he had commanded the man clothed in linen, "Take fire from within the wheelwork, from among the cherubim," he went in and stood beside a wheel.

7 And a cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim to the fire that was among the cherubim, and lifted it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out.

8 And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a human hand under their wings.

9 And behold I looked, and there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like gleaming tarshish stone.

10 And as for their appearance, the four had one likeness, something like a wheel within a wheel.

11 (When) they moved, they moved in any of the four directions; they did not turn as they moved; but in whatever direction the front wheel faced, the others followed without veering as they moved.

12 And (all of their flesh), their rims/backs, their hands, their wings, and the wheels—the wheels of the four of them—were full of eyes all around.

13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing "the wheelwork."

14 Each one had four faces: the first face was that of the cherub, the second face was that of a human being, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle.

15 The cherubim rose up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar.

16 And when the cherubim moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise up from the earth, the wheels did not turn (away) from their side.

17 When they stopped, they stopped, and when they rose up, they rose up with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

37 The name ("El Shaddai") has often been translated "God Almighty," primarily because Jerome translated it omnipotens ("all powerful") in the Latin Vulgate. There has been much debate over the meaning of the name. For discussion see W. F. Albright, "The Names Shaddai and Abram," JBL 54 (1935): 173-210; R. Gordis, "The Biblical Root šdy-šd," JTS 41 (1940): 34-43.

38 Bet here has a temporal function, and as such, is translated as "when."

39 LXX omits wēkol-bēšārām, lit. "all their flesh," perhaps because such language is unsuitable for cherubim. See Greenberg, 182.
18 Then the glory of the YHWH went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim.

19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight as they went out with the wheels beside them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the YHWH; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

20 These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim.

21 Each had four faces, each four wings, and underneath their wings something like human hands.

22 And the likeness of their faces; they were (the same faces) whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one moved straight ahead.

11:1 The spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of YHWH, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway, were twenty-five men; among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, officials of the people.

2 He said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city;

3 they say, 'It is not near to build houses; this city is the pot, and we are the meat.'

4 Therefore prophesy against them; Son of man; prophesy."

5 Then the spirit of YHWH fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the YHWH: This is what you say, O house of Israel; I know the things that come into your mind.

6 You have increased those killed in this city, and have filled its streets with the slain.

7 Therefore thus says the YHWH GOD: Your slain that you have placed within it, they are the meat, and this city is the pot; but you shall be taken out of it.

8 You have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, says YHWH GOD.

9 And I will take you out of it midst and give you over to the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments upon you.

10 You shall fall by the sword; I will judge you at the border of Israel. And you shall know that I am YHWH.

11 This (city) shall not be a pot for you, and you shall not be the meat inside it; at the border of Israel I will judge you.

12 Then you shall know that I am the YHWH, whose statutes you have not followed, and whose ordinances you have not kept, but you have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are around you."

40 Here LXX simplifies MT's difficult marēḥem weʿdēthām by translating only wēḥēm. Here and in ten other instances in Ezekiel ʿdēthām functions as an emphatic nominative. See Block, 326.
13 And while I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. And I fell down on my face and cried with a loud voice, and said, "Ah YHWH GOD! will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?"

14 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying:

15 Son of man, your brothers, (even your brothers) your own kin, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, "They have gone far from YHWH; to us this land is given for a possession."

16 Therefore say: Thus says YHWH GOD: Though I put them far away among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a little while (in some measures) in the countries where they have gone.

17 Therefore say: Thus says YHWH GOD: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they will come there, and they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations.

19 And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

20 so that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey (do) them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deed (way) upon their own heads, says YHWH GOD.

22 Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

23 And the glory of YHWH ascended from the middle of the city, and stopped on the mountain east of the city.

24 And the spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me.

25 And I told the exiles all the things that YHWH had shown me.

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41 The omission of vv. 11–12a in LXX is due to homoioteleuton, the scribe's eye having skipped from the end of v. 10 to a similar clause in v. 12a. See Block, 327.

