

**AN EVALUATION OF THE NATURE AND ROLE OF THE  
'GLORY OF THE LORD' IN EZEKIEL 1-24**

By

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## Summary

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This thesis evaluates the nature and role of 'the glory of the Lord,' *hwhy-dwbk*, in Ezekiel 1-24. The introductory chapter will present the relevance of the topic as well as purview the scope of the thesis and the structure of its presentation. Chapter two lays an interpretive foundation for the glory pericope within a central theme in the book of Ezekiel. The intended impact on the exilic audience is discerned through examining the characteristic features of the *hwhy-dwbk* in Chapter 3. Chapter four identifies three functions of the *hwhy-dwbk*. A final function of the *hwhy-dwbk* is explored in its relationship to 'the son of *adam*' in chapter five. A summary of the hypothesis is provided in chapter 6 along with a conclusion.

### **Key Terms:**

Ezekiel; Glory of the Lord; Kabod Yahweh; Ezekiel's visions; prophetic vision; Yahweh war tradition; Zion tradition; Presence of God; exile; Son of man.

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## 1 CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Contemporary Relevance of the Old Testament's Theological Construct of Glory

Issues around the proper understanding and exercise of authority are no strangers to the Church. Indeed, Jesus contended with his contemporaries over it.<sup>1</sup> What may seem out of the ordinary, however, is that authority has something to do with *glory*. Interestingly, a reference to glory in connection with the exercise of authority comes up in varied Christian circles.

One such issue, which is long standing and the epitome of the Church's struggle over authority, has been the role and function of the papal office. To this day, the office is a source of contention with both Protestants and the Orthodox. In his recent response to the pope's call in the encyclical *Ut unum sint* to renewed dialogue on the papal office, Orthodox theologian Olivier Clement (2003:9) states: 'The problem of the papacy is clearly the greatest difficulty facing ecumenical dialogue today, and particularly the dialogue between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.'

It is clear enough from Jesus' exhortation that the exercise of authority for ruling and guiding God's people was to be a counterpart to the standard operation of political powers.<sup>2</sup> Embarrassingly, the Church has always struggled to make this true. Indeed at the heart of the Orthodox/Catholic debate is the apparent abuse of power. The office of Peter, the Orthodox have argued, was and should return to a primacy of honor/love not of power and of *protos*—the first among many, not *arche*—ruler over many.

Interestingly, Clement (2003:23) frames the overcoming of the seeming impasse in the language of glory:

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 21:23-27

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 20:26

The presence of Peter in the Church...has thus no connection at all with worldly glory.

This is how the early Church understood it, not as a question of succession to be discussed, Peter and Paul “live and preside” in the Church of Rome. It is the place “where the apostles (Peter and Paul) preside daily and where their blood renders constant testimony to the glory of God.

The exercise of authority based in the ‘glory of God’ is for Clement (2003:90) a ‘mystery of Papacy’ grounded in the principle of unity in God in three persons. ‘In this way there will be unity of thought, and God will be glorified [God here means the Father] through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.’

In another instance, Gerhard Lohfink (1999:141-142) sees an understanding of glory as a critical part of his discussion on the nature and purpose of the Church. As a part of his discussion on the real and visible aspect of God’s kingdom in the world and through a people of God, he appeals to the glory of God:

Jesus’ glory does not remain in a supra-sensual realm nor is it something inward, purely spiritual, and transcendent: it is visible and tangible, can be tasted and enjoyed. It is as real and earthly as, according to the book of Isaiah, the “glory of the Lord” will be in Israel at the end time. Isaiah speaks very often of “seeing” the glory of the Lord. The Fourth Evangelist deliberately adopts the same expression. The glory of Jesus that is visible at the Cana miracle is the reflection of the glory of God in which...the “Son” has always shared. At the same time, however, it is the visible in breaking of that glory into history, more precisely into the history of Israel, the people of God, to whom now, with the appearance of Jesus, the eschatological fullness of the “glory of the Lord” has been given.

Lohfink (1999:150) argues that the saving act of Jesus’ passion and the early church’s understanding of grace must be understood in terms of the glory of the Lord. He states:

In the course of the Fourth Gospel the glory of Jesus...is explained as a glory that first comes to its true expression at Jesus’ “hour”, that is his Passion. Moreover, Paul developed a whole theology of the superabundant grace of God that appears precisely in the weakness and distress of the faithful in order that it may be clear that the overflowing fullness of glory comes not from human strength, but from God alone.

Seeing the glory of God through Jesus Christ and in the everyday workings of the Church is critical for Lohfink's discussion of what the reign of God should look like.

On the opposite end of the spectrum of what are seen as the critical issues for the church is the self-proclaimed 'house church movement.' Claiming a worldwide movement in the millions, the movement is strongly motivated by a desire to restore what is perceived to be the more loosely structured house churches referenced in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> It is evident that those advocating house churches see almost anything institutional-looking as 'empire building' that stifles the move of the Holy Spirit. Chief among the culprits of institutional Christianity is ecclesiastical office. Frank Viola (2004:electronic version) exemplifies such sentiment in his article:

In summary, the testimony of the New Testament denouncing positional/hierarchical authority is unmistakably clear. And it is in direct harmony with the teaching of Jesus. As such the final word to the Christian regarding ...leadership structure is incarnated in our Lord's piercing phrase: "But it shall not be so among you." (Mt 20:26) That is the linchpin of the whole matter.

Interestingly, the mention of glory in conjunction with the problem of authority is also discussed. A key component to healthy churches (small enough to meet in a house), vibrant church life, and the advancing of God's kingdom will be humble, servant-minded leaders who have renounced the tendency to want attention focused on them. Undrai Fizer (2004:electronic version) writes: 'In order for the miraculous to sweep across America as it did in Christ's day, we will have to die to glory. God will use those who have died to glory to raise others to glory.' (2004:electronic version) He prescribes 'three attitudes that God wants to permeate this movement of churches in houses: no empire-building, no control, no glory.'

At first, the house church advocates appear to stand in stark opposition to ideas suggested by Clement and Lohfink, but in some ways, they share something in common. All clearly see that issues of ecclesiology are increasingly paramount in our relativistic,

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<sup>3</sup> [www.house2house.com](http://www.house2house.com)

individualistic, and anti-authoritarian world that makes up the oft-labeled post-modern era. All agree—based on Mt 20:26—that the exercise of power and authority in the church must be a dramatic alternative to political governments. They all sense a kind of exhaustion over worn out appeals to authority whether it be based on Papal office or the Bible, especially since they all too often have been accompanied by oppressive and devastating coercion. Finally, they all appeal to a renewed vision of the ‘glory of the Lord’ being really, practically, but precariously present among believers and to which leadership is particularly sensitive.

Having experienced multiple church splits and bitter divisions over a period of 30 years, I have witnessed the repeated phenomenon of the disintegration of authority in a time of internal communal conflict. In doctrinal terms, lines of authority were clear enough—the Bible was the sole and definitive rule of faith and practice, but in times of internal turmoil, authority—the right to rule and make decisions—inevitably degenerated to a point where warring parties all unconvincingly claimed sole possession of it. As is the protest of the Orthodox towards the seat of Rome, so was mine during those times of communal degeneration: control, coercion, manipulation, and power plays overtook good intentions.

Surprisingly in the Old Testament, a Hebrew equivalent to ‘authority’ is rare. Rather, the ancient Israelites understood the idea of authority more under the paradigm of glory: *ḥb̄k*. It is apparent that *ḥb̄k* encompassed an array of ideas associated with authority established in God—the presence, power, fame, and rule of Yahweh.

Brueggemann (1997:289) states:

The glory of Yahweh refers to the claim and aura of power, authority, and sovereignty that must be established in struggle, exercised in authority, and conceded either by willing adherents or by defeated resisters. In many tests, Yahweh’s glory has a visible, physical appearance of light. But what is seen in the end is Yahweh’s rightful claim to governance. That claim is culminated not only of the legitimacy and appropriateness of Yahweh’s authority, but also of the sheer force that can guarantee the claim of legitimacy.



It is equally apparent that although these ideas were important for the rise and perpetuation of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, they became acute during the climactic years of Jerusalem's fall, the destruction of the Temple, and the demise of the Davidic monarchy. It was during this time and throughout the exile that a priestly class most closely aligned with the Temple recalled and reshaped the notion of the 'glory of Yahweh' or 'the glory of Israel.'<sup>4</sup> In essence, it was necessary to reassert the authority and claim of Yahweh's right to rule over His people, as well as the dynamic Presence that Israel always believed was behind her sacred institutions. Von Rad (1962:240) states: 'Thus, P's view of the *chabod Yahweh* is simply the form of manifestation which Yahweh employed in order to reveal to Israel particular decisions of his will, the setting of matters of importance.'

For many in the exilic crisis, Israel's authority to keep responding to her God was to be found in Yahweh's Glory, *hwhy-dwbk*. This notion carries itself well into the time of Jesus and the early church. An Old Testament understanding of glory becomes a critical component for the insipient church, especially attested to in John's Gospel. Glory became increasingly important in its development of orthodoxy beyond the first century A.D.

In a postmodern society such as ours, retrieving the ancient Israelites' understanding of glory, especially as related to notions of authority, right to rule, and the Presence of God, can contribute to the pressing ecclesiastical concerns mentioned above. The development of *hwhy-dwbk* in the book of Ezekiel is of particular interest precisely because of the manifestation of glory and its relationship with a community in crisis and with a unique and central figure labeled the *son of adam*. Looking at the relationship carefully produces valuable clarity to the necessary yet precarious nature of how socio/political/religious communities, along with their institutions and leaders, can lay claim to and exercise an authority that is from God, especially at the most critical times, a time of internal communal crisis. This study seeks to clarify the theological *nature* and *function* of the

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<sup>4</sup> Kutsko (2000a:79-87) concisely reviews current scholarship in his section 'The Kabod-Theology in the Priestly tradition' and compares and contrasts it with both 'Zion theology' and the kabod-theology of Ezekiel.

*glory of the Lord*, hwhy-dwbk, in the book of Ezekiel and its relationship with a community in crisis, especially as it is exemplified in the son of *adam*. In a world of political, religious, and ideological entrenchments, we would do well to revisit how God's authority—glory—relates to his people.

## 1.2 Focus of Inquiry

The ancient Israelites conceptualized authority—the right and the power to govern—under the idea of dwbk. As von Rad (1962:239) states: '*Chabod* is by and large that asset which makes peoples or individuals, and even objects, impressive, and usually this is understood as something that can be perceived or expressed.'

Furthermore von Rad (1962:240) sees that glory is given a heightened theological clarity come the time of the exile when it became existentially imperative to reassert a stabilizing influence in a chaotic and confusing situation:

...there is a further, and much more sharply defined idea of the *glory of Israel*. According to it, the *chabod* was something belonging immediately to Jahweh, a part of his supernatural being; thus, especially in Ezekiel and the Priestly document, the *glory of Israel* becomes an important technical term in describing theophanies (Ez. 1:1ff). It is a matter of the descent of a fire-like phenomenon which, since men could not bear the sight of it, is covered by a protecting cloud.

The exilic theological construction of the hwhy-dwbk served the needs of the exilic situation but was not created by Ezekiel or the priests. Rather, their innovation was the creative application of well-established and latent traditions. The more prominent of these had been the tradition developed within the cultic and liturgical precincts of Zion, and the other less prominent, but more ancient exodus/wilderness tradition symbolized in the ark/tabernacle and closely associated with the shrine at Shechem.<sup>5</sup>

A common view among scholars, such as Bright (1981:337), tends to interpret Ezekiel as rejecting his own Zion tradition in favor of retrieving the older tradition that was less

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<sup>5</sup> As summarized by Strong (2000:70) of von Rad's view. Also see Kutsko (2000a:79-87)

reliant on a fixed temple location and a partnership with a king. This seems reasonable considering the theological, ethical, and political shambles the Davidic monarchy had become. In his article *God's Kabod*, however, John T. Strong suggests that the developed sense of glory introduced by the prophet Ezekiel was in fact an attempt to uphold the Zion tradition in spite of its apparent demise. Strong (2000:70) suggests: 'It is more accurate to look to the Zion traditions, which certainly had some connections with H and P, as the theological background for Ezekiel's prophecies.' Strong's thesis does not support a redefining or rejection of Zion theology, 'but only implementing a particular aspect of it at a certain point in time.'<sup>6</sup>

That Ezekiel is primarily concerned with Zion traditions provides the context for my own hypothesis concerning the function of glory in the book of Ezekiel and its relationship to the 'son of *adam*.' The heart of the Zion tradition is Yahweh on the divine throne in Jerusalem (Ps 45, 47, 89).<sup>7</sup> Strong (2000:73) asserts that Ezekiel accentuates certain aspects of glory found in both Zion and exodus traditions in order to reassert Yahweh's intransigent right to rule over his people, arguing against the notion that Ezekiel's glory visions present an anti-monarchical agenda.

### 1.3 Hypothesis

The debate as to whether Yahweh is abandoning Zion and the Davidic monarchy or somehow upholding it provides the starting point for my hypothesis. The idea advanced here is that the glory vision of Ezekiel is presented to reiterate Yahweh's rule over his people. Rather than abandoning Zion, *hwhy-dwbk* is presented by Ezekiel as making a stand and fighting for it. Rather than repudiating the Davidic monarchy, *hwhy-dwbk* moves to preserve it. Rather than rejecting those in the land of Jerusalem in favor of the Babylonian exiles, the glory of the Lord emphatically steps in between the two and becomes a definitive and demonstrative monstrosity or icon of Yahweh's insistence upon being not just a player in the conflict, but the dominant one. This is especially

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<sup>6</sup> That Ezekiel is primarily reworking traditions associated with Zion is also argued by Renz (1999:77-93).

<sup>7</sup> See page 15 for an explanation of Zion tradition.

accomplished with the unique relationship established between hwhy-dwbk and the son of *adam*. Through a powerful encounter with hwhy-dwbk, the son of *adam* becomes a surrogate and depository, a sign, of Yahweh's active engagement with his people. The purpose of the glory pericope in Ezekiel, then, serves several functions. On one hand, glory decisively breaks with Israel's history and Zion's propensity towards degeneration. On the other hand, it retains and transforms Zion's most salient features in a way that preserves it in a time of great loss.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, the glory vision of Ezekiel serves to radically and powerfully affirm Yahweh's aggressive involvement and command over the crisis facing Israel. hwhy-dwbk provides a beacon of hope not only for exilic survival, but also for recovery.

#### **1.4 Interpretive Approach**

There is much to say when it comes to methodological approaches to interpretive reading of the Old Testament. Indeed, even the notion of doing "Old Testament theology" has been seriously challenged. It is beyond the scope of this research to take on the whole issue. In his book *Theology of the Old Testament*, Walter Brueggemann (1997:20) exerts: 'Thus there is no easy choice about interpretive assumption. Through the present century, an endless adjudication of this issue has taken place.' Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Brueggemann perceives that the Old Testament interpretive enterprise has led to a 'confusion of methods' and to a kind of unsettled dualism. This dualism is between what Brueggemann (1997:40) variously calls: 'the constant and dynamic,' 'constant and historical,' 'normative and developmental,' or 'constants and change.' He summarizes various new attempts at moving forward and lays out his own argument which accepts a plurality of approaches that can only be worked out *ad judiciously*.

Cautiously then, my fundamental approach to arriving at an understanding of Ezekiel's use of glory will be exegetical. I want to stay close to the text and let the text speak for itself. The primary source is Ezekiel chapters 1-24. Thus the basic exegetical questions

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<sup>8</sup> Renz (1999:91) speaks of 're-creation rather than restoration' and of temporary dissolution of Zion tradition rather than a demolition in principle.

of authorship, historical setting, and intended audience will be pursued. The attempt is made to delve into identifying the critical factors involved in the creating of the text as well as its original settings for the hearing of it. My conclusions will be based on direct engagement with the text incorporating literary analysis, word studies, understanding of the historical situation, and dialogue with scholarly debate. Comparison and contrast with other significant Biblical texts and the traditions that influence them will also be employed. Emphasis will be especially placed on the literary form or shape of the glory pericope, Ezekiel 1-24, as a guide for understanding the intended message.

This inquiry will be limited to understanding the intended message of Ezekiel to its earliest recipients. Similar to the exegetical task in the Gospels, this task presents a two-tiered problem when it comes to its earliest historical setting. On the one hand, there is the actual life and times of the prophet (in the Gospels it is Jesus) to which the story is situated, and on the other hand, there is the life and times of the author/community who is writing and redacting the literature (the earliest church communities). Albertz (2003:355) defines this two-tiered task as uncovering *the conceptual* as well as *the compositional reality*.

The exegetical task over the last 100 hundred years has been dominated by an historical-critical approach. It has utilized the various scientific disciplines of archeology, comparative religions and textual criticisms largely based on Enlightenment and positivistic presuppositions. Even though the current milieu of thinking has rightly and seriously challenged these presuppositions and the results that are based on them, there have been valuable insights gained. It is possible to hold in critical tension the presuppositions of the historical/critical method all the while accepting and building upon many of the results of this approach. Even with the formidable challenges facing the historical critical approach, there is still wide-spread acceptance of some of its salient features: the Old Testament literature reveals development over time; there are various strands of tradition weaved into the various texts as we have them, and these traditions can be generally identified by oral and textual sources which have distinctive

characteristics; and Biblical authors and editors employed a full array of literary and rhetorical devices for the purpose of persuasion.

Ultimately, my approach is canonical. All Biblical texts present themselves as a coherent whole to the reader. The final form of the text presumes an intended integration of divergent communal interests, even contrary ones, as well as insists on unity of faith that can hold tensions together.

In a now post-modern world, ironically, issues of methodology themselves get bogged down in defending an authoritative basis for the interpretive enterprise. In his book, *Does God Need the Church*, Gerhard Lohfink (1999:290) directly connects issues of interpretive approaches with the problem of Church divisions. Claiming first of all that: ‘the Church’s deepest wound is disunity,’ he then explains how the Bible itself bears witness to a miraculous unity of faith: ‘only to be understood as the working of the historical and meta-historical power of the person of Jesus Christ.’

In his discussion of the basis of unity<sup>9</sup>, Lohfink (1999:300) succinctly expresses the symbiotic interplay between the text and the community of the faithful who simultaneously create and receive it:

Then more than ever we would have to be serious about the fact that the Sacred Scriptures do not consist of a bundle of assorted documents that can be played off against one another, but rather make up a single book. The historic-critical method in recent decades has, by employing newer exegetical techniques derived from literary theory (synchronic analysis), approached ever more closely to this insight. It has recognized with increasing assurance that the thing to be interpreted is ultimately the canonical “final text” of the Bible, and not only certain parts or preliminary stages.

If, however, it was the authorial will of the Church that created the final text of the Bible, the canon, it can only have understood its own book in such a way that all the divergent threads in it, representing the faith of different communities or regions of the Church, come together in unity.

Exegesis must certainly trace the variety of traditions and layers in the Bible in a *historical-critical*

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<sup>9</sup> ‘To whom and wherein shall the separated churches convert? To God and God’s will, that is the historical plan God has for the world. This plan is revealed to us nowhere more clearly than in the Old and New Testaments.’ (Lohfink 1999:302)

manner. That is unavoidable for the sake of interpretation itself. But as soon as it begins to interpret the Bible *theologically*—which is its primary function—it must interpret the final text, and interpret it in terms of its unity.

## 1.5 Plan and Structure of the Dissertation

- 1) Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the purpose, focus, and direction of the dissertation.
- 2) Chapter 2 will establish an interpretive foundation for examining the glory pericope in Ezekiel. Interfacing with a variety of scholarly approaches to the book over the past fifty years, basic literary questions concerning the purpose of the book, structure, and unique literary features will be examined. These literary considerations will be harmonized with an examination of the socio-political situation of both the prophet and the exilic period.
- 3) The *nature* of *hwhy-dwbk* will be clarified in the more descriptive sections of the glory visions in Chapter 3. In particular, the purpose of the elaborate glory descriptions will be pursued.
- 4) Chapter 4 will identify the *role or function* that *hwhy-dwbk* plays in the book of Ezekiel. The literary shape of the glory pericope will serve as a basis for this inquiry. The role or function of glory is divided up into four classifications, three of which will be addressed in this chapter: *guiding, confronting, and separating*.
- 5) The role or function of *hwhy-dwbk* is pursued further with a fourth identifiable function of glory. In this case, it especially has to do with the relationship or interaction with *son of adam*. Here a fourth classification of glory's function is identified: *preparing*.
- 6) Chapter 6 will offer a summary of the insights gained from the inquiry. The pertinence of Ezekiel's understanding of glory will be summarized first in regards

to current Old Testament theological debate over issues, especially addressing the presence and absence of God. The closing remarks relate Ezekiel's presentation of the glory of Yahweh to contemporary concerns such as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

## 1.6 Explanation of Key concepts

Often, *tradition* will be coupled with topical words such as *Zion, Shechem, Sinai, Ark, or exodus/wilderness* to designate a framework for Old Testament narrative and liturgical expressions about God and his activities that has distinctive features. It is not assumed that there is but one solidified and coherent tradition for these designated terms, but rather a cluster of notions and ideas collected and realized by a particular symbol.

