



Prophets in Exile: Ezekiel I

Michelangelo's Ezekiel, Sistine Chapel

The first Jews in exile; Ezekiel's inaugural vision—the “throne chariot” and the promise of the Lord's presence even in exile; Ezekiel called as a watchman. Prophetic warnings: symbolic acts—the coming siege of Jerusalem; a vision of the corrupted temple; more symbolic acts—the harshness of exile.

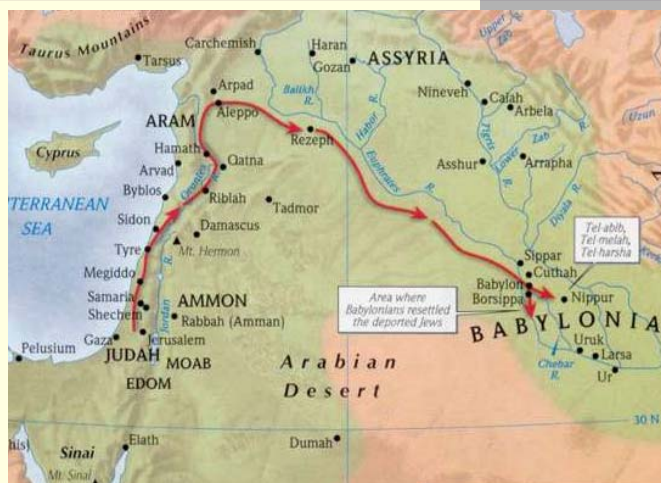
Ezekiel 1–5, 8–12, 14, 16, 18, 23.

Ezekiel

- **Yehezkel = “God will strengthen”**
 - Taken with Jehoiachin in the first deportation (c. 597 B.C.)
 - Settled at **Tel Abib** (“Hill of the Deluge,” modern Tel Aviv is named for it)
- Both **prophet and priest**
 - Is a **“watchman” for Israel**
 - Often speaks in terms of purity and impurity, makes references to Leviticus
 - **Begins with a vision of a desecrated temple ready for destruction and ends with a vision of a renewed temple**
- **Began his prophetic ministry at age 30, the traditional age for priests to begin their service**
 - Could not serve in the temple, but he could still serve God!
 - **Prophesied from 593–571 B.C.**
 - **His visions were ecstatic and symbolic, earning him the title “the father of apocalyptic”**
 - Intensely **vulnerable to the spirit**—note how often the word of God comes on him, the spirit “picks him up,” etc.
 - *Rabbinic tradition later held that only a mature man well-versed in Torah dare read the opening of Ezekiel!*

“By the river of Chebar . . .”

The Chebar was an irrigation canal south and west of Babylon. Next to it at Tel-abib many, including Ezekiel, of the first deportation were settled



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The Messages of Ezekiel

- Theological
 - **God can be present with his people, even in exile**
 - **God's glory, power, knowledge are indescribable**
- Moral
 - **Israel and Judah's punishment was a result of their own sin—especially their covenant unfaithfulness to YHWH**
 - Main message *before* 587 B.C.
 - Although the *group* suffers to some extent for the sins of their predecessors, **individuals will be judged according to their own guilt; repentance can save even the wicked** (18:1–32)
 - Nevertheless, **God is faithful and will one day restore Israel**
 - Consolation and restoration are the major messages *after* 587 B.C.
- Prophetic
 - The task of God's messenger is to serve as a **sentinel or watchman** who may individually succeed or fail
 - As a priestly or scapegoat figure, **he intercedes** (sc. prophet as **mediator**) **for his people and can symbolically bear their burdens . . . is responsible if he does not warn them** (3:12–21; cf. Jacob 1:19, 2:2–3)

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Overview of the Book of Ezekiel