42 The LXX reads this statement as a question. Compare this to the question in Ezek 9:8. It is possible that the interrogative particle has been omitted by haplography. However, an exclamatory statement as in the MT also makes sense and the LXX may have simply tried to harmonize this passage with Ezek 9:8. However, I will retain the translation of LXX.

43 The MT reads "your brothers, your brothers" either for emphasis (see Block, 341, 346) or as a result of dittography. I will adopt the emphatic translation.
Ezek 40:1-48:35

40:1 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me (there). 44

2 In visions of God, he brought me to the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.

3 When he brought me there, a man was there, whose appearance shone like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway.

4 The man said to me, "Son of man, look closely and listen attentively, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the house of Israel."

5 Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area. The length of the measuring reed in the man's hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length; so he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed.

6 Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep[...]

7 And each recess was one reed wide and one reed deep; and the space between the recesses, five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the inner end was one reed deep.

8 Then he measured the inner vestibule of the gateway, one cubit.

9 Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and its pilasters, two cubits; and the vestibule of the gate was at the inner end.

10 There were three recesses on either side of the east gate; the three were of the same size; and the pilasters on either side were of the same size.

11 Then he measured the width of the opening of the gateway, ten cubits; and the width of the gateway, thirteen cubits.

12 There was a barrier before the recesses, one cubit on either side; and the recesses were six cubits on either side.

13 Then he measured the gate from the back of the one recess to the back of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits, from wall to wall.

44 The emphatic function of שָׁמֵעַ (there) is missed by LXX, which omits the word. Many delete it with LXX.
14 He measured also the (vestibule), 45 twenty cubits; and the gate next to the pilaster on every side of the court.

15 From the front of the gate at the entrance to the end of the inner vestibule of the gate was fifty cubits.

16 The recesses and their pilasters had windows, with shutters on the inside of the gateway all around, and the vestibules also had windows on the inside all around; and on the pilasters were palm trees.

17 Then he brought me into the outer court; there were chambers there, and a pavement, all around the court; thirty chambers fronted on the pavement.

18 The pavement ran along the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates; this was the lower pavement.

19 Then he measured the distance from the inner front of the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, one hundred cubits.

20 Then he measured the gate of the outer court that faced north-- its depth and width.

21 Its recesses, three on either side, and its pilasters and its vestibule were of the same size as those of the first gate; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits.

22 Its windows, its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the gate that faced toward the east. Seven steps led up to it; and its vestibule was on the inside.

23 Opposite the gate on the north, as on the east, was a gate to the inner court; he measured from gate to gate, one hundred cubits.

24 Then he led me toward the south, and there was a gate on the south; and he measured its pilasters and its vestibule; they had the same dimensions as the others.

25 There were windows all around in it and in its vestibule, like the windows of the others; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits.

26 There were seven steps leading up to it; its vestibule was on the inside. It had palm trees on its pilasters, one on either side.

27 There was a gate on the south of the inner court; and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, one hundred cubits.

28 Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate, and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, one hundred cubits.

45 'ēlim looks like a pl. of 'āl, "supports" (cf. vv. 9–10), but this is difficult in the context. Emendation to 'ulām, "vestibule" (NRSV, REB) requires a simple orthographic adjustment, but is admittedly provisional. The MT reads "jambs" which does not make sense in context. Supposing a confusion of yod for vav, the text may be emended to read "porch." See Block, Ezekiel 25-48, NICOT, 518.
29 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others; and there were windows all around in it and in its vestibule; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits.

30 There were vestibules all around, twenty-five cubits deep and five cubits wide.

31 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its pilasters, and its stairway had eight steps.

32 Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gate; it was of the same size as the others.

33 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same dimensions as the others; and there were windows all around in it and in its vestibule; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits.

34 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its pilasters, on either side; and its stairway had eight steps.