Ollenburger (1987:22) prefers to speak of Zion as a symbol rather than a Zion Tradition. Hence: 'The central feature of the Jerusalem cult tradition, and that which bestowed upon Zion its sacral character, is the belief that Yahweh dwells among his people in Jerusalem. That Yahweh's presence should be associated with Jerusalem, and with Mt. Zion in particular.' Although there are numerous characteristics peculiar to a Zion tradition,<sup>10</sup> a few especially contribute to the hypothesis considered above:

- 1) Yahweh as the true king and ruler of His people on Zion
- 2) Yahweh with cherubim
- 3) Yahweh who does battle against both cosmic and human enemies
- 4) Yahweh's unique partnership with a Davidic monarchy
- 5) Yahweh who establishes order and rules in righteousness

*Glory*, from the Hebrew *dwbk*, will be mostly referred to in its more restrictive technical sense for a certain kind of epiphany or theophany. More accurately the term is *hwby-dwbk, glory of the Lord*. Chapter 3 is dedicated to a thorough definition of the term.

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<sup>10</sup> Renz (1999:79-83) provides a concise summary of them.



Millard C. Lind (1980:23-45) has aptly synthesized the discussion of the theology of warfare in the Old Testament. The term *Yahweh war* or even *Yahweh as warrior* is preferred over others, especially *holy war*. *Yahweh war* more precisely refers to battle narratives in which Yahweh himself takes the central role as a commanding warrior; the enemy is identified as Yahweh's enemy, a requirement of trust is placed on those who would join Him in battle; Yahweh assures victory and it comes by miraculous action that creates a chaotic and destructive panic in the enemy; the most critical human agent is a prophet; and Yahweh can claim exclusive credit for the victory.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> This summary is also indebted to von Rad's (1991) contribution.



## **2 LITERARY AND HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERPRETING THE GLORY PERICOPE IN EZEKIEL**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The scope of this chapter is limited to highlighting the critical data necessary toward understanding the role and function of glory in the book of Ezekiel. This overview of the historical situation surrounding the prophet's life and the literary formation of the book of Ezekiel will be highly selective. This chapter will lay the exegetical foundation to pursue the hypothesis.

### **2.2 Purpose of the Book – Get the Message**

The book of Ezekiel is intentionally and thoroughly rhetorical. It is meant to persuade. It is recognized that the book of Ezekiel subordinates historical, socio-political, and biographical information to a greater purpose. As Walter Zimmerli (1979:18) states, these elements are: 'repeatedly integrated into *kerygmatic* considerations and by this, estranged from its customary context...Any direct evaluation of the situation regarding visions and signs which does not take account of this feature in the service of the message is completely lacking.' Keying off of Zimmerli's comment, the book of Ezekiel demonstrates a persistent push towards getting a message across.

What, then, is the *kerygma* that the book of Ezekiel shapes the material around? Several commentators have ventured an answer that very much shapes their understanding of how the book came about, who is/are the author(s), what is the historical setting, and the intended recipient.

Joseph Blenkinsopp (1990:18) affirms: 'The central point or fulcrum on which the prophecy turns is the fall of Jerusalem which also stands at the halfway mark between the beginning of the exile and the vision of the restored temple. It marks the death of Israel,

a violent death, and the discourses, sermons, and poems of the first half explain why it came about.’

In his book *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.*, Rainer Albertz (2003:356) offers a similar picture:

This summary already reveals in outline the theological program of the book of Ezekiel. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple constitutes the midpoint to and from which everything moves. On the one hand, the book offers a theological explanation of why this destruction could take place. On the other, it works intensively to develop from the catastrophe criteria for the new beginning.

Zimmerli (1979:55) concurs with his summary: ‘Throughout...the book constantly deals with the fate of all Israel, the judgment upon Israel, and the possibility of a future for the house of Israel.’ Relying heavily on his form-critical method, Zimmerli (1979:52) furthermore proposes a strong theological focus of the book: ‘Yahweh and his action is also in substance the great central theme of the prophetic preaching...this preaching of the prophet has to do above all with Yahweh’s great self-revelation.’

The debate of Ezekiel’s life centered on the continued viability of Zion which includes both temple and monarchy. Indeed the very structure of the book places Jerusalem’s fall under Zedekiah as its centerpiece. As Zimmerli (1979:18) states: ‘The period with the greatest number of dates corresponds to the period of the last struggle for Jerusalem and the time immediately after its fall—a time which also figures very prominently in the prophet’s preaching.’

The book reflects the kind of intensity and retrospective interrogation that would naturally be going on during such a crisis. Israel, as all had known it, was to die. But this death was a slow and painful one covering most of Ezekiel’s life, and acceptance of it outlasted the prophet’s life.

Ezekiel is after fundamental faith questions. Although he intensely engages in the socio-political issues of his day, the book of Ezekiel is an attempt to squarely align and subordinate all seemingly important issues to the issue of Israel's relationship with her God. Probably the most pressing question throughout the exilic period was: Where is the mighty hand of Yahweh? Where is Yahweh in all this? There were those who still would not accept the idea that Yahweh was so thoroughly and decisively putting an end to Israel. They were struggling with a now apparent theological contradiction—the name of Yahweh, which was always synonymous with victory and protection, seemed unable to withstand the might of Nebuchadnezzar. In a recent book written by Jonathan Goldstein (2003:3), *Peoples of an Almighty God*, the author states well the dilemma for *people of an almighty god* who 'believe that a god stronger than all other powers combined is ultimately committed to be their protector, though temporarily the people may suffer adversity.' Goldstein (2003:5) states:

If such a people is to maintain its beliefs, it must solve two problems:

1. The supremacy of their god is not recognized by other peoples. It therefore must be revealed by some authoritative means.
2. Every *people of an almighty god* has suffered adversity, and other peoples have prospered. Some explanation must be provided for those facts. Especially difficult for such a people is a protracted period of adversity. How long could it take to expiate sin? Although the purposes of a god need not be fathomable by human beings, how long could a divine protector treat his people with inscrutable wrath?

This question would run throughout Ezekiel's life and indeed almost through the period of exile as many would not give up on the idea that a last ditch and dramatic intervention would come.

It is here where Zimmerli's summary is important. For him, Ezekiel decisively and insistently places Yahweh—especially the revelation of his name through divine action—as the key player in the upheaval at hand. Hence the book of Ezekiel persistently answers the fundamental question of where Yahweh is in all of this. The answer: Like a commanding general, Yahweh is actively orchestrating and implementing the entire

situation. And to what end? Yahweh is insisting on a radical break with what had become of Israel.

In the time of Ezekiel's preaching before the final fall and well into the exile, this particular dilemma persisted. For Ezekiel, nobody was getting it, and this is mainly due to the fact that no one was seeing it from God's perspective. In a communal crisis, there are many players solidifying positions and vying for dominance. But neither king, nor aristocracy, nor priest, nor prophet, whether in Jerusalem or Babylon, whether actively rebelling against Babylon or collaborating with it, understood what God was doing. Indeed, it took a while for even Ezekiel to get it. What is it that God was doing? He is bringing a complete end to the 'history' of Israel. Only when that comes about can there be talk of what new thing Yahweh is doing.

As the reality of exile sank in, other critical questions would naturally grow in intensity and with the length of time. Who is the target of Yahweh's punishment? Who is to blame? What went wrong, or what is the cause? To what degree is the punishment? Probably for some time between the final failed reform of Gedaliah and the rise of Cyrus, the exiles contemplated the question of whether or not Israel as a nation should be considered a viable entity. Is there life after death? Finally, and in all stages of the exile, there must have been the persistent question: What should I do? How should I respond?

These kinds of questions helped shape the prophet, his oracles, and the book called by his name into a message of judgment, contrition, and hope. This chapter will explore the connections between the prophet and his times and the ongoing relevance of his perspective during the exilic period and beyond as a guide for evaluating the role and function of glory and its relationship with the son of *adam*.

### 2.3 Structure of the Book and Its Unique Literary Features

It is pertinent to establish the relationship between the historical figure of Ezekiel and the portrayal of him in the book bearing his name, especially since the book of Ezekiel is the only source we have. Over the past century there has been a wide spectrum of views concerning the extent to which the book accurately reflects the message of the prophet. These views range from attributing almost none of the book to the hand of the prophet<sup>12</sup> to attributing nearly all of it to him.<sup>13</sup> Albertz (2003:353) represents a midway position in which he concludes: ‘Most of the process of composition occurred in Babylonia, but the final phase may well have taken place in Palestine. This means that the book was probably written not by Ezekiel himself but by the first and second generations of his disciples.’

Concomitant with the question of authorship is the extent to which the portrayal of the figure of Ezekiel can be historically grounded or whether it is literary fiction. Allen (1994:xxiv) urges a ‘rapprochement between their approaches [of Zimmerli and Greenberg], rather than, as some might think, setting up entrenched battle lines between literary and historical-critical claims.’ The structural unity of the book as well as several of its unique literary features is the key consideration for answering the question of Ezekiel’s involvement with the book. Albertz (2003:353) concurs when he states: ‘Such a view of how the prophetic book took shape has significant methodological consequences for its exegesis.’

The book is named after the key figure in it identified in Ezekiel 1.1 as ‘Ezekiel son of Buzi’; however, with caution may we approach the text assuming that it is *carte blanche* the words of the prophet. In an earlier work, Zimmerli (1982:144) affirms: ‘even where

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<sup>12</sup> Zimmerli (1979:7) reviews well the variety of proposed solutions, saying of the more extreme position represented by C.C. Torrey: ‘These completely deny the entire book of the prophet Ezekiel, as he presents himself in it, and affirms this with dates, and endeavor to find in it instead a pseudepigraph.’

<sup>13</sup> This view is represented by Greenberg’s (1983:26f) ‘holistic method:’ ‘The chronology of the oracles and the historical circumstances reflected in them assign them to a narrow temporal range well with in the span of a single life. The persuasion grows on one as piece after piece falls into the established patterns and ideas that a coherent world of vision is emerging, contemporary with the sixth-century prophet and decisively shaped by him, if not the very words of Ezekiel himself.’

redaction is discernible, it does not drift very far from Ezekiel himself.’ In his later more exhaustive treatise, however, he (Zimmerli 1979:18) appears to have modified his earlier conclusion because of the clear evidence of reworking and stylization: ‘It is first to be noted that the book has undergone a considerable later editing and, in its present form, cannot simply be derived from the figure of the prophet himself.’

Although the issue is still unresolved, it is still reasonable to closely link the writing of the book to the prophet Ezekiel and his lifetime. Greenberg (1983:14-15) does as much and even suggests that Ezekiel edited and amended his own prophecies. In order for Halperin’s psychological method to work, he must rely on the assumption that the prophecies originate with Ezekiel. Even though Halperin (1993:56) denies the historicity of much of the events addressed in the visions, he affirms that the vision is authentically Ezekiel’s and historically places it within Ezekiel’s actual confrontation with the elders in exile. Halperin (1993:221) argues against Zimmerli’s (1979:298) notion that ‘Ezekiel’s personality is hidden behind stylization [is] positively false...it bears throughout the signs of a powerful and very unusual personality.’ Finally, Davies’ (1989:127ff) assertion that Ezekiel was primarily a writing prophet does much to resolve certain tensions. For her, Ezekiel was redefining authentic prophecy away from oratory presentation to textual presentation and away from the prophet being an interventionist to an archivist. Her approach, as well, can only make sense when placed within the real life situation that Ezekiel faced.

**2.3.1 Literary unity and liturgical setting.** The striking structural unity of the book has created considerable debate over the possibility of one author. Albertz (2003:360) concludes that the keen interest in restoration throughout the book points to a time near the end of the exilic period when a return to the land became viable. The structure of the book is derived from a strategic placing of critical dates from the exile; however, there is one critical date which the whole book revolves around and which easily divides the book



into two parts: the final fall of Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> Thus the first part of the book, chapters 1-39, addresses Yahweh's judgment on Judah and the nations; the second part deals with a vision of restoration. Many divide the first section into two parts. Chapters 1-24 deal specifically with Judah with chapter 24 marking the beginning of the siege (589/588 B.C.E), and chapters 25-39 address Israel's neighbors as well as the final destruction of Jerusalem. These chapters are a bridge between chapters 1-24 and the last section (40-48). Obviously, the book's structure demonstrates a clear design, and it would be important to clarify the overall intent of the book and to place its earliest audience.

The unified design of the book suggests that Ezekiel's message probably coincided with the needs of an insipient liturgical setting.<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, a couple of conclusions can be drawn. First, almost all of the book is retrospective in nature and served the needs of an exilic community grasping to understand the meaning of the exile. Second, Ezekiel's message may have been the impetus for and played an integral part of an *ad hoc* worshipping community.

**2.3.2 Unique literary features.** Probably the most prominent literary feature, which is obvious to even a casual reader of the book, is its first person narrative style, what Zimmerli (1979:24) calls an 'I-style.' Immediately then, the book presents a challenge. As Childs (1979:358) states, Ezekiel doesn't conform to critical scholarship's understanding of the:

...general main features of Hebrew prophecy, these being: one, a definite geographical locality and of genuine prophetic preaching to a concrete group of listeners; second, traditional forms of oral speech (invective, threat, disputation) are missing – rather allegory, symbolic acts, and visions.

This first person narrative style is not intended to be autobiographical. In fact it is difficult to gather much personal information about Ezekiel from the text. More

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<sup>14</sup> Albertz (2003:78) has reviewed well the unresolved issue of dating the final destruction of Jerusalem and the second deportation. Throughout this dissertation I will go with Albertz's (2003:78) conclusion: 'today an increasing number are inclined to date the second deportation in 586.'

<sup>15</sup> Lind (1996:18), Blenkinsopp (1990:6), Zimmerli (1982:13)

importantly, the reader is pulled into an alternative dramatic reality—what Childs (1979:361) calls a ‘theocentric perspective.’ The prophet must serve as a watchman, but this does not mean that he is an objective observer. On the contrary, he is called upon to become a key actor in the drama to which his audience is drawn into his personal ordeal. This ‘auto-dramatic’ feature as described by Zimmerli (1979:19) is when: ‘the prophet himself is, in large measure active and shares strongly in the event.’ For Zimmerli (1979:19), Ezekiel’s symbolic behaviors go beyond simple metaphor. They are ‘transformed in Ezekiel’s experience into a dramatic reality.’

Thus, the medium is uniquely tied to the message. For this reason, it is neither possible nor desirable to starkly draw lines of distinction between the historical character and the literary portrayal of him in the book. The character of Ezekiel in the book portrays a unique person whose life is the icon of subservience to the message. He is clearly a representative figure. Furthermore, the book is designed in such a way, as is almost all of Scripture, to hearken the audience back to that character’s time and to experience it vicariously through a unique person. It is critical, however, to understand that Ezekiel is not the dominant character in this auto-drama. Instead, as Zimmerli (1979:24) states: ‘Yahweh’s action must be seen as the truly decisive reality.’

In the end, it is Yahweh, the god of Israel, who forcefully draws the prophet and his audience into realizing that He is the key player in the unfolding drama. Hence, in a very bold fashion, both through the prophet’s life and experiences as well as through his own written recollections of it and the on-going shaping of those recollections into liturgical and pastoral expressions, the book of Ezekiel answers one of the most pressing issues of faith in the exile: Where is Yahweh in all of this? The answer in no uncertain terms—Yahweh is boldly and actively present as a warrior king.

Encompassed with the ‘I-style’ of the book are several distinctive formulaic expressions that when examined, help clarify the relationship between the prophetic activity of the prophet and the prophetic function of the literature. Zimmerli (1979:36) points out two distinctive literary forms. The *disputation-oracle* or counter-argument specifically

addresses some particular polemic being circulated, albeit indirectly, through a directive between Yahweh and the prophet. Consequently, we are not presented with a classic prophetic confrontation like with Jeremiah or Amos. Oddly, the directive is for Ezekiel to ‘go and speak,’ (Ez 2:4, 3:1, 4) but no direct account is ever given of the sermon or its delivery. This feature has caused some to wonder whether Ezekiel ever had an audience. Was he more a bookish author than a prophetic orator, as some scholars have suggested?<sup>16</sup> But Zimmerli (1979:36) concludes: ‘This phenomenon makes it probable that the prophet spoke his prophecies outside the narrow circle of his disciples.’ Allen (1994:xxv) surmises that the recipients of Ezekiel’s pre-second deportation prophecies—from 593-586—were probably intended for and limited to: ‘a constituency of upper-class Judeans who had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 and settled in a labor camp in the Babylonian heartland.’ The amount of speculation the prophet generated (Ez 33:30-32) would indicate that most exiles would have only heard of the prophetic message second-hand, although it was available to them.

One of the most prominent formulas frequently used is what Zimmerli (1979:38) calls *proofsaying*. A reader cannot help but notice the repeated and emphatic use of the phrase: ‘you will know, that I am Yahweh.’ Zimmerli rightly sees this formula as having its origin in the realm of legal forms as a way of self-introduction and preliminary introduction to legal proclamation. Critical in this regard is the understanding that: ‘...we are therefore dealing with the recognition of this person who introduces himself thus in this freedom’ (Zimmerli, 1979:37-38). The saying is used in such a way as to verify and validate an action. The most important element of this feature, however, is to emphatically identify and reinforce the true subject of the action—Yahweh.

This feature conveys a profound and central theological perspective of the prophet and the book. In the end, the book is not of Ezekiel but of Yahweh. Yahweh is the central player in the book. Yet, ironically, this is the very point the Israelites stubbornly don’t see. Through the harrowing experience of exile and loss, God’s people are *encountering*

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<sup>16</sup> Zimmerli (1979:3) provides a synopsis of this view in his commentary. This perspective is the basis of Davies’ thesis (1989:37ff) of Ezekiel as transforming the prophetic role from orator to writer.

their God afresh. Even more so, this encounter of Yahweh comes primarily in and through the son of *adam*.

This distinctive feature in Ezekiel provides further clarity into the relationship between the prophet and the book, for *proof-saying* indicates that the prophetic activity of Ezekiel must have included the writing and distribution of theologically reflective material and demonstrates a non-prophetic practice and influence. In essence, Ezekiel's ministry must have included that of an author and an author who is profoundly influenced not just by prophetic traditions, but also by priestly/cultic traditions. Zimmerli (1982:7,22) summarizes this well when he states:

The overall picture is clear. The formula of self-introduction does not have any *Sitz im Leben* of its own in prophetic speech. Its frequent appearances in Ezekiel are not a constituent part of Ezekiel's fundamental prophetic characteristics, but rather direct our attention back to his Priestly heritage...It is clear that prophets, who do indeed experience their central orientation from an encounter with God, nonetheless do not experience this encounter in the kind of theophany (with its "I am" introduction) described [by the older tradition.] The situation which God appears and speaks at the time of the making of the covenant and the giving of the Law, the latter being continually renewed in the liturgical proclamation of the Law.

Where did the formula of self-introduction have its original life? What did it mean in that original setting? We are fortunate enough to hear an extremely precise answer to this question from within the Priestly literature...In this context the narrative (Priestly Writing) and the prophetic priest (Ezekiel) complement one another and vivify the background against which we can view the employment of the formula of self-introduction within the framework of legal discussion.

**2.3.4 Conclusion of literary features.** Certainly, the structure and literary features of the book guide interpretation. There is at this point widespread agreement that the book of Ezekiel demonstrates an ongoing process of writing, editing, and supplementing probably over most of the exilic period. Its overall liturgical framework along with the evidence of its legal discussion framework demonstrates that the literature found its application in some sort of insipient communal setting guided by a priestly cultic

perspective. As a whole, the book addresses the ongoing struggle and development of the exiles in Babylon.

There is no consensus on the *degree* to which the direct literary influence of Ezekiel on the final text can be deduced. Albertz (2003:353) is correct in affirming that the eye for restoration is integrated throughout the book; however, it is not necessary to conclude that this could only come about toward the latter part of the exile and therefore considerably removed from the prophet. Jonathan Goldstein (2003:83) asserts that hopes of either a dramatic rescue or of reconstitution could be concurrently running throughout the whole exilic experience and even preceded it.<sup>17</sup> Most of the eye for restoration in the book is dreamy and idealistic and finds its basis in theological and liturgical traditions, none of which directly address a particular socio-political reality.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Zimmerli (1979:71) states: ‘The possibility that a great part of the transmission in the “school” and the “updating of tradition” of many oracles took place in Ezekiel’s house by the prophet himself is not to be dismissed out of hand’. Allen’s (1994:xxv) assessment is a reasonable approach in light of the current debate:

For the reader, the book contains persistent evidence of literary units that are made up of three layers: a basic oracle, a continuation or updating that stays relatively close to the basic material and a closing oracle that stands apart from the earlier two pieces. The conclusion to be drawn is that the first two layers are to be ascribed to Ezekiel and the third to heirs of his work who were concerned to preserve it and adapt it to the needs of a succeeding generation.

Allen (1994:xxvi) concludes that the ‘canonical version’ took shape within 20 years after Ezekiel’s death, with the design of looking retrospectively at the life and times of Ezekiel as a precondition for a return.

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<sup>17</sup> Based on characteristics of a *people of an almighty* god, Goldstein’s (2003:83) rehearsal of history from Isaiah to Ezekiel demonstrates how prevalent and confusing the doctrine of Zion’s impregnability was: ‘Had the punishments inflicted on Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin been enough to expiate previous sin, so that God would now protect His people? The prophet Jeremiah himself may at first have given Zedekiah reason to think so. Many of Zedekiah’s subjects seem to have agreed. But Jeremiah soon proclaimed, like Ezekiel, that Zedekiah’s reign, too, belonged to an age of adversity...But there were other prophets who could encourage the people of Judah and Jerusalem to believe there would soon be an end to adversity, though some seers looked not to King Zedekiah as rule in the impending age of prosperity but to the exiled King Jehoiachin.’