Unlike Jeremiah, very chronological—note the frequent date references

- **Ezekiel's Call and Commissioning (1:1–3:27)**
 - Ezekiel's Circumstances (1:1–3)
 - Ezekiel's Vision of God (1:4–28)
 - The Vision of the Scroll (2:1–3:27)
- **Prophecies Against Judah and Jerusalem (4:1–24:27)**
 - Prophecies through Symbols (4:1–5:17)
 - Prophecies Through Visions (8:1–11:25)
 - Judgment Through Signs, Messages, and Parables (12:1–24:27)
- **Prophecies Against Foreign Nations (25:1–32:32)**
- **Prophecies of Israel's Restoration (33:1–39:29)**
 - Ezekiel's Appointment as a Watchman (33:1–33)
 - Israel's Shepherds (34:1–31)
 - The Rebirth of the Nation (35:1–36:38)
 - The Resuscitation of the Nation: the Valley of dry bones (37:1–14)
 - The Reuniting of the Nation: Two sticks (37:15–28)
 - The Victory of the Nation over Gog and Magog (38:1–39:29)
- **Prophecies Concerning Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (40:1–48:35)**
 - A New Temple (40:1–43:27)
 - A New Service of Worship (44:1–46:24)
 - A New Holy Land (47:1–48:35)

Note the formulaic expression, “Thou shalt/they shall know that I am the Lord”

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Ezekiel's Vision of God (1:4–28)



Peter Robson, “Ezekiel's Vision of God”

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- Seems to describe the Jewish concept of *merkavah*, or the “throne of God”
 - Wheeled because, unlike the ark permanently placed in the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem, this throne is mobile
 - *God can travel with his people into exile!*

“Likeness,” “like unto”

Ezekiel struggles to describe the unexplainable



Vikki North

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The Vision of the Scroll (2:1–3:27)

- Ezekiel's Call (2:1–10)
 - “Son of man” = “Son of Adam” or mortal
 - “be not afraid of them . . . Nor dismayed at their looks,” cf. Jeremiah 1:8, 17!
- Ezekiel's Commissioning (3:1–11)
 - Eating the scroll . . . Jeremiah 15:16, Revelation 10:10
- Ezekiel at the River Chebar (3:12–21)
 - “Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me . . . Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.” (3:17–21) *But if not . . .*
- Ezekiel Isolated and Silenced (3:22–27)

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Prophecies through Symbols (4:1–5:17)

Prophecies Against Judah and Jerusalem (4:1–24:27)

- A brick: the siege of Jerusalem (4:1–3)
- A posture: the duration of the Exile (4:4–8)
 - 390 days on the left side for Israel, 40 days on the right for Judah
 - Ezekiel the priest as scapegoat (Lev. 16:17–21)
- Bread: scarcity (4:9–17)
 - Rations at fixed time, impure food
- Shaving: destruction of the people of Jerusalem (5:1–17)
 - A third burned, a third smitten by a knife, a third cast to the wind (a tiny portion sewn in Ezekiel's garment as a remnant)

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Prophecies Through Visions (8:1–11:25)

Prophecies Against Judah and Jerusalem (4:1–24:27)

- **A vision of wickedness in the Temple (8:1–18)**
- A vision of the slaying of the idolatrous inhabitants of Jerusalem (9:1–11)
- A vision of the burning of Jerusalem **as the *Shekinah* (cloud of glory representing the presence of YHWH) prepares to depart (10:1–7)**
- **A vision of the same Lord in Jerusalem as at Chebar (10:8–22)**
- A vision of wicked princes and departed glory (11:1–25)
 - Judgment on wicked counselors (11:1–12)
 - **God will restore Israel (11:13–21)**
 - ***Shekinah* completes her departure from Jerusalem (13:22–25)**

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Signs, Messages, and Parables about Judgment (12:1–24:27)

- The sign of the prophet's baggage: Judah's captivity (12:1–16)
- The sign of trembling: Judgment not postponed (12:17–28)
- [The message against false prophets and prophetesses (13:1–23)]
- The message against the idolatrous elders: God's judgments justified (14:1–23)
- [The parable of the fruitless vine (15:1–8)]
- **The parable of the adulterous woman (16:1–63)**
 - Her youth (16:1–14)
 - Her sins (16:15–34)
 - Her condemnation (16:35–52)
 - **Her restoration (16:53–63)**
- [The parable of the two eagles (17:1–24)]

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The Proverb of the Sour Grapes Repudiated: Individual Retribution (18:1–32)

- “What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, **The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?** As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: **the soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right . . . He shall surely live.**”

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