35 Then he brought me to the north gate, and he measured it; it had the same dimensions as the others.

36 Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others; and it had windows all around. Its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits.

37 Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its pilasters, on either side; and its stairway had eight steps.

38 There was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the gate, where the burnt offering was to be washed.

39 And in the vestibule of the gate were two tables on either side, on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered.

40 On the outside of the vestibule at the entrance of the north gate were two tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gate were two tables.

41 Four tables were on the inside, and four tables on the outside of the side of the gate, eight tables, on which the sacrifices were to be slaughtered.

42 There were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid with which the burnt offerings and the sacrifices were slaughtered.

43 There were pegs, one handbreadth long, fastened all around the inside. And on the tables the flesh of the offering was to be laid.

44 On the outside of the inner gateway there were chambers for the singers in the inner court, one at the side of the north gate facing south, the other at the side of the east gate facing north.

45 He said to me, "This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple,
and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the descendants of Zadok, who alone among the descendants of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him."

He measured the court, one hundred cubits deep, and one hundred cubits wide, a square; and the altar was in front of the temple.

Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the pillars of the vestibule, five cubits on either side; and the width of the gate was fourteen cubits; and the sidewalls of the gate were three cubits on either side.

The depth of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width twelve cubits; ten steps led up to it; and there were pillars beside the pilasters on either side.

Then he brought me to the main room of the temple, and measured the pilasters; on each side six cubits was the width of the pilasters.

The width of the entrance was ten cubits; and the sidewalls of the entrance were five cubits on either side. He measured the length of the nave, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits.

Then he went into the inner room and measured the pilasters of the entrance, two cubits; and the width of the entrance, six cubits; and the sidewalls of the entrance, seven cubits.

He measured the depth of the room, twenty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits, beyond the main room. And he said to me, This is the most holy place.

Then he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits thick; and the width of the side chambers, four cubits, all around the temple.

The side chambers were in three stories, one over another, thirty in each story. There were offsets all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side chambers, so that they should not be supported by the wall of the temple.

The passageway of the side chambers widened (from story to story); for the structure was supplied with a stairway all around the temple. For this reason the structure became wider from story to story. One ascended from the bottom story to the uppermost story by way of the middle one.

I saw also that the temple had a raised platform all around; the foundations of the side chambers measured a full reed of six long cubits.

The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits; and the free space between the side chambers of the temple

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\[46\] The Hebrew is difficult here. The Targum envisions a winding ramp or set of stairs, which entails reading the first word as a noun rather than a verb and reading the second word also not as a verb (לָאָהִי לָאָהִי), supposing that an initial mem has been read as vav and nun. See Block, Ezekiel 25-48, 549.
and the chambers of the court was a width of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side.

The side chambers opened onto the area left free, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south, and the width of the part that was left free was five cubits all around.

The building that was facing the temple yard on the west side was seventy cubits wide; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its depth ninety cubits.

Then he measured the temple, one hundred cubits deep; and the yard and the building with its walls, one hundred cubits deep;

also the width of the east front of the temple and the yard, one hundred cubits.

Then he measured the depth of the building facing the yard at the west, together with its galleries on either side, one hundred cubits. The main room of the temple and the inner room and the outer vestibule

were paneled, and, all around, all three had windows with recessed frames. Facing the threshold the temple was paneled with wood all around, from the floor up to the windows (now the windows were covered),

to the space above the door, even to the inner room, and on the outside. And on all the walls all around in the inner room and the main room there was a pattern.

It was formed of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces:

a human face turned toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion turned toward the palm tree on the other side. They were carved on the whole temple all around;

from the floor to the area above the door, cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall.

The doorposts of the main room of the temple were square. In front of the holy place was something resembling

an altar of wood, three cubits high, two cubits long, and two cubits wide; its corners, its base, and its walls were of wood. He said to me, "This is the table that stands before the LORD."

The main room and the holy place had each a double door.

The doors had two leaves apiece, two swinging leaves for each door.