<sup>18</sup> Greenberg (1983:15) asserts that Ezekiel’s Temple vision (Ez 36-48) did not happen.

In summary then, literary considerations of structure and form indicate a close proximity to the life and times of the prophet Ezekiel. Greenberg (1983:12) summarizes: 'Contemporary and other ancient records, biblical and extra biblical, tend to corroborate the testimony of the dates in Ezekiel that its contents fall between 593 and 571 BCE. Events of those years are reflected in the prophecies.' First, the prophetic ministry of Ezekiel leading up to the second deportation had an obvious, profound, and growing influence over the exiles after the fall of Jerusalem. By committing to writing, the prophet Ezekiel and those who were following him would be highly compelled to hold up the vindicated Ezekiel as a true prophet and feel the need to get his message out to a broader audience.

Second, although it can be deduced that some of the writing of the book is meant to vindicate the prophet, its more important functions were threefold. Even after the fall of Jerusalem, it remained critical to cut off continued and polarizing false hopes in a reformation based on what had been in Israel. Greenberg (1983:14) confirms: 'The major concern of Ezekiel's doom prophecies is to convince his audience that their hope of independence and well-being—fanned by prophecies of Ezekiel's rivals—were false. Underpinning this hope was the constant encouragement Egypt gave anti-Babylonian forces throughout the period.' God was putting a full end to what was. Nobody of Israel (nor of Israel's neighbors) was to escape going through the fire. All of Israel must accept death before thinking about new life. Yahweh was not looking for reformation but transformation.

Concurrently, however, as a protracted period of exile began to sink in, it became necessary to ward off despair that would lead to the extinction of Yahweh's people; hence, there is a pastoral element present. 'Then you will know, that I am Yawheh' is formulated to instruct, guide, and lead, not to destroy.<sup>19</sup> What had been an initially

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<sup>19</sup> Davies (1989:75) identifies the formula as 'epistemic' saying: 'the recognition constitutes both the basis of Israel's self-knowledge, and the fundamental condition of the nation's existence.'

exclusive experience, Ezekiel's vision of glory is then offered to a broader audience just like the pillar that guided the Israelites in the wilderness.

Finally, the Babylonian *golah* had to think into what would constitute them as an exilic community. Scattered Israel must begin to re-gather into a worshipping community responsive to Yahweh's leading. The book exhibits more a vision for *pre-constituting* a new Israel than for *re-constituting* it. Certainly within the agenda of Ezekiel lies the notion that the exiles in Babylon stand the best chance of reconstitution.<sup>20</sup> It would be important, then, to establish a responsive worshipping community. It is likely that some kind of ad hoc assembly gathered support relying on a mixture of liturgical traditions from Israel's past.

For Childs (1979:361), Ezekiel is unique among the major prophets because of the 'unusual relationship between the original function of the oracles and its subsequent canonical shaping.' The same forces that influenced the original historic role influenced the canonical one as well. The result: 'There has emerged the strongest continuity between the original oracles and the final canonical shape.' (Childs, 1979:361)

## **2.4 The Unique Call and Medium of an Exilic Prophet**

The book portrays the unique character and role that Ezekiel, 'son of Buzi,' played during the tumultuous times of the early exile. As a young man, he is considered to be among the first group of Jews who was exiled to Babylon with king Jehoiakin in 597 B.C. The book places a considerable amount of his prophetic ministry between this first deportation and the dramatic fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. It is markedly silent on the last deportation of Jews and the complete demise of any Jewish rule in Palestine in 582

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<sup>20</sup> Albertz (2003:352) states: 'continuity between preexilic and postexilic Israel could be established only through the Babylonian *golah*. Only those returning from the Babylonian exile, who had fully experienced God's radical judgment, could claim to be the *true Israel*.'

B.C. Certainly, Ezekiel lived through this time and probably began to actively write down his message.<sup>21</sup>

Even though the book of Ezekiel should not be considered autobiographical, it still is unique among prophetic literature as to the prominence it gives to Ezekiel in the drama.<sup>22</sup> Again, Yahweh is the main character in the drama of Israel's demise, and this point is central to the message of the prophet and the book; however, the prophet plays a critical supporting role. With caution can we extract biographical details about the prophet. Nothing is understood about the prophet apart from this interchange between Yahweh and the *son of adam*,<sup>23</sup> an interchange in which the prophet's role is passive and subservient.

Nonetheless, the book gives witness to a prophet whose impact on the community gained authoritative influence as the exile endured. The meaning of this relationship between Yahweh and his 'watchman' will be explored in further chapters. This section lays out the important considerations for that. As I see it, much can be understood in pursuit of several questions which most commentators address: To what extent do the prophet's own feelings and personality come through despite the stylized presentation of him? In other words, what is to be made of the odd and eccentric behaviors and responses of Ezekiel? Secondly, given the unique features found in the book, to what extent should Ezekiel be considered a prophet in the more classical sense?

**2.4.1 Personal makeup of the prophet.** Much has been made of the personality of Ezekiel portrayed in the book. There is an on-going internal tension that is consistently portrayed. Zimmerli (1979:20) clearly observes this tension when he states on the one

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<sup>21</sup> Allen (1994:xxiv) 'The dates attached to some of Ezekiel's messages indicate a prophetic ministry that lasted twenty-two years from 593 to 571 B.C. (Ez 1:29; 29:17).

<sup>22</sup> Having placed considerable weight on Ezekiel being a writing prophet and that the prophecy is primarily written then presented, Davies' (1989:70-71) views the book in a dramatic and creative 'narrative' mode. When examining the role of glory (chapter 4), I will also interpret the text as a dramatic portrayal.

<sup>23</sup> Davies (1989:39) postulates however, that much more can be deduced about Ezekiel if one is willing to see him as primarily a writing prophet: 'The essential difference between them (classical prophets) consists in this : that Ezekiel was a fundamentally literate mind, i.e., his patterns of thought and expression were shaped by habits of reading and writing.'



hand: 'Ezekiel was a prophet of particular sensitivity and dramatic power.' Equally, however, Zimmerli (1979:16) concludes: 'There is a confusing mobility in what is told of his life and suffering on account of this divine message.' This tension is best explained in that it originates from the unique experience of this young exilic priest turned prophet. Ezekiel stood between several polarizing positions vying for supremacy. So strong is this internal tension portrayed that several scholars have ventured theories of the prophet's mental and physical disabilities.<sup>24</sup> Although these considerations may have validity, it is at least equally valid to attribute the unique personality and prophetic approach of Ezekiel more to the extreme situation than to an extreme personality. This is precisely the tack of Davies (1989:67):

While it is true that Ezekiel for the most part lives in a separate world. I suggest that this testifies less to his character than to the circumstances in which he was constrained to work as a prophet and the literary means he devised to perform this function. The book he produced may accordingly be seen...as an imaginatively constructed literary work which also, and not incidentally, serves as an apology for that irreversible shift in the prophetic role.

Surprisingly, though, little scholarly attention has been given to the possibility of a dramatic and cathartic encounter with an ominous force at the river of Kebar. The thesis explored in the proceeding chapters will explore the potential of such a view.

**2.4.2 Crisis of prophecy.** Of critical consideration in this regard is the crisis of prophecy. Certainly, as both the book of Jeremiah and Ezekiel reflect, a word from the Lord was becoming increasingly contentious and confusing. As Blenkinsopp (1979:13) states: 'Conflict within prophetic circles, amply in evidence in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and a growing public skepticism and disillusionment with respect to prophets in general, testify to the crisis that prophecy was undergoing at this time.'

Ezekiel, however, was probably the first to face a daunting prophetic challenge. Prophecy's venue, from its earliest conception onwards, had always been the cult with its

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<sup>24</sup> Almost every commentary on Ezekiel feels obligated to address this. Blenkinsopp (1990:8-9) provides a concise synopsis of varying views. Halperin (1993:218) especially entertains a psychoanalytic interpretation to the prophet as having a 'radical misogyny.'

symbiotic relationship with the king.<sup>25</sup> The dilemma is clear: How was one going to prophesy without a pulpit? Davies (1989:51) cites Baruch's reading of Jeremiah's scroll in the Temple as an example of the dilemma when the prophet is barred from personally delivering his message in a public square. Davies (1989:23-25) explains that the crisis of the Temple created the 'dissolution of the nation's decision-making apparatus' effectively requiring 'a new kind of challenge to the prophet in communicating his message.' The traditional medium was simply non-existent, or at least, it was too remote, both geographically and existentially, to be accessible. Of the many things the *golah* were stripped of, a prophet was stripped of his venue. The book of Ezekiel gives witness to a limited and ad hoc audience in the early years of the exile (Ez.8:1, 14:1, 20:1) Like an athlete trying to gain recognition without getting on the playing field, so a prophet (more accurately Yahweh) was faced with getting the message circulated absent of its established venue. How would a prophet be recognizable in an impure land? A second dilemma is equally apparent: Would an Israelite enveloped in the rich and lengthy history of Zion even be considering a prophetic ministry in such a remote location?

This challenge is answered in part by Davies' proposal. She sees the focus on Ezekiel's strangeness as misguided and unnecessary if Ezekiel's essential medium is not the person of the prophet but the text. As I will argue in chapter 3, even within the text, the person of Ezekiel is presented as the first and most immediate encounter; nevertheless, Davies' thesis goes far to resolve certain interpretive tensions within the book if we allow for an imaginative literary element to have its place.

**2.4.3 The prophet's self-awareness.** A further exploration of these questions leads to a plausible scenario that makes sense of the data and helps explain the eccentricity of Ezekiel—only through a process of understanding his own anguish over the deportation and impending destruction of Zion did Ezekiel come to understand himself as a prophet

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<sup>25</sup> Samuel Terrien (1978:13) lays out the cultic centrality of Israelite religion in his book *Elusive Presence*. Of the prophets he states: 'To be sure, some prophets polemicized violently against the abuse of cultus, but they always functioned within the cultic situation of a sanctuary.'

and his experiences as prophetically symbolic.<sup>26</sup> Ezekiel was a forerunner of an extremely unpalatable message. He is the first to be made to experience this painful reality and then to resolutely relay this message to a recalcitrant audience. It can be surmised that before the final destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel's prophetic calling and activity was discovered gradually, both by Ezekiel and his community.

There are several observations that can be made, especially in the vision accounts that lend to the impression that only through a painful *personal ordeal* did the prophet come to fully acquiesce to the idea that God was aggressively present in the crisis at hand. One of the more salient features found in the vision accounts is the repeated use of force and its resultant constraint being directly applied to the prophet (Ez 3:14). Ezekiel is made not only to see the impending disaster but also to reluctantly experience it. God must first forcefully persuade his messenger. With force, God has transported Ezekiel to the exilic community (Ez 3:12-14). It is possible that Ezekiel was not a part of the original exiles but arrived only some three to four years before the fall of Jerusalem. Certainly the book dates most of Ezekiel's activity within this time (Greenberg 1983:7-8). Perhaps he was among Zedekiah's entourage who traveled to Babylon (Jer 51:59). It may also be quite possible that he was forcibly taken to Babylon as perhaps a subversive collaborator with Jeremiah by the anti-Babylonian contingent gaining control in Jerusalem (Jer 29:26). Greenberg (1983:40) effectively leaves open the possibility that Ezekiel came to the exiles some time later than the first deportation in his discussion of the phrase 'among the exiles (Ez 1:1): 'For although the vision occurred at the Chebar canal, it was only when it was over that the prophet went (returned?) to the exile settlement Tel Abib, on the Chebar, to be actually among them.'

My suggestion that Ezekiel was forcefully brought to Babylon sometime later than the first deportation, not by the Babylonians but by his fellow Israelites, helps explain several things which are hinted at in the book.<sup>27</sup> It explains Ezekiel's intimate and specific

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<sup>26</sup> Greenberg (1983:123) resolves many of the interpretative problems presented in the book in terms of process in which Yahweh accommodates a weak and indecisive personality.

<sup>27</sup> In a brief review of scholarly opinion on Ezekiel's knowledge of events in Jerusalem, Halperin (1993:44) acknowledges that one solution is that Ezekiel was in Palestine for some time before the fall.

knowledge of things going on in the temple, his being physically bound and restricted to his house, his feelings of anger, frustration, and despair being taken to the brink, his negative view of factions in Jerusalem,<sup>28</sup> and his often coy and evasive response to the exilic community. It may also help explain how Ezekiel established notoriety despite having not initially preached, why the elders were interested in him (if not anything more than to get news of the situation), and finally, how it put him on the path of realization that Jerusalem was on an irretrievable path of destruction.

Oddly enough, Ezekiel does not see his ordeal as the result of political maneuvering. Instead it is completely Yahweh's doing. Here again, the prophet is made to see this through a vision of God's glory. The prophet responds as someone who is seized and incarcerated. His feelings of bitterness and anger are overtaken by an overwhelming silence. He is dumbfounded and speechless. As a man captured by an enemy force, he is commanded to speak only when spoken to. Yahweh, the captor, appoints Ezekiel as an emissary in the internment camp. He is to be a guardian or watchman (*hpu*)—one whose sole responsibility is to report what is going on.

Ezekiel's captor, Yahweh of the armies, addresses His emissary with a name appropriate to his situation. The *son of adam* is one who eats words of sorrow (Ez 2:9), makes no appeal to rights or privileges, has abandoned his rebellious posture (Ez 2:8), collaborates with his captor to subvert his own comrades (Ez 2:3ff), and most of all, relays and negotiates the terms of surrender. Actions speak louder than words, and it is apparent that this was the tack taken by Yahweh in and around the time of Jerusalem's judgment. What was about to occur was unspeakable. By the forceful presence of Israel's God, Ezekiel is made to see that God will himself destroy his precious city, put an end to David's monarchy, and disinherit the people from the land.

Through a protracted time of agonizing, humiliating, and ecstatic experiences, Ezekiel gradually comes to understand his life as 'a sign,' and begins to redefine the meaning of a

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<sup>28</sup> These will be discussed in more detail in chapters three and four.

prophet as well as the prophetic task (Ez 12:11).<sup>29</sup> As perplexing as this must have been for him, the book of Ezekiel indicates that it was equally baffling to the exilic community. It attests to Ezekiel's roundabout way of addressing his audience with figurative speech, symbolic action, vision accounts or silence. This gave his audience cause to consider him more as odd (Ez 12:8), stubborn (Ez 3:8), foolish or amusing (Ez 33:32). Ironically though, they at times seek his advice.

Along with the ambiguity of Ezekiel's audience is the vague and generalized way that he addresses them. Childs (1979:358) states: 'Then again, the prophet seems to oscillate back and forth between Babylon and Jerusalem without ever reflecting a concrete historical addressee in either community.' Even though the addresses are sometimes to the exiles then to those in Jerusalem, to the ruling classes then to the people, the overarching title, 'house of Israel' or simply 'Israelites' (Ez 2:3, 3:4) is most frequently addressed.

It is here where something of the internal intensity of the prophet must be understood in relation to his message. As can be expected, a nation being ripped apart by intense circumstances was bound to splinter into polarized groups. The tendency was to choose sides. Certainly, the book of Ezekiel favored the Babylonian *golah*, but not unqualifiedly.<sup>30</sup> It is best to understand the bipolar nature of this prophet. He was truly torn between his love for Zion and his disgust of her degenerative worship, between his repulsion of exile and the necessity for it. Indeed, it has been the tendency in interpreting the book to pit one aspect of Ezekiel's perspective with another, usually attributing it to later redaction. In the story of his encounter with Yahweh, Ezekiel is made to see things from Yahweh's perspective—the agony of bringing wrath on the very object of His deepest love (Ez 16.5, 16).

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<sup>29</sup> The redefining of the prophetic task from an orator to a writer is a central part of Davies (1989:127) thesis: '...these problematic features are best understood as aspects of Ezekiel's effort to create a new literary idiom for prophecy. He develops an archival speech form which is oriented less toward the immediate press of events in the political sphere than toward reformation of the tradition in light of the catastrophic event of Jerusalem's fall.'

<sup>30</sup> See Albertz (2003:363).

There is no doubt that the book gives the impression of a man who was as confounding to his contemporaries as he is to the modern reader. It is critical to understand that his posture in itself encapsulates Ezekiel's message. God himself will make his head as hard as stone—belligerent, stubborn, dumbfounding—because that is precisely what the situation between God and his people has become—astounding, dumbfounded, unbelievable (Ez 3:8-9). He is called the son of *adam*, taking on in human form the confoundedness of God, of the people, and the situation.

**2.4.4 Summary.** In summary then, prior to the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel's medium was uniquely tied to the message. There is one key reason—among all the other things the exiles were stripped of, a prophet was minus a podium, the temple, cult, liturgy, and king. The preacher was minus a pulpit. And the message is clear—nobody is getting it. The unbelievable must now become believable. Neither the exilic king nor interim king, nor the *golah* nor the ones still in Jerusalem, neither priest nor prophet, neither those opposing nor cooperating with Babylon were willing to accept that Yahweh Himself would destroy Zion. The history of Israel was coming to a complete and tragic end.<sup>31</sup> Chief among the ones not getting it was the priest/prophet Ezekiel. Thus, there was a protracted period of time in which the prophet is caused to realize through personal visions, ordeals and dramatic encounters where Yahweh is in all of this and what He is doing.

But Ezekiel's dramatic encounter with *hwhy - dwbk* at the river Kebar forcefully presents another perspective—even though Zion is destroyed, Yahweh has not abandoned it.

## 2.5 The Revival of Traditions

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<sup>31</sup> Albertz (2003:9) 'From the perspective of this biblical account, the deportation of the Israelites from the land to which God had brought them meant the termination of Israel's history.'

The book of Ezekiel displays an amazing breadth of knowledge of Israelite traditions.<sup>32</sup> As can be expected, in a time when the social fabric of a nation is crumbling, people naturally cling to things from their history that can give them a sense of stability. Jeremiah signals this back to the Bible approach when he exhorts: ‘Stand by the roads and consider, inquire about ancient paths’ (Jer 6:16). The reliance on older Israelite traditions will be explored throughout this study, so this section will provide only a synopsis of the important ones. It is most important to establish here, that this reevaluation of older traditions probably reflects more Ezekiel’s upbringing as a Jerusalem priest than with his connection with prophetic traditions. Also of interest, Davies (1989:39) suggests that, unlike earlier prophets: ‘Ezekiel was primarily a literate mind’ shaped by habits of reading and writing.

**2.5.1 Affinity with pre-classical prophecy.** Of main importance to the study of glory in Ezekiel is the reliance and interface with theological traditions that hearken back to the early monarchy or even predate it. Zimmerli (1979:42) states: ‘In this regard, it is immediately striking that Ezekiel, in the composition of his oracles, is connected much more closely than the writing prophets who preceded him with traditions and forms of pre-classical prophecy.’ With the vanquishing of both monarchy and temple in sight, it would be natural for those reluctant to reject their history to retrieve and reevaluate earlier traditions. To recall how the people of God were constituted before temple and monarchy or as a united kingdom would be of tremendous encouragement and value. Hence stories and traditions around the wilderness wanderings, the entrance into the land, its early constitution as a tribal confederacy, and the insipient establishment of a united kingdom under David and Solomon would naturally be of renewed interest. All of these are of particular importance because of the prominent role of glory.

**2.5.2 Deuteronomistic influence.** During the century preceding Ezekiel, the Deuteronomistic tradition had consolidated and gained prominence, especially during Josiah’s reign. It is well established that the Deuteronomistic reform reflects a significant

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<sup>32</sup> Davies (1989:61) sums up well: ‘The form-critical and traditio-historical work of Zimmerli has impressively demonstrated the close and detailed connections...’

influence for Jeremiah and the book called by his name,<sup>33</sup> and that influence is found with Ezekiel as well. Characteristic Deuteronomistic features are found in Ezekiel: centralized worship, covenantal solidarity, the prominence of a mediating figure like Moses, and as already discussed, the introductory covenantal formula—‘I am Yahweh.’ Of particular interest to the study of glory is one striking Deuteronomistic feature explained by Goldstein (2003:93): ‘Whatever had been the content of its [Deuteronomy] hortatory chapters when the book was brought before King Josiah, they did predict the destruction and exile of a sinful Israelite kingdom.’ Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel followed through with this thinking tenaciously. Goldstein (2003:94) states further:

The course of events had strikingly vindicated the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. According to their teachings, the reforms and even the death of Josiah had not appeased the wrath of the Lord over the sins of the past, and sins in the present had enraged him still further. Judah and Jerusalem, said the two prophets, were doomed to fall, and fall they did.

Most significant concerning this Deuteronomistic influence on Ezekiel and Jeremiah is the posture that both of them advocated for exile—do not rebel; do not resist your captors. As Goldstein (2003:94) states: ‘Subjection to Babylon is a milder alternative punishment for sin; if the Lord’s people do not submit to it, they will incur instead as their sentence the dreadful content of Deuteronomy 28:15-68, 29:21-27.’

**2.5.3. Priestly concerns.** Besides the Deuteronomistic influence there is a decidedly priestly influence in the book. The close connection has already been introduced under the above section on structure. Albertz (2003:336) reiterates the linguistic connection when he states: ‘The book exhibits clear affinities with Priestly language.’ Even more decisively, he attributes the theological basis of the book to a priestly one, ‘specifically the priestly theology of the sanctuary, in which the *kabod Yahweh* is the focus of the later sanctuary theology of P.’ The decidedly priestly perspective is summarized well by Albertz (2003:360):

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<sup>33</sup> Blenkinsopp (1983:182)



At the center stood a polemic against idols and idolatry, high places, pagan rites, and divination; here the book concurs with the Deuteronomists. Profanation of the Sabbath was addressed as a transgression specific to the exilic period; the inclusion of sexual abominations and contempt for holy things reflected specifically priestly interests. Through all of these transgressions, the Judeans had defiled the temple, Jerusalem, and the land.

Zimmerli (1982:107) sees the priestly perspective in Ezekiel as having an extended history well before the exile in the liturgical tradition of the Jerusalem cult; hence, he places Ezekiel within the sphere of ‘cult prophecy’:

We must consider Ezekiel to be one of the “cult prophets” who were oriented toward the liturgical event of Yahweh’s self-revelation. In any case, we can discern the priest-prophet Ezekiel’s proximity to the liturgical activity in the temple throughout his book.

Finally, along with the priestly influence is an emphasis on theophany. There is a marked emphasis on visual elements quite unique to the prophetic perspective. Repeated often is the phrase: ‘I looked and I saw’ (Ez 1:4, 2:9). Much will be explored about this later. What is important to emphasize here is that this imagery is closely aligned with a theology of the temple, and therefore with Zion theology. Zimmerli (1979:41) affirms this: ‘The Zion tradition also appears strongly in Ezekiel.’ The glory pericope in Ezekiel demonstrates both a reliance on old Israelite cultic traditions<sup>34</sup> about the presence of their god as well as an interchange with a contemporary reworking of them by a Priestly school.<sup>35</sup> Here again the prophet exemplifies the bipolarity of an intense love for Zion with the understanding of the inevitability of its destruction. This conundrum is addressed in the book by the imagery of Yahweh’s glory and in terms of its absence or presence. Blenkinsopp (1990:5) affirms the criticalness of this imagery to the central idea of the book when he observes its integration into the structure of the book. ‘The arrangement of the prophet’s discourses in the rest of the book is consonant with this pattern of divine absence and return [exemplified by glory imagery].’ Most important, however, is the critical and ingenious way Ezekiel uses imagery from antiquity to

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<sup>34</sup> Zimmerli (1979:53): ‘...the prophet, in his description of what he saw, stands in the older traditions of Israel.’

<sup>35</sup> Zimmerli (1979:53): ‘On the other hand, Ezekiel 1 cannot be separated from the later Priestly Document’s descriptions of the appearance of the “glory of Yahweh” in the desert.’

crucially address the contemporary crisis. Zimmerli (1979:53) sums it up well:

‘...Ezekiel appears at the same time both archaic and revolutionary in that he speaks of the manifestation of the glory of Yahweh in a remote place of exile.’

**2.5.4 Summary.** Davies (1989:62) views the incorporation and engagement with such a wide array of Israelite traditions in the book that Ezekiel’s prophetic task is essentially defined by it. Hence for Davies, Ezekiel’s main confrontation/dialogue is not so much with an immediate audience (like the elders before him Ez 8:1) but with ‘tradition’ itself:<sup>36</sup>

Other prophets engage in direct and often heated exchange with various of their contemporaries—kings and priests, disciples and rival prophets—but Ezekiel appears primarily in conversation with the tradition. Like a creative archivist, he desires to only preserve the treasures of the past but also to make them available and meaningful in the present. Even his disputation speeches are aimed as much at the tradition as at the people.

Ezekiel demonstrates an amazing breadth and creative interaction with a wide array of themes, motifs, and traditions from Israel’s history. This dictates a certain interpretative constraint in two ways. First, one must exercise caution when questioning historical situations and audience. Rarely does Ezekiel *directly* engage them. Second, Ezekiel’s audience is more representative than actual. Ezekiel’s oracles are amazing trans-generational, equally addressing Israel’s past, present, and future, and trans-traditional, speaking to peculiar traditions as well as redefining them.

## 2.6 Socio-political Considerations

It is not the purpose here to rehearse the scope of the socio-political developments of the late seventh and early sixth centuries BC but only to highlight two important considerations most pertinent to the study.

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<sup>36</sup> ‘Tradition’ in such general terms is problematic, yet she seems to use the term here as an encompassing term for ‘extensive dependence on earlier tradition’ (1989:61).

First, a brief examination into the Babylonian agenda aids in understanding how intense the debate over the theological perspective of Zion's inviolability was during Zedekiah's reign, and it may have significantly influenced the Babylonian decision to raze it. It is likely that most of the Babylonian activity in Palestine centered on the subjugation of Jerusalem. According to Albertz (2003:55-56): 'After the conquest of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar's foreign campaigns vanish in obscurity.' Judah played a small role in Babylonia's agenda for the region. The main concern was to prevent Egypt from gaining a foothold outside of its territory. However, Albertz (2003:54) provides a significant and plausible reason why Jerusalem was singled out for such a harsh treatment—Nebuchadnezzar had personally appointed and trusted Zedekiah, so he 'must have taken this revolt as a personal affront as well as sign that his policy of isolating Egypt had failed.' In other words, Jerusalem was to be made an example of what awaits all in the western region with rebellious designs. Jerusalem had personally angered the Babylonian king.

This motive provides a significant insight pertinent to my inquiry into Ezekiel because Albertz (2003:56) postulates that there was a theological interest in destroying the city and the temple which must have significantly heightened the political and theological polarization. Despite the Babylonian disdain for destroying foreign temples, Nebuchadnezzar unrelentingly went after Jerusalem:

It is reasonable to suppose that Nebuchadnezzar intended to strike at the theological foundation of the anti-Babylonian party, which even during the siege insisted that Yahweh's presence in Zion would prevent the city from being taken... When Nebuchadnezzar decided to disprove so dramatically the myth of Zion's inviolability, he sought to extinguish once and for all the religious roots of anti-Babylonian machinations in Judah.

The glory pericopes in Ezekiel are very much involved in attacking the anti-Babylonian party. Greenberg (1983:13) identifies this contingent squarely on Zedekiah: '...restiveness continued, and in that year [when Zedekiah visited Babylon] Zedekiah called a conclave of west-Asiatic states in Jerusalem with a view to throwing off the Babylonian yoke.' Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel had to forcefully deal with a pro-Zion

theology<sup>37</sup> which in spite of breaking critical covenantal stipulations,<sup>38</sup> insisted on Yahweh's unconditional favor. Both prophets insisted on humble servitude, partly for theological reasons—insisting on the adherence to the covenant, but also for practical ones—seeing clearly that humble submission was the only way to spare Zion. The frustration and anger expressed in Ezekiel is also directed at this party. This anti-Babylonian party was not restricted to Judea either. As reflected in Ezekiel's meetings with the elders, the question of rebellion was a serious consideration. Clearly the issue of Zion's inviolability connected with Yahweh's presence (glory) was one that had to be forcibly addressed.

A second historical consideration is the apparent silence in Ezekiel concerning the attempted reform of Gedaliah and its collapse. The situation in Jerusalem after 586 must have been confusing. The Gedaliah reform must have given Deuteronomistic hopes one last gasp. Yet at the same time the Babylonian influence must have been overbearing (Albertz 2003:90-96). Most significant, however, is Albertz's (2003:94) assessment of what brought about its demise: 'The failure of the attempted reform was due to the impatience of a nationalist who still could not imagine a state without its own king and enjoying a more equitable distribution of the property.' Although Ezekiel had several things in common with this reform, it still posed an obstacle to Ezekiel's fundamental message—Yahweh is putting a complete end to Israel and all must be judged. Certainly, Ezekiel would have vehemently opposed yet another anti-Babylonian agenda for its nationalistic pride, even after the terrible events of 586. But he would have equally opposed Gedaliah himself mainly because it fostered false hopes of escaping judgment. This situation after the fall of Jerusalem reveals the issues that Ezekiel had to address before 586 were still intensely active. Greenberg (1983:14) attests to the 'flurry of rebellious activity' surrounding the time of Ezekiel's visions and stresses the relevance of Ezekiel's prophecies to that time. This situation provided ample motivation for Ezekiel to begin writing down his earlier prophecies, perhaps to be transmitted back to Jerusalem.

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<sup>37</sup> This group is characterized in Ezekiel chapter 11. A more thorough description of them and Ezekiel's interchange with them will be discussed in chapter 4.6.3.

<sup>38</sup> It may very well be that Ezekiel ties Zedekiah's breaking oath with Babylon (Ez 17:11-21) with the refusal to 'follow my decrees and commandments' by the leaders in Jerusalem (Ez 11:12).

These historical considerations demonstrate two things of significance. One, the doctrine of the inviolability of Zion was well known and intensely influenced political motivations of not only Jews in Jerusalem and Babylon, but Babylonians as well. Zedekiah's rebellion with its disastrous consequences is clearly the centerpiece of the book and of the prophet Ezekiel's activity, and this theological presumption brought it about. Second, the doctrine lingered well after the fall of Jerusalem and provides reason why Ezekiel's message was still pertinent (maybe even more so than before) well into the exile and provoked the need for a wider circulation via written prophecies presented at some kind of ad hoc liturgical setting.

## **2.7 Summary**

Ezekiel foresaw the thorough and complete end of Israel, and through his own personal experience foreshadowed and exemplified the appropriate response to God. It is neither possible nor desirable to attempt to distinguish between the historical character and the literary portrayal of him in the book. As is recognized by a wide range of views, the book is a highly stylized literary piece with a clear agenda in mind. The character of Ezekiel in the book portrays a unique person whose life is the icon of subservience to the message. He is clearly a representative figure. Furthermore, the book is designed in such a way, as is almost all of scripture, to hearken the audience back to that time and to experience it vicariously through this unique person.

There is widespread acceptance of the integration between the message, situation, and recipients of the prophet and the ongoing situation of the exile. The same forces that influenced the original situation similarly influenced the canonical shaping. Holding to a similar view, I confidently speak of Ezekiel in the sense of Ezekiel's message—what this particular prophet/priest conceived and lived out is the impetus, harbinger, and main contributor for a particular view of what and how Yahweh was doing during a time of tremendous social and theological upheaval. To speak of the portrayal and message of

Ezekiel allows for an interpretation that is sensitive to both historical and literary considerations, without diminishing the force of the message being presented.

I consider it reasonable that the glory pericope under consideration in this treatise, Ezekiel 1-24, can be closely associated with the prophet's own accounting of such events and that they were written down after the fall of Jerusalem for an audience whose understanding of the event was still misdirected or confused.

The prophet and his message had to serve three concomitant exilic perspectives that could easily polarize into exclusive agendas: First, Ezekiel must continue to insist that Yahweh Himself was making a complete break from the past and that there was no hope in a dramatic rescue and restoration of the way things were. Yahweh's judgment was thorough and exhaustive; on the other hand, Ezekiel must ward off a spiritual degenerate tendency that would abandon all hope in Yahweh and lead to the dissolution of Israel as Yahweh's people and to disregard of covenant stipulations. Ezekiel must hold out the dynamic presence and activity of God even in captivity. Finally, the prophet must provide a picture of Yahweh's relationship beyond judgment, a hope for a new beginning. As it will be addressed in subsequent chapters, Ezekiel's vision of the future is more to provide a foundation for *pre-constituting* a new Israel than *reconstituting* the old.<sup>39</sup>

I would characterize Ezekiel's prophetic activity prior to the final fall of Jerusalem as follows: He began his call 5-6 years prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 586<sup>40</sup> and possibly came to the *golah* during Zedekiah's visit to Babylon under constraint as a Jeremiah sympathizer in extreme personal anguish. He begins to realize his personal ordeals as prophetic and employs them into signs of a prophetic message. The exilic community begins to take notice of the strange goings on of this priest becoming prophet. They are more baffled by him than anything else. Ezekiel even utilizes their confounded response as a symbol of the message and is willing to let speculation and rumor about him to go

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<sup>39</sup> Davies (1989:127) develops this notion extensively, understanding Ezekiel to have transformed the prophetic role away from a public orator to an 'archivist:' 'He develops an archival speech from which is orientated less toward the immediate press of events in the political sphere than toward reformation of the tradition in light of the catastrophic event of Jerusalem's fall...'

<sup>40</sup> Albertz 2003:354

unrestrained to further exasperate and prepare his audience for his message. As portrayed in the book, Ezekiel's audience for his preaching was initially limited to consulting elders and to the Babylonian *golah*. Even though the book presents Ezekiel as the only immediate recipient of the message, we can conjecture that generally the 'thus says the sovereign Lord' formulaic statement reflects the message of Ezekiel until the fall of Jerusalem.

After the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel's ministry becomes two fold. Ezekiel must continue to persuade the broader community of Babylonian *golah*, now including the newer exiles from Zedekiah's reign, and those still in Judea that Yahweh will put a full end to Jerusalem. After the fall of Jerusalem and the second even more tragic and harsh deportation, Ezekiel begins to commit his experiences to writing because the situation still very much required the exiles to 'get it.'

It is probable that he wrote much of it himself and employed scribal disciples to help, committing the completion, editing, and application of his message to them. Perhaps it was to be read in an ad hoc covenant renewal type of communal gathering. This would explain the liturgical structure given to the entire book. The time of this initial committing to writing of the message is during the Gedaliah reform when there was still an inkling of hope for a return and restoration. It is in this situation that Ezekiel must still forcefully insist that a full end is necessary.

Second, Ezekiel and those who are convinced of his perspective must develop what I will call a *theology of suspension*. It is here I return to Albertz's (2003:360) consideration of the book's central purpose:

Clearly the book of Ezekiel is to be read from the very start from the perspective of the conditions needed for a new beginning...The disciples of Ezekiel were clearly concerned to maintain that it was inappropriate simply to expect that the future would bring a restoration and continuation of the preexilic way of life. They believed that there was no such thing as automatic transition to salvation: there must be a caesura, a real new beginning.

I am in general agreement with this assessment; however, it is not necessary to conclude that a ‘school of Ezekiel’ toward the closing years of the exile must have written the book.<sup>41</sup> The book’s view of restoration remains thoroughly idealistic and dreamy, and, unlike second Isaiah, rarely reflects concrete social/political conditions for it.<sup>42</sup> A major emphasis of the book is to *deconstitute* and then secondly, only to *preconstitute* Israel. Everywhere in the book is the emphasis, the hope, and the warning that only Yahweh’s sovereignty and power will bring this about. Clearly, the view of the Jews in exile is that the end of history had come.<sup>43</sup> Until God would restore land, king, and temple, his people would be historically suspended. It is an interim constitution that is the prime concern in the book.

With all the above in view, it is plausible that the exilic view was one of having to “repeat history.” All of Israel’s history, now reinterpreted through the eyes of death, must be revisited. Thus the canonical view of restoration could very well be one of a long and drawn out process.

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<sup>41</sup> Alibertz’s view (2003:353)

<sup>42</sup> Davies asserts: ‘...if Ezekiel is, like earlier prophets, a public figure, nevertheless he has taken a step back from direct confrontation with an audience as the essential dynamic of prophetic communication.’

<sup>43</sup> Alibertz (2003:9): ‘From the perspective of this biblical account, the deportation of the Israelites from the land to which God had brought them meant the termination of Israel’s history.’



### 3 THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF *hwhy-dwbk*

#### 3.1 Introduction

Before pursuing the role and function of glory in the book of Ezekiel (chapter 4), we must be clear about discussing *dwbk* as a single entity. In Ezekiel, *dwbk* is rarely written simply by itself, as ‘my glory’ or ‘his glory’ (Ez 39:21), but most commonly in construct with the Name, *hwhy-dwbk*, the glory of the Lord.<sup>44</sup> As will be discussed later, the connection of Yahweh with glory is closely aligned with the Zion tradition; however, the phrase itself appears fixed within a broad Priestly tradition.<sup>45</sup> The other designation, *larvy yhla dwbk*, glory of the God of Israel<sup>46</sup>, may harken back to an older amphictyonic tradition at Shiloh with the ark as its centerpiece.<sup>47</sup>

As in other descriptions of Yahweh’s glory,<sup>48</sup> Israel’s god offers a visual display of His Presence to the assembly. Primarily, this chapter explores this visual dimension of *hwhy-dwbk* and what is behind it. First, the phenomenological basis of the prophet’s encounter with glory is explored. Second, the distinctive features of glory are identified and the meaning of these features explored in terms of how the prophet is experiencing glory and how they are functioning literarily (how the audience experiences glory through the text). Finally, the intended effect of *hwhy-dwbk* upon Ezekiel and his audience is clarified. In Ezekiel, the *hwhy-dwbk* is an effulgence emanating from the center of a larger epiphany—a fiery storm cloud. This larger object is domesticated by numerous entities that are inseparable yet distinct from glory. All of this is experienced within a larger context of a vision of God. Even though these distinctions must be kept in

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<sup>44</sup> Ez 1:28, 3:12, 23, 10:4,18, 11:23, 43:4,5, 44:4

<sup>45</sup> Zimmerli (1979:124): ‘The innermost kernel of the *kabod* sayings...is represented in the tradition which we possess almost exclusively in references of a priestly character.’ Allen (1987:36) concurs with this position: ‘In fact, *hwhy-dwbk*...is a set phrase in the Priestly source.’

<sup>46</sup> Ez 8:4, 9:3, 10:19, 11:22, 43:2

<sup>47</sup> Terrien (1983:205) reviews how a ‘long-ingrained theology of glory in Zion’ was especially centralized in the ‘Jerusalem priesthood’ the early ark traditions into a ‘throne’ idea.

<sup>48</sup> Ex 13:21-22 1Kgs 8:10-11, Lev 9:23-24

mind, the overall impression it intended to evoke was of a real, near, threatening, and engaging sense of Yahweh's active involvement in the midst of Israel in crisis.<sup>49</sup>

### 3.2 Visual Encounter of The Glory of God.

In the broadest sense, the *hwhy-dwbk* is experienced only within the realm of 'visions of God', *Myhla twarm*, where 'heaven and earth are opened' (Ez 1:1) or 'between heaven and earth' (Ez 8:3). Strictly speaking, the vision of God is not the glory of the Lord, but the medium by which it is encountered. This distinction is made, but not rigorously maintained, leaving a certain ambiguity, but Ezekiel never calls what he sees as a vision of the glory of God. Carefully are the words chosen: 'there before me *was* the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain' (Ez 8:4). Although vision is a reference to sight, it is clear that it involves a full sensory experience including sound and touch, so primarily vision should be understood more as an *encounter* or experience than merely a visual observation. Most importantly, within the vision, God engages his prophet with penetrating dialogue. The prophet is forced into active response with his God.

Although much is conjectured about the precise nature of the sighting, there is no compelling reason to dismiss a phenomenological object as the initial basis of his gaze.<sup>50</sup> Ezekiel is cognitively experiencing something outside of himself. Neither the text nor prophetic tradition lends itself to strictly understanding the vision as a hallucination<sup>51</sup> or literary imagination.<sup>52</sup> The book itself seems to aggressively combat such notions as part of the problem (Ez 13:1-9). Several considerations of prophetic vision support the likelihood of a natural object as the initiator of Ezekiel's encounter.

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<sup>49</sup> Zimmerli (1979:124) 'It is not impossible, even though it cannot be demonstrated with certainty, that the original presentation by the prophet intended the whole phenomenon to be understood by the term *hwhy-dwbk*.

<sup>50</sup> Both Block (1997:92) and Greenberg (1983:43) refer to the usual strong northwesterly wind (*shamal*) that can at times kick up wind and sand storms of immense intensity, especially in July.

<sup>51</sup> Halperin (1993:217) explores a psychoanalysis approach and fully entertains the possibility that Ezekiel's visions are delusional and projections of Ezekiel's mental illness.

<sup>52</sup> Such as Patton (2004:73): 'The storytelling in the book is so artful that it draws the reader into assuming that what is says about Ezekiel reflects a historical person's real experience.'

Prophetic vision for divine guidance and intervention is a feature common among Israelite prophets as well as its neighbors.<sup>53</sup> But as Carley (1975:31) argues, a phenomenological basis for prophetic vision is well established in both the prophetic and priestly traditions of Israel. ‘In the priestly view of the relation between God and the world, natural forces closely reflected divine activity.’ Greenberg (1983:42) suggests both an inner crisis: ‘outwardly manifest as a trance...but in connection with some sensory or physical effect other than mere audition.’ Yahweh’s means of revelation are always down to earth. As Greenberg (1983:42) confirms: ‘...prophetic visions sometimes arise out of an everyday occurrence suddenly transformed.’ Natural phenomena—plagues, watery inlets that can dry up, storm clouds, thunderstorms on mountain tops, erupting volcanoes—are all recurrent enough, but when they happen coincidentally with human endeavors, especially of deliverance, then they become trans-incident and trans-ordinary. Something over and above the natural event is going on. It is the prophetic task to first perceive this and then to convey it to others.