On the doors of the nave were carved cherubim and palm trees, such as were carved on the walls; and there was a canopy of wood in front of the vestibule outside.

Although wēhahallōnōt mēkussōt is attested in all the versions, many delete the first word as a ditto hatch, and see in the second a reference to covering with wood or reeding of wooden walls. Cf. Leslie Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, WBC 29, 224.
26 And there were recessed windows and palm trees on either side, on the sidewalls of the vestibule.

42:1 Then he led me out into the outer court, toward the north, and he brought me to the chambers that were opposite the temple yard and opposite the building on the north.

2 The length of the building that was on the north side was one hundred cubits, and the width fifty cubits.

3 Across the twenty cubits that belonged to the inner court, and facing the pavement that belonged to the outer court, the chambers rose gallery by gallery in three stories.

4 In front of the chambers was a passage on the inner side, (ten cubits wide and one cubits)48 deep, and its entrances were on the north.

5 Now the upper chambers were narrower, for the galleries took more away from them than from the lower and middle chambers in the building.

6 For they were in three stories, and they had no pillars like the pillars of the outer court; for this reason the upper chambers were set back from the ground more than the lower and the middle ones.

7 There was a wall outside parallel to the chambers, toward the outer court, opposite the chambers, fifty cubits long.

8 For the chambers on the outer court were fifty cubits long, while those opposite the temple were one hundred cubits long.

9 At the foot of these chambers ran a passage that one entered from the east in order to enter them from the outer court.

10 The width of the passage was fixed by the wall of the court. On the south also, opposite the vacant area and opposite the building, there were chambers

11 with a passage in front of them; they were similar to the chambers on the north, of the same length and width, with the same exits and arrangements and doors.

12 So the entrances of the chambers to the south were entered through the entrance at the head of the corresponding passage, from the east, along the matching wall.

13 Then he said to me, "The north chambers and the south chambers opposite the vacant area are the holy chambers, where the priests who approach the LORD shall eat the most holy offerings; there they shall deposit the most holy offerings-- the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering-- for the place is holy.

14 When the priests enter the holy place, they shall not go out of it into the outer court without laying there the vestments in which they minister, for these are holy; they shall put on other garments before they go near to the area open to the people."

48 Heb "one cubit." The LXX and the Syriac read "one hundred cubits."
When he had finished measuring the interior of the temple area, he led me out by the gate that faces east, and measured the temple area all around.

He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.

Then he turned and measured the north side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. Then he turned and measured the south side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. Then he turned to the west side and measured, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed. He measured it on the four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to make a separation between the holy and the common.

Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east.

And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory.

The vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.

As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east,

the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me out of the temple.

He said to me: Son of Man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel forever. The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their whoring, and by the corpses of their kings at their death.

When they placed their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they were defiling my holy name by their abominations that they committed; therefore I have consumed them in my anger.

Now let them put away their idolatry and the corpses of their kings far from me, and I will reside among them forever.

As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern; and let them be ashamed of their iniquities.

When they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, and its whole form-- all its ordinances and

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Although MT bêhôdî, "when I came," is supported by LXX and Syr., since Ezekiel had no part in the destruction of Jerusalem, the final yod is probably an error for waw, viz., bêhôdî, "when he came." A few medieval Hebrew MSS, Theodotion's Greek version, and the Latin Vulgate support a third person pronoun here. See BHS.
its entire plan and all its laws; and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances.

12 This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. This is the law of the temple.

13 These are the dimensions of the altar by cubits (the cubit being one cubit and a handbreadth): its base shall be one cubit high, and one cubit wide, with a rim of one span around its edge. This shall be the height of the altar:

14 From the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits, with a width of one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits, with a width of one cubit;

15 and the altar hearth, four cubits; and from the altar hearth projecting upward, four horns.

16 The altar hearth shall be square, twelve cubits long by twelve wide.

17 The ledge also shall be square, fourteen cubits long by fourteen wide, with a rim around it half a cubit wide, and its surrounding base, one cubit. Its steps shall face east.