This speaks of a fundamental truth of Biblical revelation for the believing community—to see (perceive) through and beyond the common events of earthly existence to another more authentic reality. Terrien (1983:149) concedes that Israel probably was influenced by ‘storm-theophany’ traditions of Northern Semitic nations, but insists: ‘In contrast to the mythic poets of the neighboring cultures, they were always able to point to the transcendence of their God. Natural forces were mobilized only to manifest his presence.’ Important to the hypothesis presented here is Carley’s (1975:38) conclusion that an objective visual of some kind formed the basis for discernment especially in the context of Yahweh war and is connected with the phrase, ‘that you will know that I am Yahweh’:

The form was used when a leader of the people asked Yahweh whether battle should be joined with Israel’s enemies...Of particular interest is the introduction of a third member, indicating the

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<sup>53</sup> Blenkinsopp (1990:23) attests: ‘Visionary experiences often accompanied the call to prophesy in Israel and elsewhere in the ancient Near East.’

purpose of Yahweh in fulfilling prophecies: 'You shall know that I am Yahweh.' Knowledge in this case would come from an objective sign.

Furthermore, Carley (1975:13) believes this phenomenological orientation goes back to the exodus from Egypt and is connected to 'the hand of Yahweh.' Terrien (1983:163) concedes that the phenomenologically based revelation of the Reed Sea and Mt. Sinai are especially evident in the ark which: 'provided a link between the memories of Moses and the erection of the temple...that such a sacred object was a military emblem, symbol, or token of the nearness of Yahweh in battle. It belonged originally to the ideology of the Holy War.'

Like other prophets before him, Ezekiel is drawn into a full sensory experience. The account of Samuel's calling indicates the inseparable nature of prophetic word with a sighting of some kind. 'In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions' (1 Sam.3:1). Ezekiel first encounters Yahweh unexpectedly and reluctantly by a presenting or exhibition. At first glance the object appears common enough, until a voice commands the prophet to look harder. Suddenly, the prophet sees more than a bush (Ex 3:1-4), a basket of ripe fruit (Am 8:1), a plumb line (Am7:7), a boiling pot or an almond branch (Jer:1), a gusty wind, an earthquake or a fire (1 Kgs 19:11-13). Because of the voice of God, the object is transformed into a double meaning. The sighting comes at a time of personal and national crisis, and the prophet hears and receives the definitive voice of Yahweh, initially responding in horror, reluctance, and self-degradation.

Most importantly, the prophet is brought into a dialogue with Yahweh.<sup>54</sup> This dialogue with Yahweh is one of the features that distinguish a true prophet from a false one. Many may see and even hear something, but a true vision engages the prophet in a dialogue—face-to-face.<sup>55</sup> The prophet is compelled to engage Yahweh. Through it all, there comes an unflinching confidence that 'the word of Yahweh came to me.' Terrien (1983:151)

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<sup>54</sup> Allen (1994:38) discusses the essential combination of word and sight in Israelite prophetic tradition. But through a dialogue: 'he ceases to be an external observer and becomes a participant in the divine purpose.'

<sup>55</sup> In Num 12:5-8, Terrien (1983:148) interprets the 'face-to-face' phrase as placing emphasis on 'psychological presence' or 'awareness of communion.'

concludes that the ‘word’ feature is representative of a ‘Name’ theology which supersedes and indeed nearly eliminates a ‘visual’ tradition in Israel:

In Hebraic religion, the name plays the theological role which other religions ascribe to divine images and cultic representations. The dynamic and worldwide demands of the name, however, bring a unique power to Hebraic religion. The hearing of such a name and the bearing of its implications require a response different from that inherent in the contemplation of an image.

It is not necessary to conclude, as Terrien<sup>56</sup> does, that the word eliminates or even subordinates the visual (or tangible) elements in prophetic encounter as will be presented below. His comments, however, reinforce the critical Israelite distinction being made here—that authentic image or icon was always accompanied by the word.<sup>57</sup>

There are some features, however, that set Ezekiel’s experience apart from most other prophets. He shares with Isaiah a throne vision,<sup>58</sup> the most distinguishing features being a description of otherworldly beings, the throne of Yahweh, and a claim to have seen ‘the Lord’ (Is 6:1) or ‘the God of Israel’ (Ez 10:20). Both of these visions stress Yahweh’s immediate and determined involvement with His constituency. As to whether Isaiah’s vision is inspired by an experience within the Jerusalem temple, Watts (1985:74) comments: ‘God is clearly the Heavenly King, exalted on his throne. His glorious presence dominates the scene as his robes fill the room... “the hall” may refer to the Temple in Jerusalem or the great heavenly hall. The word cannot settle the question.’ But the discerning council of Judah’s kings was understood to operate in tandem with Yahweh’s heavenly one as 2 Kings 22:17-23 indicates.

Important in these temple visions is the ensuing dialogue that occurs between Yahweh and the prophet who has been summoned to the heavenly court. This again points to a

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<sup>56</sup> Terrien pits ‘a theology of name,’ ‘presence through time’ against ‘a theology of glory,’ presence through space.’

<sup>57</sup> This discussion of aniconism, as is much of Old Testament studies of the Twentieth Century, has been dominated by Protestant thinking which is already predisposed towards a ‘word’ dominated method. There is an ignorance of the longstanding discussion of word and image in church history, one in which Eastern Christianity insists was settled by the church. Word and image both are incarnational, one depicting aspects of God by words, the other by paint.

<sup>58</sup> Zimmerli has noted a close textual similarity between them. (1979:97-100)

distinguishing characteristic of a true prophet of Israel, for although the prophet is only engaged after Yahweh's decision, the prophet is called to witness the discussion and to even dialogue with God about it, thus securing the knowledge of God. Watts (1985:71) calls this kind of privy encounter 'an authenticating vision' and cites the theophanic encounters of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Samuel as the broader vision tradition: '...in which God reveals (and in some measure defends) his decisions to bring judgment' (Watts 1985:73). In the summary statement of Ezekiel 1:28, Ezekiel also accredits his vision, calling it the *real-to-life*<sup>59</sup> appearance.

### 3.2 Glory's Habitation—An Approaching Storm Cloud

As observed by Ezekiel seemingly from a distance, the glory of the Lord is referenced in narrower terms. The glory of the Lord appears within and emanating throughout a 'stormy wind, an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by light' (Ez 1:4). The entire cloud phenomenon is the object in the phrase, 'like the appearance at the river Kebar.'<sup>60</sup> This qualifying phrase is referenced to validate all the glory visions in the book. As presented in the inaugural vision, the storm cloud has several features. First, it is a cloud conjuring up elements traditionally associated with the hidden, untouchable, and fearful characteristics of Yahweh. 'The Lord has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud.'<sup>61</sup> That the cloud has 'fire taking hold of itself'<sup>62</sup> conjures up well-established imagery of glory's association with violent and fearful thunderstorms or volcanic eruptions (Ps.18.8-14), and refers to a churning, fearsome internal intensity. The cloud entity not only has the *bybo hgn*, surrounding radiance, at its center, but it permeates throughout the cloud and extends beyond the periphery.

The north, *Nwpu*, is a derivative of the verb *Npu* meaning 'to hide or treasure up.'<sup>63</sup> In general, the north was viewed as a dark and foreboding place but also a place to secure

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<sup>59</sup> The term *twmd harm* will be discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter. For now, Terrien's (1983:235) comment is adequate: 'The presence is elusive but real.'

<sup>60</sup> Ez 8:4, 10:15

<sup>61</sup> 1 Kgs 8:12, see also Psalms 18:9-11

<sup>62</sup> Block (1997:92)

<sup>63</sup> BDB pg. 860

treasure. Its significance here is debated. Zimmerli (1979:120) views it no more than the mythological sense in which the north is seen as the abode of the gods. Tying it in more with a phenomenological sense, Block (1997:92) suggests no special significance, while Allen (1994:26) suggests ‘a sinister portion of the sky’ that ‘conveys a threat.’ What is significant, however, is that it is *approaching*, breaking in on the scene in a dramatic and forceful way. It is an ominous intervention, and perhaps the reference to the north allows the scene to be ubiquitous, making the encounter apply equally for the prophet, the exiles and the residents of Jerusalem (and for the reader). Ezekiel’s vision of the *hwhy-dwbk* approaching from the north must be juxtaposed with the understanding of it residing in Jerusalem (Ez 8-10). This picture may be a subtle way to reinforce that Zion is dependent on Yahweh’s presence from the heavenly abode and not the other way around.

Finally, the cloud is divided into two distinct realms by the *eyqr*, expanse (Ez 1:22). The upper half has as its center a throne and is again surrounded by a churning light. The lower half of the cloud is dominated by ‘living beings’ who are later identified as ‘cherubim,’ considered in the ancient Near East to be ‘tutelary deities of hybrid form and massive proportions placed at the entrance to Mesopotamian temples’ (Blenkinsopp, 1990:20). The living beings are symbiotically linked to animated wheels. The two are primarily there to evoke a sense of security, determination, freedom, and power—God’s bodyguards. Also among the lower regions are celestial ‘men’ who freely move between the realm of the cherubim and the realm of men (Ez 9:1ff). They are called the ‘visitors’, *ṭwdqr*, a designation rich with the implementation of judgment.<sup>64</sup> This split-level depiction is often over-looked, but is critical. The upper level is strictly inhabited by the man on the throne and the surrounding radiance and has no direct contact with the realm of men, other than Ezekiel. Ezekiel is maintaining the theological notion that direct contact with glory is lethal. The lower realm of the storm cloud does interact in the realm of humans, even beyond the temple precinct. Also, the upper realm acts independently from the lower realm, at times being detached from it (Ez 9:3).

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<sup>64</sup> Am 3:2,14, Ho 1:4, 2:15, Ex 20:5, Jer 9:24, Is 10:12

### 3.4 The Essence of Glory—A Churning Radiance

The detailed description of glory in Chapter 10 indicates glory moving separately, but not independently from the cherubim/wheels demarcated by ‘the expanse’. Ezekiel constantly locates the *hwhy-dwbk* proper as above the cherubim/wheels and separated by an expanse (Ez 10.19,20, 11.22). Strictly speaking then, the *bybo hgn*—surrounding brightness (Ez 1:4, 27)—is what must be properly referred to as Yahweh’s glory, but it is viewed consistently by Ezekiel as originating, emanating, and inseparable from the man on the throne (Ez 1:26). The ‘surrounding brightness’ is most properly the object of the demonstrative *awh* in the summary statement of the introductory vision (Ez 1:28). The ‘surrounding brightness,’ however, is so congealed with the man on the throne that Allen (1994:36) interprets glory as most directly referring to the figure on the throne. Yet, v 28 reiterates that the intense light, now compared to a rainbow piercing through rain clouds, is most accurately the *hwhy-dwbk*. Even still, it is feasible to conceive of the entirety of the vision—the immense storm cloud of 1:4—as the object as well.<sup>65</sup>

**3.4.1 The churning radiance.** The *hgn*<sup>66</sup> refers to the brightness of dawn, a full moon, or brilliant stars. In Proverbs 4:18 it connotes finding one’s way, a clearly lit path. In general, *hgn* emphasizes clarity of purpose, vision, and guidance more than of beauty. The adverb, *bybo*,<sup>67</sup> means to enclose or surround, and it may carry a similar connotation with Ezekiel 1:27 where the gleam of the upper half of the man is like an ‘encased fire.’<sup>68</sup> Although the phrase is problematic, it seems to indicate a kind of brightness that is generated by its self-containment. Also strongly connoted by the word

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<sup>65</sup> Allen (1994:34) concludes: ‘That this revelation is the heart of the theophany vision is shown by the climactic resumption of terms from v 4 and in part from v 13. What has been glimpsed from afar in terms of a homogeneous mass of energy is now seen close up as the nucleus of the power that had permeated the whole.’

<sup>66</sup> BDB 618 Conclusions based on author’s comparative word studies.

<sup>67</sup> BDB 686

<sup>68</sup> NJPS (1988:894) Of Ezekiel 1:27 it translates: ‘fire encased in a frame’ admitting, however, that the meaning in Hebrew is uncertain.



is a kind of circular movement, a churning, that insures solidity and invincibility, like an army surrounding a city. It is like a modern wood-burning stove which by the very nature of its self-contained and circulating air in the firebox creates a bright, intense flame and radiant heat. The source of this ‘surrounding radiance’ is the illuminated man on the sapphire throne, an undeniable allusion to Yahweh as the true king.

The significance of the *bybo hgn* needs little explanation, for even today, we share a similar notion with the Ancients. Important people in our lives—whether entertainers, politicians, military or sports heroes—are considered to have a certain commanding presence. They are even called idols. The appearance of a highly esteemed individual is said to be impressive, dynamic, electrifying, or charismatic. The person’s presence or *aura* is said to emanate well beyond the individual, even in representations of that person—photographs, films, emissaries, official seals or letters. Ultimately, presence is something felt or sensed, mystical and invisible, but it exudes itself from a visual, an appearance. In keeping with the Priestly tradition, the *hwhy-dwbk* is ‘the personal presence of the deity in light’ (Zimmerli, 1979:124). ‘Ultimately, the fire represents the blazing presence of God’s very self’ (Cook, 2004:183). But the repeated references to the internal intensity of this light, especially in parallel with flashing lightning, burning coals, and fire (Ez 1:4,13, 14, 27) are enough to warrant a picture of both a brilliant and lethal presence.<sup>69</sup> Terrien (1983:259) also suggests that the intensity of light emphasized throughout is a unique way to veil Yahweh’s essence by, in a sense, ‘over-exposure’: ‘Ezekiel saw God in a blinding light—as effective a mask of the Deity as darkness.’

**3.4.2 Man on the throne.** Many of the features of glory in Ezekiel’s description are shared with broad Priestly<sup>70</sup> and Zion traditions.<sup>71</sup> But one feature belongs exclusively to

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<sup>69</sup> Kutsko (2000a:67): ‘Ezekiel’s language gives the additional impression that it is bridling something potentially dangerous.’ Cook (2004:184) also adds to the dual nature of fire in reference to God’s presence: ‘Just as natural fire plays both constructive and destructive roles, luminous power has similarly ambivalent character. It can be a potential good...but must be respected and treated with utmost care. Otherwise, full blown disaster is possible.’

<sup>70</sup> Kutsko’s (2000a:63) assessment of the Priestly tradition (P) is important to keep in mind: ‘Certainly the Priestly stratum is complex and cannot be attributed to a single source or to a single period...suffice it to say that the Priestly material encompasses a lengthy period of compositional and editorial activity.’ Also, he summarizes the Priestly theology of glory (Kutsko, 2000a:80)

<sup>71</sup> Mainly represented in this work by Ollenburger’s (1987) assessment.

Ezekiel—the man on the throne (Ez 1:26-28, 8:3, 43:5-7). As Kutsko (2000b:65) reminds: ‘The passage is highly anthropomorphic.’ There is little doubt that the anthropomorphic features of the hand, the bodily shape, and the voice depict Yahweh as King and Commander of the armies. But considering Ezekiel’s strong condemnation of idolatry, the depiction of Yahweh in such clear human terms creates difficulties.

This question is central to Kutsko’s (2000a:150-156) thesis concerning the issue of God’s presence and absence. Although I disagree with his conclusion—that the imagery ultimately functions to demonstrate God’s absence from Jerusalem and presence in Babylon—it is helpful in understanding where the imagery is coming from and why. Ezekiel’s glory vision along with the Priestly theology of glory reformulates earlier wilderness and creation theologies that are expressly employed as a polemic against ancient Near Eastern notions of idols and divine imagery (Kutsko 2000a:77-100). Especially important along these lines is the developing notion of man being made in the image of God (Kutsko, 2000a:63-71). But, Ezekiel’s image of glory is a clear departure from the Priestly theology of glory where God’s appearance is remote and mysterious. The Priestly theology is expressly ‘nonanthropological’ and seeks to diminish and even counter the notion of Yahweh’s ‘tie to a special, divinely elected place’ (Kutsko 2000a:82).<sup>72</sup> For Kutsko (2000a:91), Ezekiel must press the Priestly theology of glory to extremes in order to reestablish two competing notions of Yahweh necessary for the exiles to embrace. On the one hand, Israel needs an image of God that ‘must maintain God’s transcendence in order to provide the vehicle for God to trespass borders’; while at the same time, ‘employ an image of God’s proximity whose sentient quality the prophet can communicate to those who have no vision.’

In Ezekiel’s vision, there are three anthropomorphic features that originate directly from the man on the throne (Ez 2:1-3, 8:3-4), all of which have an immediate and exclusive impact and interchange with Ezekiel. These three features are inextricably linked in a kind of symbiosis: the *hand*, the *spirit*, and the *voice*. Terrien (1983:260) understands

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<sup>72</sup> Oddly, Terrien (1983:203) contradicts Kutsko’s perception of Priestly theology on glory, saying of Isaiah’s temple vision: ‘He exploded the priestly notion of a divine glory that dwelled within the sacred space.’

these features as a way to express the force of the vision beyond the initial impact: ‘As the vision is about to fade, presence continues to impart its power to man.’

For Terrien (1983:260) the *xwr* is especially linked to a ‘bio-energy’ that put into: ‘psychic motion...the will of the Deity.’ Just as one cannot see the wind but only its effects, so is the description of this spirit within the visions. This spirit operates only within the vision and in direct reference to the glory of Yahweh. So immediate is the relationship between the spirit and the prophet that Ezekiel testifies of the spirit coming into him (Ez 2:1). The coming of the spirit into Ezekiel is particularly connected with forcing the prophet to pay attention, observe, and listen to Yahweh’s case against his people, and then to consequently transfer the message to the Israel: ‘The spirit of the Lord came upon me, and he told me what to say’ (Ez.11:4). The *spirit*, and the *hand* are the prime operatives in bringing the word to the prophet in such concrete terms that he can eat and taste the word. Terrien (1983:261) assures: ‘Ezekiel’s commission was confirmed by the hand of Yahweh and empowered by the spirit of Yahweh. In addition, the prophet had “incorporated” the word of Yahweh.’

The *xwr* especially functions as a barrier breaker, acting like a conduit: ‘the spirit lifted me up and took me away’ (Ez 3:24, 8:3, 11:1, 24). The major purpose for the transport is to connect the prophet with his appropriate audience. Hence, the spirit lifts the prophet, places him before the targeted audience, and commands him to ‘prophecy against them.’ The final destination of the prophet’s spirited transport is the exiles (Ez 3:15, 11:25). However, the spirit can break barriers between the terrestrial and celestial realms<sup>73</sup>, geographic locations, and even the holy and profane, causing Ezekiel to view and even participate in profane acts (Ez 4:14, 8:6ff).<sup>74</sup>

Carley’s (1975:28) contribution suggests that the emphasis on ‘hand of Yahweh’ and ‘spirit of Yahweh’ harken back to pre-classical prophecy where the need is to emphasize

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<sup>73</sup> The expression ‘the heavens were opened’ (Ez 1:1) is exclusive to Ezekiel’s vision (Greenberg, 1983:41) (Terrien, 1983:258)

<sup>74</sup> Strong (2000:75) has made particular note of glory’s role in transversing the problem of a Holy God engaging the chaotic or ‘unclean’ regions of His realm: ‘the domain of Yahweh’s Glory is earth, especially the unclean regions or the *wilderness*.’

the forces empowering the prophet. This, he suggests, was necessary where the emphasis on the word, prominent in classical prophecy, was degenerating into impotency. What is behind ‘the voice’ is an active, breathing, animated force with not only the power to act (the hand) but the ability and freedom as well (the spirit).

The hand, the spirit, and voice all convey a forceful, intruding, and activating presence that for Terrien (1983:261) compels the prophet to subordinate his entire life: ‘to the intrusion of the presence.’ All of this is generated from ‘the man on the throne,’ bringing to forceful clarity what many in the crisis were muddying (Ez 8)—that according to Strong (2000:69), Yahweh was emphatically present: ‘on the earth...as well as his presence on the divine throne.’

So what is the *hwhy-dwbk* in Ezekiel’s visions? First of all, it is a powerful phenomenological and mystical *encounter* that is infused with meaning especially because a word accompanies it. The prophet interprets and conveys this encounter through descriptive language and by subordinating his whole life to it.<sup>75</sup> Ezekiel portrays his experience of glory as most specifically a churning light surrounding, permeating, and emanating from the throne of Yahweh. It is housed in, yet permeates throughout a churning, active storm cloud divided into an upper realm dominated by the surrounding radiance, a throne with a radiant being in the form of a man on it, and a lower realm taken up by extraordinary living beings who are bonded to animated wheels, and ‘men’ (angelic) who move easily between the lower realm and the realm of men. The spirit, the hand, and the voice are active extensions implementing the will of the man on the throne in glory’s center into the prophet’s life.

### **3.5 Evocative Impression—God’s Perceived Presence**

Certainly, the detailed description of glory is intended to evoke an overall image or impression. Ezekiel’s vision of glory is understood, first by Ezekiel then by his audience, as offering a commanding and definitive presentation or exhibition of Yahweh’s

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<sup>75</sup> The meaning of Ezekiel’s symbolic gestures is the topic of chapter 5.

engagement in the crisis at hand. This is so much the case that the NJPS translation consistently calls it simply ‘the Presence,’ and Allen (1994:3) follows in kind translating it ‘the glorious Presence.’ Ezekiel confidently calls the throne imagery ‘the God of Israel.’ But to what extent can this sighting be equated with Yahweh who ‘sits enthroned above the circle of the earth’ (Is 40:22)?