18 Then he said to me: Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: These are the ordinances for the altar: On the day when it is erected for offering burnt offerings upon it and for dashing blood against it,

19 you shall give to the levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who draw near to me to minister to me, says the Lord GOD, a bull for a sin offering.

20 And you shall take some of its blood, and put it on the four horns of the altar, and on the four corners of the ledge, and upon the rim all around; thus you shall purify it and make atonement for it.

21 You shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burnt in the appointed place belonging to the temple, outside the sanctuary.

22 On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering; and the altar shall be purified, as it was purified with the bull.

23 When you have finished purifying it, you shall offer a bull without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish.

24 You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD.

25 For seven days you shall provide daily a goat for a sin offering; also a bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be provided.

26 Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it.

27 When these days are over, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord GOD.

44:1 Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut.
The LORD said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut.

Only the prince, because he is a prince, may sit in it to eat food before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.

Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD; and I fell upon my face.

The LORD said to me: Son of man, mark well, look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of the LORD and all its laws; and mark well those who may be admitted to the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary.

Say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: O house of Israel, let there be an end to all your abominations

in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You have broken my covenant with all your abominations.

And you have not kept charge of my sacred offerings; but you have appointed (foreigners) to act for you in keeping my charge in my sanctuary.

Thus says the Lord GOD: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary.

But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment.

They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple, and serving in the temple; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall attend on them and serve them.

Because they ministered to them before their idols and made the house of Israel stumble into iniquity, therefore I have sworn concerning them, says the Lord GOD, that they shall bear their punishment.

They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my sacred offerings, the things that are most sacred; but they shall bear their shame, and the consequences of the abominations that they have committed.

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50 The third person reference to Yahweh and the irregular word order (cf. 9:4; 23:36) lead many to delete the name as a gloss (Zimmerli, Ezekiel 2, HERMENIA, 437; Allen, Ezekiel 20-48, 244. But MT is not ungrammatical and the reading is attested in virtually all Hebrew mss. and the versions (except LXX); on the principle of lectio difficilior, MT should be retained.

51 Instead of an energetic nun (י), the text may have read a third masculine plural suffix ב (mem), "them," which was confused with י (nun) in the old script. See Block, Ezekiel 25-48, 621. This word ("foreigner") is not in the Hebrew text but is supplied from the context.
14 Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its chores, all that is to be done in it.

15 But the levitical priests, the descendants of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me; and they shall attend me to offer me the fat and the blood, says the Lord GOD.

16 It is they who shall enter my sanctuary, it is they who shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge.

17 When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments; they shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within.

18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads, and linen undergarments on their loins; they shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat.

19 When they go out into the outer court to the people, they shall remove the vestments in which they have been ministering, and lay them in the holy chambers; and they shall put on other garments, so that they may not communicate holiness to the people with their vestments.

20 They shall not shave their heads or let their locks grow long; they shall only trim the hair of their heads.

21 No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court.

22 They shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the stock of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest.

23 They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.

24 In a controversy they shall act as judges, and they shall decide it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes regarding all my appointed festivals, and they shall keep my sabbaths holy.

25 They shall not defile themselves by going near to a dead person; for father or mother, however, and for son or daughter, and for brother or unmarried sister they may defile themselves.

26 After he has become clean, they shall count seven days for him.

27 On the day that he goes into the holy place, into the inner court, to minister in the holy place, he shall offer his sin offering, says the Lord GOD.

28 They shall not have an inheritance. 52 I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no holding in Israel; I am their holding.

52 MT wehāyētā lāhem lēnahālād, lit. "And she shall become their special possession," makes no sense in the context, since it lacks a fem. antecedent. The construction resembles wehāyētā lāhem lēnahālād, where the land is the subject of the verb, but the land has not been mentioned previously in
29 They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs.

30 The first of all, the first fruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests; you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, in order that a blessing may rest on your house.

31 The priests shall not eat of anything, whether bird or animal, that died of itself or was torn by animals.

45:1 When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set aside for the LORD a portion of the land as a holy district, twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty thousand cubits wide; it shall be holy throughout its entire extent.

2 Of this, a square plot of five hundred by five hundred cubits shall be for the sanctuary, with fifty cubits for an open space around it.

3 In the holy district you shall measure off a section twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide, in which shall be the sanctuary, the most holy place.

4 It shall be a holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and approach the LORD to minister to him; and it shall be both a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary.

5 Another section, twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand cubits wide, shall be for the Levites who minister at the temple, as their holding for cities to live in.

6 Alongside the portion set apart as the holy district you shall assign as a holding for the city an area five thousand cubits wide, and twenty-five thousand cubits long; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

7 And to the prince shall belong the land on both sides of the holy district and the holding of the city, alongside the holy district and the holding of the city, on the west and on the cast, corresponding in length to one of the tribal portions, and extending from the western to the eastern boundary of the land. It is to be his property in Israel. And my princes shall no longer oppress my people; but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes.

9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord GOD.

10 You shall have honest balances, an honest ephah, and an honest bath.
11 The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, the bath containing one-tenth of a
homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; the homer shall be the standard measure.
12 The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels
shall make a mina for you.
13 This is the offering that you shall make: one-sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat,
and one-sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley,
14 and as the fixed portion of oil, one-tenth of a bath from each kor (the kor, like the homer,
contains ten baths);54
15 and one sheep from every flock of two hundred, from the pastures of Israel. This is the
offering for grain offerings, burnt offerings,55 and offerings of well-being, to make atonement
for them, says the Lord GOD.
16 All the people of the land shall join with the prince in Israel in making this offering.
17 But this shall be the obligation of the prince regarding the burnt offerings, grain offerings,
and drink offerings, at the festivals, the new moons, and the sabbaths, all the appointed
festivals of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, the burnt
offerings, and the offerings of well-being, to make atonement for the house of Israel.
18 Thus says the Lord GOD: In the first month, on the first day of the month, you shall take a
young bull without blemish, and purify the sanctuary.
19 The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the
temple, the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court.
20 You shall do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who has sinned through
error or ignorance; so you shall make atonement for the temple.
21 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall celebrate the festival of the
Passover, and for seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten.
22 On that day the prince shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a young bull
for a sin offering.
23 And during the seven days of the festival he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD
seven young bulls and seven rams without blemish, on each of the seven days; and a male
goat daily for a sin offering.

54 A literal reading of MT. The first occurrence of this phrase is missing in LXX and usually
deleted as dittography. Perhaps Vulg., which reads kôr in place of the second hōmer, points to an
original that has been lost by assimilation. If so, the parenthetical comment equates the volumes of
these two units of measurement. The present context, involving liquids, also supports kôr; hōmer is
used to measure dry products. See Block, Ezekiel 25-48, 657.