The image of Yahweh’s Presence in chapter one is a composite sketch blending features from numerous Israelite sources<sup>76</sup> and throughout the Near East<sup>77</sup>. As with composite sketches, the final stage includes an editorial gloss in order to smooth out minor flaws and make it presentable. Patton (2004:75) confirms that there is a ‘larger movement in the book to appropriate a wide range of traditions.’ Overall, however, the composite features are intended to reaffirm to the Israelites in crisis a ‘picture’ of their god—Yahweh as king, who is able to guide and rule his people and Yahweh as Warrior, who is able to defeat His enemies (who are now his own people).

All the imagery is well established from the liturgical vocabulary of the Jerusalem temple to emphasize the sovereign kingship of Yahweh over his people at Zion.<sup>78</sup> That Yahweh is depicted riding on storm clouds, enthroned above the cherubim, and clothed in darkness is well known to worship at Zion.

Ezekiel’s vision also conjures up images of a chariot throne hearkening back to the Ark at Shiloh and incorporated into the Zion Tradition. Ollenburger states: (1987:43) ‘There is little doubt that the epithet *dwelling upon the throne* is closely related to the notion of the Ark as Yahweh’s throne.’ Chariots were not only vehicles of war, but also of transport. The transfer of a temple location or the carting off of temple paraphernalia after the sacking of a city by chariot was a common enough event.<sup>79</sup> The transport of the Ark to Jerusalem falls under this kind of picture. But the predominant impression is not simply

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<sup>76</sup> Kohn’s (2004:160) cataloging of D and P sources in Ezekiel 20:1-47 demonstrates the adjustment of material ‘to suit his personal prophetic agenda and the contemporary circumstances of his audience.’ This ‘quintessential synthesis of Israelite traditions’ reflected above all in ‘the compilation and editing of the Torah’ finds its roots in the early exile (Kohn 2004:167).

<sup>77</sup> Cook (2004:179-182).

<sup>78</sup> Terrien (1983:172-174). Psalm 24 is a prime example of the liturgy around glory.

<sup>79</sup> Berquist (1992:24)

a throne relocation. Strong (2000:86) persuasively argues: ‘Just in 1:26, Ezekiel sees in 10:1 the royal war chariot of the *kabod* of Yahweh.’ Hence, the throne chariot was not just used for transport to another temple, but to the front lines of the battlefield as well. Equally associated with this imagery, then, is the *ark* bound up in early Israelite traditions at Shiloh. The ark was also a transportable object. Situated atop a platform, it could be carried by men or placed on a cart. Blenkinsopp (1990:18) sums up this connection:

This object was carried into battle and used for purposes of divination...It accompanied the Israelites on their journey through the desert and was carried into battle. After the settlement in the land, it served as the rallying point of the tribes in the central highlands in their life-and-death struggle with the Philistines. It was located at the tribal shrine in Shiloh as the outward warranty of the presence of the invisible God, Yahweh of the hosts.

The Shiloh traditions around the ark also contribute to developing the Davidic monarchy. Ollenburger (1987:37) convincingly demonstrates the correlation between the Ark tradition at Shiloh and that of the Jerusalem cult: ‘The narrator in 1 Samuel 4 and 2 Samuel 6 wishes to make clear...that the Ark in Jerusalem stands in continuity with the Ark at Shiloh.’<sup>80</sup>

Even earlier still than the Shiloh tradition, Ezekiel’s glory imagery evokes reminders of Yahweh as a fearsome warrior at the Reed Sea, a guiding presence in the wilderness and a judge/lawgiver atop the Sinai mountain. In my view, this connection is mostly underplayed in many Ezekiel commentaries. There are a few considerations, however, that can reinforce a close connection.

First, Noth’s study of the Pentateuch has established a considerable redactic activity by a Priestly group during the exile. This being the case, it is clear that the revisiting of Israel’s time of earliest formulation in the wilderness was a major focal point by priests in exile. Noth (1972:104) makes clear that as the canonical form takes shape: ‘...the narrative of the deliverance at the sea is to be regarded as the real nucleus of the Exodus

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<sup>80</sup> Terrien (1983:165-167) confirms: ‘The nomadic aspect of the ark was not forgotten, however, for its original connection with the ideology of the Holy War and the sojourn in the wilderness was reenacted in the ceremonies of its procession in later times.’

theme.’ Ezekiel also revisits the formulative years in the wilderness (Ez 16).<sup>81</sup> Noth identifies the heavy reliance on the formula ‘then they will know that I am Yahweh’ Noth (1972:105) as a P redaction in Exodus 14, and Strong (2000:90) identifies a parallel function between Exodus 14 and Ezekiel’s prophecies:

The recognition formula in Ezekiel’s oracles against Egypt (chs. 29-32) and the Transjordanian states (ch. 25) is associated with battle and the knowledge of Yahweh as a powerful warrior deity. It is parallel in function to the recognition formula found in Exod 14:18, which serves to answer Pharaoh’s question, “Who is Yahweh that I should heed him.

For Noth, the Reed Sea account reveals not only P’s interest in this, but also a reliance on knowledge of old Sinai traditions. A key concern is the keen interest of J on the cloud/pillar theophany, especially as the central symbol of guidance in the wilderness:

The narrative element of the pillars of cloud and fire in all probability derives from the Sinai tradition. Smoke rising like a cloud and fire are features of the theophany on Sinai (19:18 J), and the phenomenon of the pillars of cloud and fire presumably goes back to observation of an active volcano, to which allusion is without doubt made in the account of the events of Sinai. The pillars of cloud and fire showing the way which is to lead Israel to Sinai are already given to the Israelites as a divine guide, in J, from Exodus onwards. (Noth 1972:109)

Ezekiel’s depiction of glory echoes the critical features from Israel’s crisis at the Reed Sea and the wilderness wanderings, mainly in the imagery of the fiery mountain at Horeb and the fiery pillar at the Reed Sea. Although Ezekiel’s contemporaries have reworked the exodus account of glory at the Reed Sea, it still echoes back to very early ideas of an awesome and fearful phenomenon accompanying the Israelites. Most importantly, in the fiery pillar at the Reed Sea, Yahweh fought His own battle against his enemy and ‘gained glory’ (Ex 14:4, 31).

Like other exilic priests Ezekiel conjured up images from the pre-monarchical traditions, especially of the precarious times during the wilderness wanderings and conquest of the

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<sup>81</sup> Kutsko (2000a:152) concludes: ‘For Ezekiel, the exile was the wilderness revisited, and he enrolled tradition of the mobile *kebod-yhwh* to depict the complementary aspects of God’s absence and presence.’

land. It seemed an appropriate way to address how God could be both present and transient at the same time as well as how God could be present despite a king, city, or temple. But even more importantly, the image is of an active and engaging presence, one especially designed to picture Yahweh marching out to battle (Ez 13:5).

Overall then, the depiction of glory in Ezekiel is designed to evoke a sense of God's Presence as the sovereign King and Warrior in the crisis of the exile. The whirling wheels of the cherubim depict the effortless mobility and freedom of the one upon the throne to act.<sup>82</sup> The cherubim with their column-like legs, four-sided features, and straightforward gaze emphasize the unflinching determination and invulnerability of Yahweh. The immediate, forceful, and direct action of the spirit upon the prophet as well as the ease in which the visiting 'men' carry out God's commands reinforces the notion well-established in the Jerusalem cult of Yahweh's exclusive prerogative to choose and act for His people.<sup>83</sup>

In all of Israel's traditions concerning glory, *hwhy-dwbk* is synonymous with a perceived and real Presence of Yahweh. The older glory traditions of Sinai and Shiloh were harbored and liturgically elaborated upon under the auspices of the Jerusalem cult. Ollenburger (1987:23) concludes well: 'But it is essential to keep in view that everything else that can be said about Zion, and everything that took place within the Jerusalem cult, depended upon the prior notion of Yahweh's presence there.' The temple precinct was understood to be the point or portal of contact with Yahweh whether that contact be His Name that dwelt there, His footstool that was fixed there, or His glory that filled it. For sure, Zion was Yahweh's occupied territory in the realm of men, and His glory established and protected Yahweh's domain in the profane regions of the earth (Strong, 2000:73). It served as His 'base camp' to advance His kingdom to all the earth, until all the earth would be 'full of his glory.'

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<sup>82</sup> Renz (1999:96): 'The emphasis [of the cherubim] is directly on the mobility of God's presence. Cherubim are used not to fix God upon throne in Jerusalem, but to form the chariot with which YHWH is free to come and go to Jerusalem (or, indeed, any other place) as he chooses.'

<sup>83</sup> Ollenburger (1987:82) treatise of 'Yahweh's Exclusive Prerogative' is thorough and helpful. For example: 'As we have seen, it was part of the logic of the ascription of kingship to Yahweh that he alone was king and was, by virtue of his monarchical status, the exclusive source of security and refuge. This logic is evident in Ps 82, to choose only one text.'



But in light of an exiled aristocracy and an encroaching army, the notion of Yahweh's perceived Presence residing at Zion would create serious implications. Indeed, Ezekiel's prophecies give witness to competing, confusing, but ultimately incorrect views of Yahweh's perceived presence. The elders in Jerusalem are claiming: 'The Lord does not see us; he has forsaken the land' (Ez 8:12). Given that exiled kings were usually blinded, symbolizing the decapitated ability to rule, this saying may be emphasizing the dethronement of Yahweh in the heavenly court by a more powerful god. Equally consternating to Yahweh is the assertion of princes, *yrv*, and the people of Jerusalem: 'They (the exiles) are far away from Yahweh; the land has been given to us,' (Ez 11:1-15) implying that Yahweh has not gone anywhere.

It is doubtful, however, that most entertained the notion that Yahweh was dethroned in the heavenly realm. The pertinent question was: where was Yahweh now that the distinctive characteristic of Yahweh's Presence on the earth—the glory of Yahweh especially represented by the Ark in the Holy of Holies housed on Zion—was gone? How could it be perceived, who would perceive it, and what would it mean?

These questions have created considerable debate over Ezekiel's perspective on the locality of Yahweh's Presence.<sup>84</sup> Citing important predecessors, Strong (2000:71) summarizes one side of the debate: 'Tryggve Mettinger's 1982 study *The Dethronement of Sabaoth* has taken large, bold steps, adding detail and clarity to what von Rad began to outline. Much like von Rad, he sees Ezekiel's emphasis on the *kabod* as a departure from Zion theology in that it apparently has replaced the designation Yahweh Sabaoth.' Fueling the debate in more contemporary circles, Steven Tuell (2000:97) agrees with this assessment. He argues that the picture is of Yahweh being dethroned from Zion, rejecting and abandoning Zion and all that went with it—Davidic king, cult, temple, and city—and in a sense, exiling Himself with those in Babylon. Ezekiel, then, is trying to enforce the idea that Yahweh is in Babylon with the exiles.

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<sup>84</sup> Kutsko (2000a:1-24) frames the current debate well and his book is devoted to understanding presence and absence of God.

Furthermore, the idea of Yahweh's complete and utter rejection of Zion and his abandonment of His Presence fuels an even broader debate in contemporary Old Testament scholarship, favoring a broad Mosaic tradition over a Jerusalem tradition. Brueggemann (qtd. Ollenburger 1987:153)<sup>85</sup> sums up one side:

The Mosaic tradition tends to be a movement of protest which is situated among the disinherited and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a God who decisively intrudes, even against seemingly impenetrable institutions and orderings. On the other hand, the Davidic tradition tends to be a movement of consolidation which is situated among the established and secure and which articulates its theological vision in terms of a god who faithfully abides and sustains on behalf of the present ordering.

No clearer is the view of the Mosaic superiority expressed than in Mendenhall's (qtd. Ollenburger 1987:153)<sup>86</sup> view: 'What we can now prove is the fact that the cultic/political system of Jerusalem during the Monarchy had nothing to do with the Yahwist revolution and was actually completely incompatible with that religious movement.' Terrien (1983:268) also favors this view, arguing that sapient notions of God's Presence ('sacrality of time') were gradually winning out over spatial notions ('sacrality of space'). Ezekiel's understanding of the whereabouts of Yahweh becomes an intriguing aspect of this larger contention.

Along with this contention that the Mosaic tradition is a purer form of Yahwism, Yahweh's glorious presence is now perceived apart from the cultic trappings of Zion.<sup>87</sup> Perception of glory is a critical question since the earlier *kabod* traditions tenaciously maintained an empirical reality to it. The fierce storm cloud atop a mountain and in the wilderness is understood to have found its residence at Shiloh represented by the Ark and

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<sup>85</sup> Brueggemann, Walter 1979 'Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel' *JBL* 98 161-185

<sup>86</sup> Mendenhall, George 1975 'The Monarchy' *Interpretation* 29 pp.155-170

<sup>87</sup> I am in agreement with Patton (2004:78) that past scholarship has tended towards a negative bias of the priesthood and cult resulting in hard distinctions between priests and prophets. Patton urges a re-evaluation of such distinctions.

ultimately on Zion in the Holy of Holies.<sup>88</sup> From its inception, Israel only understood the *hwhy-dwbk* as the visible reassurance of Yahweh's nearness to the sacred assembly. It is God's mediated Presence, and therefore, must have an immediate and tangible expression. Indeed, it seems that the complaint of Ezekiel's contemporaries centered on believing that if the temple were to be destroyed, Yahweh would necessarily be absent. Tuell (2000:111) argues that through Ezekiel's visions—more accurately his recounting of them—God is replacing the more empirical imagery of Yahweh's *kabod* with word images. He (2000:97) goes on to summarize:

The means of that presence, it appears, were the words of Ezekiel, who by describing his visions of YHWH's *kabod* gave his readers vicarious access to his own ecstatic experience. Thus, Ezekiel the priest has, in the last analysis, radically reworked and even rejected his priestly heritage, and text has replaced temple as the locus of divine presence.

Tuell is right in his assessment that Ezekiel's recounting of the manifestation functions as an alternative means for perceiving Yahweh's glory, but not as Tuell advocates, as a rejection of the thoroughly corrupted institutions of the past, suggesting that the retelling of the story is better than the actual experience. On the contrary, Ezekiel's vision accounts are but a gracious substitute for the temple and do not demonstrate the radical rejection of it. Ezekiel's vision does not negate Zion and all that it stands for, but reaffirms the most fundamental element of that tradition—Yahweh is King and desires to dwell among His people. Instead, the imagery is depicting the exile as a time where, in a sense, the glory gained at the Reed Sea, in the conquest of the land, and established at Zion has lost ground. God's glory is in retreat but not defeat. As will further be explored in the next chapter, Yahweh is in fact making a stand to defend Zion and protect it. The real difference, which the Israelites don't understand, is from *whom* Yahweh is protecting Zion. Ironically, it is not the Babylonians, but the Israelites.

Furthermore, it is not primarily the recitation of words that provide the medium for perception; more immediately, it is being in the presence of the 'son of *adam*' who is

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<sup>88</sup> Terrien (1983:174) says of Psalm 24 and the ark: 'The cultic object is inseparable from the belief in Yahweh, the Hero of Battle, triumphant over cosmic as well as historical enemies.'

experiencing the manifestation that is critical. The visible aspect of God's glory is not exclusively transferred to the word, as much as to a unique man engrossed in a powerful experience with his god. The elders are drawn into the vision *while* the 'son of *adam*' is seeing it (Ez 8:1). The exiles are made to agonize with the son of *adam* as he remains mute, lays docile, eats his food over a smoldering dung pile, or shaves his head and packs his bag. It is primarily in going through the 'son of *adam*'s' ordeal *with him* that others are able to see the glory of God. In a real sense then, the son of *adam* is the Ark's temporary surrogate. Interestingly, Tuell (2000:108) arrives at a similar conclusion: 'Ezekiel himself has become in some sense the point of intermediation between God and God's people.'

John T. Strong (2000:69) makes a strong case that Ezekiel's use of *kabod* is not a departure from Zion tradition but an ingenious attempt at reinforcing it. The glory of Yahweh is for Ezekiel a mediating and substantial presence of Yahweh especially in and for a crisis situation. Central to his point is to clarify the nature of *kabod* as a *hypostasis*, where (2000:73) 'the abstract aspects of Yahweh were personified and given substance.' Hence, Strong's starting point for discussing glory is to reaffirm a critical aspect as to the *nature* of glory that in my view is consistent throughout the Old Testament—the visual, perceptible, and engaging reality of God's Presence.<sup>89</sup> Even more importantly, this Presence of Yahweh is not static or benign, giving the impression of a mere show piece. *hwhy-dwbk* is an engaging and dynamic force to be reckoned with. Strong (2000:81) summarizes:

...the *kabod* of Yahweh is the hypostasis of the divine king. Its domain was the unclean regions of the world, and its function was to represent the holy and distant Yahweh in this profane realm and to confront all opposing forces. This conception of the *kabod* was already present in the Zion traditions.

Important to our discussion is Strong's affirmation that Ezekiel's view of glory is consistent with Israel's earlier perceptions of it, going all the way back to that

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<sup>89</sup> Terrien (1983:172): 'It will be recalled that the Yahwistic stories of the Sinai theophanies stressed the visual aspect of divine manifestation.'

monumental event at the Reed Sea where Yahweh first ‘gained glory’ and made his Name renowned. From Reed Sea to temple mount, God’s Presence has been perceived and made real among the assembly through the display of *kabod*. Glory is God’s real point of contact in the real and tangible world of humankind.

While not contributing directly to the issue of the nature of glory, Ollenburger significantly contributes to the defense of Zion tradition, with its emphasis on objective and spatial dimensions to glory (Terrien 1983:172), as an equally valid and essential expression of Yahwism as the Mosaic tradition. The significance for this study is his central thesis that what is most fundamentally affirmed at Zion. Yahweh’s exclusive prerogative is over all the affairs and intrigues in the history of His people and the nations precisely because Yahweh is the ruler of all creation. First Ollenburger (1987:155) affirms:

...the reason Isaiah is able to confront Ahaz with such a radical critique is that he is rooted so firmly in the Jerusalem tradition and its theology of creation, which includes among its presuppositions the exaltation of Yahweh as king, and indeed his glory and holiness which are most apparent in his theophanic appearance in that favored of all Jerusalem institutions, the temple.

Going further he summarizes (1987:157):

It must be emphasized that the world-order of God’s good and just creation is offered in the traditions of the Jerusalem cult as a statement of the way things are. It is not offered as a wish for the way things could be, or a hope for what they will become, but as a positive affirmation of what is ‘really real.’ In the real world Yahweh is Lord and King and his exclusive prerogative is exercised...The realities presumed by kings and tyrants are false realities, just as idols are false gods, and all are subject to the judgment of God who is the Lord of creation.

It is a matter of continuity with Israel’s past, rather than making a break with it, that Ezekiel sees *hwly-dwbk* approaching from the North. Reaffirming Yahweh’s freedom and ability to act in the affairs of humankind, he sees it marching out to battle. Rather than seeing Yahweh dethroned from the heavenly court, Ezekiel envisions Yahweh’s

uncontestable superiority in the heavenly realm advancing on the now contestable territory of Zion. Reaffirming Yahweh's exclusive and permanent right to rule, the churning radiance surrounds a throne and permeates out from it to all precincts of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, even to the rivers of Babylon. Reminiscent of Yahweh's commanding engagement at the Reed Sea or the Ark's retrieval from Philistine territory, Ezekiel envisions Yahweh mustering a stand against His foes. Having lost ground, Yahweh must regain glory territory. Thus, for a season, Yahweh's Presence is neither on Mt. Zion nor in captivity, rather it is entrenched between two camps, defending one and destroying the other, and the *perception* of that Presence is incarnated and conveyed through one *son of adam*.

Understanding Ezekiel's storm cloud as compared to the standing fire/cloud at the Reed Sea goes far to resolve the problem of Yahweh's whereabouts as well as the often baffling transport of the prophet to and from Jerusalem to Babylon. For from God's perspective, both Jerusalem and the exiles at the river are on the same battlefield.

### 3.6.1 Conclusion

In a time of catastrophic collapse, it is the most natural response to ask, 'Where is God?' All of Israel, including Ezekiel, was asking such a question, and God provided an answer through the prophet. Ultimately and most importantly, Ezekiel encounters his god in a storm cloud exhibition. Through the symbolic elaboration of the word, the prophet vicariously offers all who are looking for a glimpse into the reality of God's Presence in the crisis. Ezekiel insists he witnessed the real, life-like, appearance of the invisible God (Ez 1:28), and ultimately that is what glory is—a life-like presentation (hypostasis) of the invisible God.<sup>90</sup> Relying on the long tradition of Yahweh's glory being the visible and tangible point of contact between the heavenly throne and Yahweh's realm among his people, Ezekiel helps all those who are looking to their god to see Yahweh's determined and powerful intervention. Ezekiel perceives the storm cloud image containing glory as

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<sup>90</sup> The phrase, *twmd harm*, will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

primarily comparative to the guiding pillar of the wilderness standing between the assembly of those opposing or resisting Yahweh's rule and those who are trusting in it. Hence, Yahweh's Presence is neither within the Temple precinct nor with the exilic community—the location of the storm cloud in Jerusalem retreats only to the periphery of the city, and in Babylon, it is envisioned only 'in the plain.' Yahweh's Presence is standing between Jerusalem and Babylon as a guide and defender to those trusting in Him, but as a lethal threat to those resisting Him.





## 4 THE GUIDING, CONFRONTING, AND SEPARATING ROLE OF THE hwhy-dwbk IN EZEKIEL

### 4.1 Introduction

The visions of glory were intended to evoke a sense of Yahweh's real Presence as both Divine King and Warrior. Through the storm cloud epiphany, Ezekiel encounters the encroachment of the god of Israel into the very heart of Israel's crisis.

This being the case, the next question becomes pressing—what role does hwhy-dwbk play in Ezekiel's prophecy and to what extent is it effective? Clearly from Ezekiel's perspective, it is not an exhibition piece for admiration, but is actively engaged in a monumental historical drama. To remind, the hwhy-dwbk strictly speaking is the 'churning radiance' within an approaching storm cloud that is primarily perceived by Ezekiel within a vision of God. Even though this distinction is clear enough to the reader, the story tends to blur it. Yet when considering the glory of Yahweh and its many trajectories, mainly: the churning radiance, the 'visiting' men, the man clothed in linen, the spirit, the voice, the outstretched hand, the cherubim/wheels, and the man on the throne, one thing is clear—the hwhy-dwbk plays a dominant role in the drama unfolding in the book of Ezekiel, especially the first twelve chapters. The next two chapters will explore the various activities of glory within the drama.

The role of hwhy-dwbk can be summarized in four categories, three of which will be addressed in this chapter: guiding, confronting, and separating. The fourth function, preparing, will be discussed in the proceeding chapter. These varying roles of hwhy-dwbk easily converge for Ezekiel because he views God's glory through the archetypal image of Yahweh's guiding presence in the wilderness—Nne dwme, the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21). With this archetypal image, Ezekiel especially relies on a 'Yahweh war'<sup>91</sup> tradition shaped and idealized by the Zion tradition.<sup>92</sup> Terrien (1983:162f) views

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<sup>91</sup> See PG 16 for a definition of 'Yahweh war.'

the Yahweh war tradition being idealized by a ‘long held tradition in Jerusalem,’ saying especially of the ark: ‘...such a sacred object was a military emblem, symbol, or token of the nearness of Yahweh in battle. It belonged originally to the ideology of the Holy War.’ By comparing the exilic plight to Israel’s crisis at the Reed Sea (Ex 13:17-14:31) and in the Desert of Sin (Ex 16ff), Ezekiel envisions the real life drama of his time as an epic battle. Yahweh is engaging in a battle to reclaim his rightful place as King over his people. Hence, Glory’s departure is not a defeat or even a retreat of Yahweh as Warrior King, but a reassertion of it. Yahweh pulls back from the Temple precinct in order to muster his forces against a common opponent. By defeating His foe as He did at the Reed Sea, Yahweh will once again gain glory for Himself, reassert His kingship, and provide a way for deliverance (the exile) for those conditioned to follow His lead.

Two qualifications are necessary when it comes to comparing the glory episodes in Ezekiel with the episode of the Reed Sea incident found in Exodus. First, the emphasis here is simply to point to an intriguing interface with this episode. I intend to demonstrate primarily a common reliance on theme or scenario.<sup>93</sup> It is beyond the purview of this work to explore the possible reliance on source or common literary form. However, in summarizing Marco Noble’s (1982) work on ‘cultic scheme,’ Calduch-Benages (2004:94) notes the close structural similarity not only of the battle sequence of Exodus, but also the battle narratives of Elijah with the prophets of Baal and several of the prophetic books: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and Amos. As a priest, Ezekiel was certainly exposed to the liturgical recounting of critical junctures in Israel’s salvation history as solace and encouragement for the worshipper. Second, the issue of dating both the Exodus account, with its accepted layering of a Priestly redaction<sup>94</sup> and the Ezekiel episodes would not significantly alter the conclusions presented below. It can be confidently reasoned that the experience of exile finds a powerful metaphor in Yahweh leading a people out of Egypt and into a harrowing and unnerving situation that required a raw trust in the one leading the expedition. Terrien summarizes: ‘...the

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<sup>92</sup> Von Rad ( 1991:88ff) places the narrative of the sea, Exodus 14, with the ‘Post-Solomon Novella.’ The monarchy significantly ‘idealized’ earlier notions of Yahweh War.

<sup>93</sup> A view shared by Kutsko (2000a:94-99)

<sup>94</sup> See chapter 3 footnotes 26 and 27.

priestly writers of Babylonian exile, reflecting a long-held tradition of the Jerusalem temple, described in detail under the name “tabernacle,” their idealized picture of the sanctuary during the desert wanderings.’

## 4.2 Literary Structure of the Glory Episodes

For the readers of Ezekiel, our encounter with glory comes primarily through the text, and so it is through the text that the role of glory must be initially explored. The focus will mostly be on Ezekiel 1-7 and 8-12. As mentioned already, the glory pericope clearly determines the structure of the book. It sets up the authoritative basis for the content of the book.<sup>95</sup> Thus what the glory of the Lord did for Zion, so the glory pericope does for the book. Even more specifically, the glory pericope sets up the ‘thus says *Adonai Yahweh*’ speeches, the extended sermons of Ezekiel concerning the fall of Jerusalem (Ez 6-7, 12-24). Here too, the glory pericope provides the weighty credentials for authenticity. Ultimately, however, the literary encounter leads the reader to one shared by the exilic audience and Ezekiel himself.

According to the structural analysis below,<sup>96</sup> the material concerning glory found in the first twenty-four chapters of Ezekiel can be divided into two accounts that follow a similar pattern. The two accounts, designated *episodes*, have a spiraling effect, repeating yet building on certain themes. Several considerations should be noted for the structural outline below. First, there is considerable consensus among scholars that the meticulous structure of the book is in and of itself intended to have an important theological impact. Davies (1989:141) states: ‘These visions are marked as interrelated, not only by their common designation, *Myhla twarm* (1:1; 8:3; 40:1), but also by a continuity of motifs and structural elements, which other scholars have noted in detail.’ Kutsko (2000a:9) affirms that ‘indentifiable literary themes and recurrent phraseology suggest that

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<sup>95</sup> ‘His inaugural vision assured Ezekiel of God’s presence with him and his fellow deportees, and formed a firm basis for his commissioning’ (Cook 2004:182).

<sup>96</sup> The literary outline is one based on my own study of the Hebrew text *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* 1977. The attempt to stay close to the form and wording of the text, hence the structure, and avoid a topical outline.

approaching Ezekiel as a well-integrated, coherent text is warranted...Indeed, the Temple and Yahweh's presence there (kabod) are the text's fundamental structuring element.'

Second, as represented by Zimmerli (1979:253ff), many commentators see a clear break at chapter 8 in which the second glory encounter (Ez 8-11) is an attempt at 'assimilating' Ezekiel chapter 1.<sup>97</sup> Third, most commentators have not placed particular emphasis on the role and nature of glory in the book as in this treatise; rather, they tend to structure around the content of the speeches.

Finally, Chalduch-Benages' (2004:88-101) assessment of Marco Nobile's (1982)<sup>98</sup> work on Ezekiel is of particular interest. In Ezekiel, Noble asserts that there is a 'cultic scheme' that is especially designed to legitimize all of a society's social institutions with divine approval (Chalduch-Benages 2004:93). 'This foundational scheme consists of three moments: first, a theophany or some legitimate apparition of the divinity; second, a conflict frequently symbolized by a struggle between the godhead and his adversaries...; and third, the founding of the sanctuary.' The following outline matches Nobile's first two 'moments' and notices a repetition of the pattern.<sup>99</sup> Of particular interest to the presentation below is the framing of the scenario in terms of a battle.

Ezekiel experiences the first episode (Ez 1-7:27) by the Kebar River and is by himself. In the second episode (Ez 8-13ff), Ezekiel is engaged within the vision, yet this time he is before a group of elders in his own home. Each glory episode is divided into six sections that appear chiastically arranged as the outline below illustrates.<sup>100</sup> The first section (A) recalls the initial encounter with glory signaled by a date, an acknowledgement of where it was and who was present, and the phrase 'I looked and behold.' This section is paralleled (A<sub>1</sub>) by the prophetic speeches of Ezekiel marked by the characteristic formula

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<sup>97</sup> Blenkinsopp (1990:5); Block (1997:272); Allen (1994:xxvif). Of particular note is Block's chiastically arranged order to Ezekiel 8-11:25 that is similar to the one presented below.

<sup>98</sup> Nobile, M., 1982 *Una lettura simbolico-strutturalista di Ezechiele* Doctoral dissertation, Pontifical Biblical Institute, Roma

<sup>99</sup> The third moment, the founding of a sanctuary, is entertained as relating to Ezekiel in sections 4.6.3 and 5.3.2.

<sup>100</sup> Davies (1989:11) has noted several structural studies that have noted chiastic organization of the two visions.

‘thus says *Adonai Yahweh*.’ An address to the ‘son of man’ signals the next section (B). Here, Yahweh commands Ezekiel to respond and listen. In the counterpart section (B<sub>1</sub>), Ezekiel is again commanded to respond, mainly with symbolic action. The two sections in the middle (C, C<sub>1</sub>) are concerned with an encounter with glory that includes a transport of both glory and the son of man.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Episode**

A - Initial encounter with glory (1:1-28)

B - Son of man address (2:1-3:11)

C - Initial moving and ascending of Glory (3:12-23)

C<sub>1</sub> - Spirit lifting – transport (3:24-27)

B<sub>1</sub> - 2<sup>nd</sup> son of man address (4:1-5.4)

A<sub>1</sub> – Direct address ‘This is what Adonai Yahweh says (6-7)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Episode**

A - Initial encounter with glory (8:1-40)

B - Son of man address (8:5-18)

C - Initial moving and ascending of Glory (9:1-10:22)

C<sub>1</sub> - Spirit lifting – transport (11:1-25)

B<sub>1</sub> - 2<sup>nd</sup> son of man address (12:1-28)

A<sub>1</sub> – Direct address ‘This is what Adonai Yahweh says (13-24)

An extended structural analysis of the two glory episodes is provided below and will be referred to throughout the next two chapters. The literary analysis of the glory pericope places the structure of the two episodes (Ez 1-7, 8-24) in comparison. The analysis

demonstrates a deliberate shaping of the first two glory episodes along a similar structure. This comparative approach will serve as the basis for gleaning insights on the role of glory and its relationship with the son of man. The structure exposes a critical characteristic of glory—everything that happens within the episode is first set in motion by a glory movement. When glory moves, things happen. More will be said of this observation later; preliminarily, however, it presents a striking feature of glory in Ezekiel which is often underplayed in commentaries—the *hwhy-dwbk* is viewed as an actuating dynamic force. This force applies equally to its real life effect on Ezekiel, the exiles, *and* the liturgical community listening to its reading.

<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Episode Ez 1-7:27</b></p> <p><b>I. 1:1-28 1st encounter and movement</b></p> <p>A. 1:1 In the 30<sup>th</sup> year</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. While I was among the exiles</li> <li>2. heavens opened, I saw visions</li> <li>3. hand of the Y' was upon <b>him</b></li> </ol> <p>B. 1:4 I looked and behold <i>hnhw araw</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1:4 – windstorm</li> <li>2. 1:5-14 4 living creatures/form and appearance</li> <li>3. 1:15-21 wheels and living creatures</li> <li>4. 1:22-25 expanse</li> </ol> <p>C. 1:26 Figure like that of a man</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Mda harmk twmd</i></li> <li>2. waist up, then down</li> </ol> <p>D. (1:1 Visions of God – heaven)</p> <p>E. 1:28 Identification of glory</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>harm awh</i></li> <li>2. <u><i>hwhy</i></u>-<i>dwbk</i></li> <li>3. When I saw it I fell</li> <li>4. I heard a voice speaking</li> </ol> <p><b>II. Son of Man address- 2:1-3:11</b></p> <p>A. 2:1 initial command</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stand</li> <li>2. 2:2 Spirit came and raised</li> </ol> <p>B. 2:3-6 He said, 'son of man'</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 2:4-5 YHWH's complaint – house of Israel <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 'I am sending you to a rebellious house'</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. 2:6 'Don't be afraid' cycle</li> </ol>	<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Episode Ez 8-24:27</b></p> <p>I. 8:1-4 1st encounter and movement</p> <p>A. 8:1 In the 6<sup>th</sup> year</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. While sitting...among the elders</li> <li>3. Hand of adonai Y' came upon</li> </ol> <p>B. 8:2 I looked and behold <i>hnhw araw</i></p> <p>C. 8:2 Figure like that of a man</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>sa-harmk twmd</i></li> <li>2. waist down, then up</li> </ol> <p>D. 8:3 Spirit lifted <i>abtw me up</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. between heaven and earth</li> <li>2. in visions of God</li> <li>3. he took me to Jerusalem</li> </ol> <p>E. 8:4 Identification of glory</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Ms-hnhw</i></li> <li>2. <u><i>larvy yhla</i></u> <i>dwbk</i></li> </ol> <p><b>II. Son of Man address – 8:5-18</b></p> <p>A. 8:5 initial command</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. look to the north</li> </ol> <p>B. 8:6 He said, 'son of man'</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 8:6 YHWH's complaint – house of Israel <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 'Do you see'</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
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<p>a. 'of their words'</p> <p>C. 2:9 2<sup>nd</sup> command – symbolic action 1. 2:9 'I looked and I saw'</p> <p>2. 3:1 'eat the scroll' a. obedience – 'so I did'</p> <p>D. 3:4-11 3<sup>rd</sup> command- elaboration of complaint 1. command – go and speak</p> <p>2. Y's reason – 'they' 'house of Israel' a. 3:7 not willing to listen b. 3.8 prophet set in opposition</p> <p>3. 3:11b – hearing problem a. 'whether they listen'</p> <p><b>III. 2<sup>nd</sup> Encounter and movement of glory – 'I heard' 3:12-23</b></p> <p>A. 3:12a 'spirit lifted me' 1. rumblings of glory in dwelling place</p> <p>B. 3:17 command to watch and listen 1. distinction between righteous and wicked 2. Ezekiel charged 'you are accountable'</p> <p>C. 3:22 'the hand of YHWH was upon me'</p> <p>D. 3:22-23 <b>Glory's 3<sup>rd</sup> movement – depart</b> 1. 3: 22, 23 Ezekiel depart auy 2. 3:23 glory standing dme 3. location – the plain</p> <p>E. 3:23 identification of glory – like at Kebar 1. response – 'I fell'</p> <p>IV. 3:24-27 Spirit lifting A. 3:24 Spirit entered and raised B. He spoke to me C. 3:24 command – 'go' 'shut' 1. 'they' will tie 2. say to 'them'</p> <p>D. 3:27 hwhy ynda rma hk Response to 'whoever listens, whoever doesn't listen'</p>	<p>C. 8:6 2<sup>nd</sup> command – symbolic action 1. 8:5 'I looked...and saw' a. Y's reason for withdrawal</p> <p>2. 8:8 'dig a hole into the wall' a. obedience – 'so I did'</p> <p>D. 8:9-18 3<sup>rd</sup> command – elaboration of complaint 1. command – 'break through, enter, see' a. obedience – 'I went and looked'</p> <p>2. Y's reason – 'they' 'house of Israel' a. 8:12 'Lord doesn't see' b. 8:18 Yahweh set in opposition</p> <p>3. 8:18 – hearing problem a. 'I will not listen to them'</p> <p><b>III. 2<sup>nd</sup> Encounter and movement of glory – 'I heard' 9:1-10:22</b></p> <p>A. 9:1f 'have draw near' the visitors 1. glory move up from resting place</p> <p>B. 9:4-5 (command to hear) 1. distinction between righteous and wicked 2. Ezekiel's lament 3. Yahweh's response – 'they say I don't see'</p> <p>C. 10:1-15 Expanded glory visions 'I looked' 1. 10:1-2 voice from throne 2. 10:4-5 glory arose 3. 10:6-8 man receives fire 4. 10:9-14 vision of the wheels</p> <p>D. 10: 15-21 <b>Glory's 3<sup>rd</sup> movement – depart</b> 1. 10:18 departure auy 2. 10:19 glory standing dme 3. location – eastern door of temple gate</p> <p>E. 10:20,22 identification of glory – like at Kebar 1. response – 'I knew'</p> <p>IV. 11:1-24 Spirit lifting A. 11:1a Spirit lifted and brought B. 11:2 YHWH said to me C. 11:4 command – 'prophesy' 1. 'they' – plotting 2. prophesy against 'them'</p> <p>D. 11:5,7 hwhy ynda rma hk Response to 'cooking pot' proverb 1. 'then they will know' 2. answer to proverb</p> <p>E. 11:16-21 Ezekiel's cry 1. YHWH's response – to 'what they are saying' 2. 11:16 'I will be a sanctuary' 3. 11;17 'I will give the land to them' 4. 11:18 'they will return and remove' 5. 11:21 'for those devoted to idols'</p> <p>F. <b>11:22-23 Last movement of glory</b> 1. standing on the mount east of city 2. Ezekiel transported to exiles</p>
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<p>G. 3:27 Report to exiles</p> <p><b>V. 4: 1-5:4 Symbolic Action</b>  A.4:2 1<sup>st</sup> command series – to son of man ‘lay siege’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.4:1 take a clay tablet</li> <li>2. 4:2 lay siege</li> <li>3. 4:3 take an iron pan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. iron wall between you and city</li> <li>b. turn your face</li> <li>c. this will be a sign</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. 4:4 lie on left side <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. put the sin of Israel upon yourself</li> <li>b. bear their sin</li> <li>c. assignment of days <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. days as years</li> <li>ii. 390 days you will bear Israel’s sin</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> <li>5. 4:6 lie on right side <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. bear sin of Judah</li> <li>b. 40 days</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. 4:7 ‘turn face toward Jerusalem w/bared arm <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. I will tie you up</li> </ol> </li> <li>7. take ration food <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. further instructions</li> <li>b. bake using human waist <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ezekiel’s objection</li> <li>ii. Yah’s provision</li> <li>iii. son of man speech</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>B. 5:1 2<sup>nd</sup> command series – ‘take and shave’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 5:5 TSAY 3<sup>rd</sup> person indictment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Israel’s sin exposed</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. inevitability of fulfillment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 5:17 ‘I Yahweh have spoken’</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>VI. 6:1-7:27 Speeches of YHWH</p> <p>A. 6:1-2 command to prophesy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. set your face against the mountains</li> <li>2. ‘prophecy’</li> </ol> <p>B. 6:2-10 1<sup>st</sup> Direct address</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 6:2b ‘ Thus says Adonai YHWH’</li> <li>2. 6:10 ‘Then they will know that I am YHWH’</li> </ol> <p>C. 6:11-14 2<sup>nd</sup> Direct address</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 6:11 – ‘thus says Adonai YHWH’</li> <li>2. 6:14 – ‘Then they will know that I am YHWH’</li> </ol> <p>D.7:1-27 ‘Word of the Lord came to me’ speeches</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:27 Final word <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. by their own standards I will judge them</li> <li>b. ‘they will know that I am YHWH’</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<p>G. 11:25 Report to exiles ‘I told the exiles</p> <p><b>V. 12:1-28 Symbolic Action</b>  A. 12:3 1<sup>st</sup> command series to son of man ‘pack for exile’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 12:4 bring out belongings during the day</li> <li>2. 12:4 go out</li> <li>3. 12:5-6 ‘dig through wall’ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a.’ take and go’</li> <li>b. ‘cover your face’</li> <li>c. ‘this will be a sign’</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>B. 12:8 2<sup>nd</sup> command series – ‘tremble as you eat’</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 12:19 TSAY 3<sup>rd</sup> person indictment</li> <li>2. inevitability of fulfillment <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ‘whatever I say will happen’</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>VI. 13:1-24:27 Speeches of YHWH</p> <p>A. 13:1-2 command to prophesy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. prophecy against the prophets</li> <li>2. ‘say to them’</li> </ol> <p>B. 13:3 1<sup>st</sup> Direct address</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 13:3-16 cycle of 3 ‘ Thus says Adonai YHWH’ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ‘set your face against daughters’</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. 13:23 ‘Then they will know that I am YHWH’</li> </ol> <p>C. 14:1 2<sup>nd</sup> Direct Address</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 14:4 – ‘thus says Adonai YHWH’ cycles</li> <li>2. 14:8 ‘then they will know that I am YHWH’ <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. 14:9-11 remedy of prophecy problem</li> <li>b. 14:11 ‘they will be my people/I will be God’</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p>D. 14:12-24:27 cycle of ‘word of the Lord came to me’ speeches</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 24:27 Final word <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. ‘you will be a sign’</li> <li>b. ‘they will know that I am YHWH’</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
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### 4.3 Obtrusive Encounter – Glory as the Guiding Icon of Crisis

**4.3.1 Literary Scheme.**<sup>101</sup> In the parallel episodes, Ezekiel’s encounter with glory is initiated by an obtrusive interruption into the life of the prophet. This initial encounter is signaled by a time reference to a certain year followed by an acknowledgement of an immediate audience and location. A vision of God follows where the heavens are opened or where heaven and earth meet,<sup>102</sup> and the hand of Yahweh<sup>103</sup> is upon the prophet. The initial introduction of the glory encounter implies a forceful or at least unexpected intrusion, emphasizing an overriding theme of Ezekiel—what is about to happen and be said is Yahweh’s doing. Next is the formula: ‘I looked and behold,’ *hnhw araw*. A description of a storm cloud theophany is elaborated on in the chapter 1 episode while the second account in chapter 8 is dormant. Finally and of central importance is the signal phrase: ‘a life-like appearance of a man’ with a description of his appearance. The section ends with a demonstrative affirmation that the visual is ‘the glory of Yahweh’ wherein the prophet falls prostrate and hears a voice speaking.<sup>104</sup>

**4.3.2 Guiding Icon Amidst Misguided Images.** The imagery in these inaugural encounters emphasizes Yahweh’s ability to guide his people through dark and perilous times and in a time of battle. Ezekiel conjures up remnants of earlier prophetic traditions where the prophet is a war consultant<sup>105</sup> and a vision of Yahweh’s participation an absolute prerequisite (1 Kgs 22:6ff, 1 Sm 3:1). Ezekiel’s evocative account of glory supplies what Israel has always considered a necessity—a reliable guiding vision, an icon

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<sup>101</sup> Refer to literary outline section I.