55 Most emend hâdôldât to sg. hâdôlād, on the strength of numerous Hebrew mss. and the
following entries in this list. The pl. is appropriate in the context, however, and many translations
(including LXX) render the following sg. forms as pl. forms. See ibid., 657.
24 He shall provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull, an ephah for each ram, and a
hin of oil to each ephah.
25 In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month and for the seven days of the
festival, he shall make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, and grain
offerings, and for the oil.
46:1 Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall remain closed
on the six working days; but on the sabbath day it shall be opened and on the day of the new
moon it shall be opened.
2 The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by
the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his offerings of well-being,
and he shall bow down at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not
be closed until evening.
3 The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the
sabbaths and on the new moons.
4 The burnt offering that the prince offers to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs
without blemish and a ram without blemish;
5 and the grain offering with the ram shall be an ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs
shall be (as much as he wishes to give), together with a hin of oil to each ephah.
6 On the day of the new moon he shall offer a young bull without blemish, and six lambs and
a ram, which shall be without blemish;
7 as a grain offering he shall provide an ephah with the bull and an ephah with the ram, and
with the lambs as much as he wishes, together with a hin of oil to each ephah.
8 When the prince enters, he shall come in by the vestibule of the gate, and he shall go out by
the same way.
9 When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed festivals, whoever
enters by the north gate to worship shall go out by the south gate; and whoever enters by the
south gate shall go out by the north gate: they shall not return by way of the gate by which
they entered, but shall go out straight ahead.
10 When they come in, the prince shall come in with them; and when they go out, he shall go
out.
11 At the festivals and the appointed seasons the grain offering with a young bull shall be an
ephah, and with a ram an ephah, and with the lambs as much as one wishes to give, together
with a hin of oil to an ephah.

56 “Whatever he can afford” is an idiomatic rendering of mattat yādō, which literally
translates “gift of his hand.” I would like to follow the suggestion of Allen and other versions (NIJS;
NRSV; NIV) to translate it optatively, “as much as he wishes.” See Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, 241.
12 When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or offerings of well-being as a freewill offering to the LORD, the gate facing east shall be opened for him; and he shall offer his burnt offering or his offerings of well-being as he does on the sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out the gate shall be closed.

13 (He shall provide) a lamb, a yearling, without blemish, for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning he shall provide it.

14 And he shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning regularly, one-sixth of an ephah, and one-third of a hin of oil to moisten the choice flour, as a grain offering to the LORD; this is the ordinance for all time.

15 Thus the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, as a regular burnt offering.

16 Thus says the Lord GOD: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons out of his inheritance, it shall belong to his sons, it is their holding by inheritance.

17 But if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of liberty; then it shall revert to the prince; only his sons may keep a gift from his inheritance.

18 The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their holding; he shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own holding, so that none of my people shall be dispossessed of their holding.

19 Then he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, to the north row of the holy chambers for the priests; and there I saw a place at the extreme western end of them.

20 He said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, in order not to bring them out into the outer court and so communicate holiness to the people."

21 Then he brought me out to the outer court, and led me past the four corners of the court; and in each corner of the court there was a court

22 in the four corners of the court were small courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; the four were of the same size.

23 On the inside, around each of the four courts was a row of masonry, with hearths made at the bottom of the rows all around.

24 Then he said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who serve at the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people."

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27 Some Hebrew Mss. read this as a second person singular, thus to recognizing the beginning of a new subsection. Block and Allen agree with this translation. However, I would rather go with other Hebrew Mss., the LXX, and the Vulgate that read the verb as third person singular (referring to the prince), both here and later in the verse. See Block, Ezekiel 20–48, 680; Allen Ezekiel 20–48, 270.
47:1 Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar.

2 Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and the water was coming out on the south side.

3 Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and (it was ankle-deep). 58

4 Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. 5 Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist.

5 Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed.

6 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he led me back along the bank of the river.

7 As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other.

8 He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, (the sea of stagnant waters), 59 the water will become fresh.

9 Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes.

10 People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea.

11 But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt.

12 On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."


59 MT 'el-hayyámmad hammu̇lyám, "to the sea which have been brought out," is difficult. LXX τος ἐξ θαλάσσης διεσυρμένος, "the waters of the breakthrough," assumes hammu̇lyám for hayyámmad, which has the advantage of numerical agreement between noun and adjective. Vulg. deletes 'el-hayyámmad, apparently recognizing the redundancy. BHS read ἡλίκινθος, "salted." The intended sense is undoubtedly caught by Syr. sry, "stagnant" (so is NRSV). See See Allen, Ezekiel 20–48, 273; Block, Ezekiel 25–48, 687.
13 Thus says the Lord GOD: These are the boundaries by which you shall divide the land for inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions.

14 You shall divide it equally; I swore to give it to your ancestors, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

15 This shall be the boundary of the land: On the north side, from the Great Sea by way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, and on to Zedad,

16 Berothah, Sibraim (which lies between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), as far as Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran.

17 So the boundary shall run from the sea to Hazar-enon, which is north of the border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north. This shall be the north side.

18 On the east side, between Hauran and Damascus; along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel; to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar. This shall be the east side.

19 On the south side, it shall run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt to the Great Sea. This shall be the south side.

20 On the west side, the Great Sea shall be the boundary to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This shall be the west side.

21 So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel.

22 You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.

23 In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord GOD.

48:1 These are the names of the tribes: Beginning at the northern border, on the Hethlon road, from Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enon (which is on the border of Damascus, with Hamath to the north), and extending from the east side to the west, Dan, one portion.

2 Adjoining the territory of Dan, from the east side to the west, Asher, one portion.

3 Adjoining the territory of Asher, from the east side to the west, Naphtali, one portion.

4 Adjoining the territory of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, Manasseh, one portion.

5 Adjoining the territory of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, Ephraim, one portion.

6 Adjoining the territory of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, Reuben, one portion.

7 Adjoining the territory of Reuben, from the east side to the west, Judah, one portion.

8 Adjoining the territory of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the portion that you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand cubits in width, and in length equal to one of the tribal portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the middle of it.

9 The portion that you shall set apart for the LORD shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in length, and twenty thousand in width.
These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring twenty-five thousand cubits on the northern side, ten thousand cubits in width on the western side, ten thousand in width on the eastern side, and twenty-five thousand in length on the southern side, with the sanctuary of the LORD in the middle of it.

This shall be for the consecrated priests, the descendants of Zadok, who kept my charge, who did not go astray when the people of Israel went astray, as the Levites did. It shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites.

Alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites shall have an allotment twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width. The whole length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and the width twenty thousand.

They shall not sell or exchange any of it; they shall not transfer this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the LORD.

The remainder, five thousand cubits in width and twenty-five thousand in length, shall be for ordinary use for the city, for dwellings and for open country. In the middle of it shall be the city;

and these shall be its dimensions: the north side four thousand five hundred cubits, the south side four thousand five hundred, the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred.

The city shall have open land: on the north two hundred fifty cubits, on the south two hundred fifty, on the east two hundred fifty, on the west two hundred fifty.

The remainder of the length alongside the holy portion shall be ten thousand cubits to the east, and ten thousand to the west, and it shall be alongside the holy portion. Its produce shall be food for the workers of the city.

The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it.

The whole portion that you shall set apart shall be twenty-five thousand cubits square, that is, the holy portion together with the property of the city.

What remains on both sides of the holy portion and of the property of the city shall belong to the prince. Extending from the twenty-five thousand cubits of the holy portion to the east border, and westward from the twenty-five thousand cubits to the west border, parallel to the tribal portions, it shall belong to the prince. The holy portion with the sanctuary of the temple in the middle of it.\(^6\)

\(^6\) The suffix on Kethib btkh refers to the sacred precinct, not to the rest of the area as suggested by Qere btkw. See BHS.
and the property of the Levites and of the city, shall be in the middle of that which belongs to the prince. The portion of the prince shall lie between the territory of Judah and the territory of Benjamin.

As for the rest of the tribes: from the east side to the west, Benjamin, one portion.

Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon, one portion.

Adjoining the territory of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar, one portion.

Adjoining the territory of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun, one portion.

Adjoining the territory of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad, one portion.

And adjoining the territory of Gad to the south, the boundary shall run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt to the Great Sea.

This is the land that you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, says the Lord GOD.

These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure,

three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel.

On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan.

On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun.

On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali.

The circumference of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is There.61

61 LXX either misread יְהֹוָה כִּיֵּמָה as יְהֹוָה כִּיֵּמָה, "YHWH is its name," or is based on a different Vorlage.