<sup>102</sup> This element is not found in the same place in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pericope, but still is present.

<sup>103</sup> The theme of the ‘outstretched hand of Yahweh’ especially in Deuteronomy refers to the mighty act of Yahweh at the Reed Sea (Kohn 2004:164).

<sup>104</sup> The participle (Ez 1:27), *rbdm—speaking*, is probably inserted to distinguish it from the general use of *lwq* to refer to sound (Ez 1:24). It is now a talking voice, one that is clearly understood. There is little reason to doubt the connection between the man on the throne and the talking voice. The man at glory’s center is calling out commands, like a military general.

<sup>105</sup> Kohn (2004:161) ‘The concept of consulting Yahweh is exclusively found in Deuteronomy describing the functions of prophets in the tradition of Moses.’ Swartz (2004:66) also clearly distinguishes between the priestly divination and prophetic. The critical distinction in prophetic divination, especially for the current presentation, is the exclusive emphasis on Yahweh’s sole initiative: ‘... the only steps that can and must be taken to rectify the present catastrophe will be taken by Yahweh himself’ (Swartz 2004:67).

of Yahweh's providential leading.<sup>106</sup> Along with this, however, it counters misguided and destructive images seized upon by others desiring to 'see' through the current crisis. Of paramount concern, then, is a clear and reliable image to guide Israel's people. There is a vision problem, and Ezekiel counters it by calling on his audience to gaze upon the reliable guiding image of Yahweh's engagement with the crises. He insists that only then will Israel be in the right frame of reference to listen to Yahweh's definitive word. By comparison, the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt begins with a compulsory mandate from the Pharaoh to go out into the wilderness, whereupon Yahweh watched over His people (Ex 12:42). Although the fiery cloud pillar is not mentioned at first, it is natural to imply its presence, especially since it is stated later (Ex 13:21, 12:42). The march into exile, as so the wilderness, is marked immediately by the obtrusive yet guiding icon of Yahweh.

It is necessary here to clarify my use of *image, idol, or icon*. In his book *Biblical Ambiguities*, David H. Aaron (2002:21) advocates a 'gradient' reading of Biblical language and opposes what he calls a 'binary interpretation' that too easily makes hard distinctions between literal and figurative interpretations of not only language but objects as well. First, Aaron (2002:152ff) argues that the ancient world was capable, as we contemporaries are, to distinguish between 'conceptual ascription and ontological identity.' Second, (Aaron 2002:192) there is little if any real utilitarian distinction between elaborate objects, such as sculptured or molten figurines, paintings, or carvings and more simplistic objects, such as stones, altars, and sacrifices. All of them served the same purpose—to aid the seeker in making that critical connection with that which transcends the current situation. Thus, the use of almost any object in a ritualistic fashion, including written and spoken words,<sup>107</sup> as a visual aid, *iconism*, was the conventional practice throughout the Ancient Near East, including Israel. The idolatry so vehemently

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<sup>106</sup> Tuell (2004:249) comments on the departure of God's glory from the temple: 'YHWH uses icons (temple, cherub images) to communicate God's presence, but is not bound by them.' Cook (2004:190) also attests to the iconic nature of worship at Zion, but says Ezekiel has insisted on an expansive reality behind Zions' icons and symbols.

<sup>107</sup> Both Tuell and Davies advocate the text (an object) taking a mediatory role once reserved for cultic functions and objects. Davies (1989:127) concludes: 'He [Ezekiel] formulated his speech in such a way as to facilitate a kind of engagement whose essential medium is not the person of the prophet but the text.' Tuell (2000:97) states: '...text has replaced temple as the locus of divine presence.'

condemned in the Old Testament is more accurately targeting a distinctive iconism that led to particular kinds of behavior deemed abhorrent, degenerate and ultimately devaluing of creation and life. I agree with Aaron (2002:146) when he concludes: ‘...the details in the character of the objects must be scrutinized more at the level of function than appearance.’ In this regard, Ezekiel makes the clear connection between certain kinds of images and *what they produce*. But what was most sought after was a clear guiding image to protect and lead all involved through the crisis.

Several features clarify the image of glory as a guiding Presence. First, Ezekiel’s visions give clear indication that there were several frenetic and competing attempts to discern the best course of action. In Ezekiel’s clandestine visual of the seventy elders of the house of Israel at the Temple (Ez 8), the motivation behind the ‘detestable things’ they are doing is not just a petition for help, but a seeking of council.<sup>108</sup> Accompanying this scrambling before a myriad of images is a slogan which is a central motivating factor for Yahweh to act against these people, for they are saying: ‘Yahweh does not see us. He has forsaken the land’ (Ez 8:12). Seemingly in a different direction are the ‘princes of the people’ who are devising evil and offering evil counsel (Ez 11:1ff). They are represented as holding considerable sway in the city and are confident Yahweh is still well-established on Zion and has only strained out the undesirable portion from it (Ez 11:3, 14f). That this party may have a Deuteronomic bent is indicated by Yahweh’s indictment—‘you did not follow my laws and decrees’ (Ez 11:12). There is no direct mention of cultic purity as with the elders in the temple.<sup>109</sup> It can be concluded then that there were competing parties, each looking for a guiding icon not only for direction, but for security, solidarity and control.<sup>110</sup>

Considering the severity of the situation, the confusion over a reliable guiding image is natural. We may well assume that the ark was among the items confiscated in the first

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<sup>108</sup> Halperin (1993:58) views the ‘elders’ in Ezekiel’s visions as ‘part of the environment’ and in fact, ‘its main exciting factor.’ He affirms that the idea of elders consulting prophets is well established and hearkens back to the days of Elijah and Elisha. ‘The situation may have become a staple of prophet narratives precisely because it tended to recur in real life’ (Halperin 1993:59).

<sup>109</sup> A more detailed examination of the ‘leaders of the people’ in Ezekiel 11 is discussed in section 4.6.3 below.

<sup>110</sup> Interestingly, Halperin (1993:58) views them as the identical group and primarily the ones in exile.

deportation (2 Kgs 24:13). This being the case, the primary icon of Yahweh's presence among his people, not only as ruler but as warrior and defender would have sparked a scrambling for a suitable surrogate. The Priestly redacted story of the golden calf at Sinai (Ex 32) is comparative. Consternated by the delay of Moses on Sinai, the people construct what Aaron (2002:188) describes as: 'not an idol anthropomorphically depicting Yahweh...(but) an alternative icon for cultic purposes that was to be employed in the absence of their heretofore primary intermediary, Moses. It is the application of a *non-sanctioned alternative* that the author wishes to castigate.'

Ezekiel's tour of the temple precinct in chapter 8 confirms the frenetic attempts to find, as it were, a surrogate guiding image. More than likely, the confusion ranged from what Aaron calls (2002:56) 'insolent and opportunistic polytheism,' to competing versions of Yahwism, one of which was a retro-iconism of a pre-Josiah reform where a more liberal use of imagery was acceptable.<sup>111</sup> As Aaron (2002:163) attests especially in reference to Ezekiel 8:16: 'Deuteronomy (27:15) indicates the ongoing secretive use of sculptured and molten images. Here again, it is the lateness of this proscription that should lead us to assume a prolonged cultic involvement with such artifacts.' For sure, Ezekiel was not the only one looking to past traditions for discernment. Given the longevity of Manasseh's reign and the instability of Josiah's, it would be quite natural for some to advocate a revival of such times. Finally, the loss of the ark would have seriously dismantled the authoritative base for the whole traditional prophetic enterprise.<sup>112</sup>

The complaint of Yahweh—'for they are saying, "Yahweh doesn't see."' (Ez 8:12)—is paramount. This is the precise reason for Jerusalem's demise. There are several things that are repugnant about the scene in the inner chambers of the temple. David Aaron's (2002:151ff) insistence that the issue of imagery/idolatry is over 'competing icons' is

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<sup>111</sup> Halpern's (1993:43-44) reviews the 'substantial controversies' over this passage but concludes that the: 'scholarly responses to Ezekiel 8...generally suppose that it constitutes a precious testimony to the syncretic Yahwism of pre-Exilic Judah, thus indirectly to the religions of the surrounding cultures.' Halperin goes on to oppose this view.

<sup>112</sup> Patton (2004:75) argues against starkly contrasting the role of priests and prophets as has often been in the past (see chapter 3), and reminds that: both are religious functionaries who mediate God's presence and can work within a cultic context.' Pertinent to part of this dissertation is the priest's role in a Yahweh war (Deut. 20:1-4).

important because Ezekiel's glory vision is primarily concerned with an internal problem. Aaron (2002:152) affirms the common practice in battles of the ancient world to utilize '...symbols on banners...to evoke the *functions* of the deity, despite the absence of the primary image.' That an intensive effort to discern a political and military course of action is likely in chapter 8,<sup>113</sup> and the employment of images is a necessary aspect of it. So, the issue was not the images, per se, but more properly, which images were effective? Which ones will effectively promote Yahweh's (or some other god's) direct assistance in the crisis? Which god would show up in the current debacle.

Aaron (2002:151) convincingly argues that the issue of images is more one of competing icons than syncretism, and ultimately, it is all about competing versions of Yahwism: 'This is not a battle for differentiation with an external adversary; this is a battle between Yahwists—those whom we would come to know as the P-Yahwists—against those who would no longer reign as authoritative priestly Yahwists.' Aaron (2002:185) concludes: 'The issue was apparently who controlled which icons.' Kutsko (2000a:53) concurs with such an assessment: 'For Ezekiel, illegitimate expressions of God's presence lie at the very heart of the exile, for the offensive practices allied with these expressions precipitate destruction.'

The issue over the competing versions of a guiding icon is directly confronted in Ezekiel's vision of the Temple (chapter 8). Admittedly, the visionary aspect of this passage creates interpretive difficulties. Halperin (1993:40-58) adequately reviews the diverse views over this passage and challenges the notion that Ezekiel's vision accurately reflects the Temple situation prior to its fall. He suggests that the primary 'villains of 8:11 and 11:1 are visionary representations of the *elders of Judah*' (Halperin 1993:64). This question cannot be answered here, but I suggest two things. Halperin's understanding of the text doesn't deter from what is of critical interest here—the concerted effort to find divine guidance in the situation and its connection to an objective emblem or icon to rally behind. Whether real or imagined, what is being addressed in the

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<sup>113</sup> Part of Davies (1989:61) presentation relies on the supposition that the traditional mode of prophetic activity as 'intervention' had come undone. 'The prophets' urgency to break through Israel's deafness, which reached a crescendo in Jeremiah, was gone.'

glory visions is an image problem—a clear and dominant picture of where Yahweh is in the situation. Also, Halperin does not adequately address the juxtaposition of the supposed situation at the Temple within the dominant ‘picture’ of Yahweh’s glory boldly standing over the entire situation. He tends to focus too much on Ezekiel’s apparent conflict with the elders.

The problem over a guiding icon is two fold in Ezekiel chapter 8. First, the images are individualized for private use. Central to Yahweh’s complaint is that each elder is ‘at the shrine of *his own* idol’ (Ez.8:12). Interpreting the verse as ‘each in the chambers of his wicked imagination,’ Halperin (1993:63) suggests that Ezekiel is aiming more at the secret thoughts of his audience than on a real situation at the temple. But if we go with Aaron’s (2002:162) argument that: ‘iconism has a long history,’ we can deduce that there was a seizing upon secondary imagery in the Temple with a distorted emphasis on primacy. For one, since temples of the ancient Near East were seen as a kind of garden paradise, it is understandable how the notion of a garden could be supplemented with creatures (Ez 8:10). Cook states (2004:185):

For both Ezekiel and the wider Israelite context, with the divine glory present, Jerusalem’s temple symbolized God’s cosmic mountain towering into the cosmic expanse. There, humans came closest to Eden, god’s holy realm. The carved pattern of repeating cherubim and palm trees on the temple’s doors and wood paneling (Ez 41:16-20,25; 1 Kg 6:29, 32,35; cf Ex 26:31; 36:35) helped re-create Eden’s ambiance (Gen 3:24; Ez 28:13).

Probably of bigger consequences, however, Ezekiel may be pointing away from the secondary iconography of the portico and to the neglect of the primary iconography ‘the cherub’ (singular Ez 9:3, 10:4) found in the holy of holies in direct association with the ark.<sup>114</sup> Blenkinsopp (1990:54f) suggests that there was both a turning toward alternative iconography, especially that of Egypt, and a turning away from exclusive trust in Yahweh as symbolized by the ark.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> According to Cook (2004:187): ‘...the *kabod* of God normally rests in the adytum. It hovers over the cherub statues in the holy of holies...The statues sit symbolically at the intersection of the axes of the cosmos.’

<sup>115</sup> Jeremiah also affirms the wide spread and congealed mixtures of Yahwism with idolatry (Jer 44:9).

Along these lines, prohibition against images often includes the qualifying phrase ‘for yourselves’ (Deut.27:15, 5:8). The critical line drawn by authentic Yahwism (and what is behind the similar problem of high places) is that of a corporate verse a party spirit. Terrien (1983:142) affirms: ‘The distinctiveness of Israel, the mark which sets the people apart from other nations is strictly theological. Israel has no ethnic meaning unless the presence of Yahweh remains with the people.’ The ark, the primary icon of the temple, belonged to Israel, and no one, not even a king, could hope to manipulate it strictly for one’s own advantage. Clearly, this sentiment is expressed in the third prohibition to avoid ‘taking up’ the Name for ‘worthless purposes’ (Deut 5:11). The unifying presence<sup>116</sup> of the ark, which served to downplay the competition among the tribes in order to serve a greater good, is being undermined by a divisive competition over agendas. Nobody, it appears, is seeking the good of the nation. Ezekiel’s perspective is the opposite, as evidenced by his persistent use of ‘house of Israel’ to address his audience. Indeed, Ezekiel’s bold claim to have seen ‘the glory of the God of Israel’ (8:4) is directly countering the self-serving guidance sought by those in Jerusalem or Babylon.

Aggravating things further is a conjoining complaint—their actions are not only myopic and anti-corporative, but ‘in the dark’ (Ez 8:12). This phrase probably has several connotations. They may be actually incensing without candlelight with the obvious depiction of groping, stumbling, and confusion implying a pathetic and futile effort for clarity.<sup>117</sup> How ironic to complain that Yahweh doesn’t see while one is groveling in the dark. But even more so, the picture is probably one of acting away from public notice, hence, secretive and conspiring.<sup>118</sup> Since there were still those in the city who did not advocate an Egypt-sponsored rebellion, it would be necessary to keep things out of the public square. The fact that Ezekiel has to ‘dig a hole’ to even see such a thing accentuates the elders conniving intentions. Ezekiel may well have known of such

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<sup>116</sup> Terrien (1983:162ff) aptly testifies to its central and iconic importance in both the North and the South.

<sup>117</sup> ‘A literal darkness is undoubtedly the primary meaning, but it may also reflect the spiritual state of the people...’ (Block 1997:289)

<sup>118</sup> Blenkinsopp (1990:55) asserts that the behavior of the elders in Ezekiel 8 depicts a concerted and deliberate agenda going on in Jerusalem to enlist Egypt’s help, even to the point of enlisting help from their gods.

clandestine behavior while still ministering there, and upon discovering it, been subject to deportation. Terrien (1983:145) understands Moses' request to 'behold the glory of God' (Ex 33:18) as an apologetic against such 'challenges of divine privacy' and the strong 'egotistic desire' to have personal assurance. This same propensity is reflected in the elders' actions in Ezekiel 8 where, in Terrien's (1983:144) words, they: 'fall prey to...the lust for absolute knowledge [and] refuse to accept historical relativity.'

Most certainly, there was a flurry of competing clairvoyant activity in the years prior to Jerusalem's fall. The Jerusalemites were pulling out all the prophetic and cultic apparatus from Israel's past to discern a way to go, but with diminishing results.<sup>119</sup> For the ancients, including Israel, this of necessity included an objective orientation. As much as Terrien (1983:208ff) argues for the superiority of the 'theologoumenon of the Name'—the word represents the truer sense of Yahweh's presence and therefore repudiates all object attempts to represent that—he admits that the need for spatial (objective) orientation for discernment was everywhere present in the Ancient Near East and an integrated part of Zion traditions. Furthermore, Terrien (1983:211) concedes to Ezekiel's vision of glory as an accommodation to Israel's earlier reliance on this compulsion, calling it a return to the 'theologoumenon of glory,' especially prevalent in the Jerusalem cult.

Agreeing then with Terrien, the issue of discerning an iconic/emblematic/symbolic token of Yahweh's real presence is evident in Ezekiel's glory visions. This is not a regression, however, but a reconfiguration. Terrien fails to recognize what Ezekiel profoundly affirms—the hwhy-dwbk residing on Zion is based solely on the notion that Yahweh, as Warrior, is a vibrant, transient, intervening force when it comes to critical junctures in Israel's history. This is precisely what the ark in the Holies of Holies represented.

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<sup>119</sup> Jeremiah's confrontation with Hananiah (Jer 28) is a classic example. It is worthy to note that the book of Jeremiah gives ample evidence that both Jeremiah and the 'false prophets' were using objects in an emblematic way. The objects, which were not only representative of the message but a harbinger for it, became as provocative, perhaps even more so, than the prophetic sermons (i.e. the linen belt Jer 13, clay jar Jer 19, fig baskets Jer 24, and the scroll Jer 36). Indeed, most of the people would know the iconic object and what it meant better than the content of the speeches.



Ezekiel envisions the *hwhy-dwbk* as Yahweh's own provision for an iconic, real, and guiding Presence in Israel's new wilderness experience.

#### 4.4 Yahweh's Confrontation with Alternative Iconism

The bold appearance of Yahweh in Israel's crisis (and Ezekiel's) demonstrates Yahweh's desire and ability to lead those who are willing. In crisis, the desire to have a guiding icon is compelling, and Israel's god does not deny that. Like the pillar in the wilderness, God provides Israel a beacon to guide and lead. But the *hwhy-dwbk* does not sit dormant amidst multiple choices, hoping that Israel will rightly choose. Instead, it aggressively confronts alternative iconism and exposes its lethal potential to the continuation of Israel. Thus the *hwhy-dwbk* presents itself simultaneously as both a *guiding* and *confronting* Presence.

Alternative iconism is far from benign in Yahweh's (and Ezekiel's) view, for incensing in the dark each at the shrine of his own idol not only fosters division, suspicion, speculation and arrogance, but ultimately, injustice and violence. Ezekiel's prophecies repeatedly attribute outbreaks of ruthless violence and injustice to particular imagery. Certain kinds of images induce violence. 'Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with violence and continually provoke me to anger' (Ez 8:17). 'Doom has burst forth, the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed! Violence has grown into a rod to punish wickedness' (Ez 7:11). 'The land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of violence' (Ez 7:23).

Imagery in the ancient Near East hardly provided mere aesthetic enhancement; they, as images still do today, incite human passion, for good and for bad.<sup>120</sup> The precarious balance between proper icons which induce a humble trust in Yahweh's lead and certain kinds of images that lead to 'detestable practices,' and violence comes to a high pitched

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<sup>120</sup> In Terrien's (1983:163) argument that Israel's notion of presence was effectively imageless, he admits that: 'the prohibition of images—a custom without real parallel in the ancient Near East—created a problem for the worshippers of Yahweh.' Significant to the presentation in this chapter, Terrien (1983:163-164) suggests that the ark was a concession to the pressure to have 'manifest' presence in times of crisis, especially in battle.

crisis in the exile. The primary motivation is divination, a seeking of direction, guidance, protection, and prosperity from a superior source. At issue for Ezekiel is a true, reliable, authentic image of Yahweh's guiding presence rather than the 'false visions and lying divinations' proliferating in Jerusalem (Ez 22:28).

**4.4.1 Destructive iconism.** With the initial 'thus says *Adonai Yahweh*' speeches found in each of the two episodes (Ez 5:5-7:27 and Ez 13:3-24:14), the real crisis over a reliable image to guide Israel is clarified. Interestingly enough, the speeches immediately confront the most despicable and abhorrent behavior of the Israelites and directly attribute the causes to certain kinds of iconism. Kutsko (2000a:70-76) has noted that the ethical/moral dimension to Ezekiel's prophecy has been greatly underestimated by scholars and upholds, as I do below, that there is 'a vigorous ethical dynamic in the book of Ezekiel' (Kutsko 2000a:70).

First of note is the placement of the initial 'thus says *Adonai Yahweh*' speeches in the literary structure of the glory episodes.<sup>121</sup> They are chiasmatically parallel to the appearance of glory. Immediately the glory picture is pitted against false visualizations. In addition, both speeches immediately proceed from symbolic actions by Ezekiel.<sup>122</sup> Ironically, the prophet himself becomes an iconoclastic icon.

In the first 'thus says *Adonai Yahweh*' speech (Ez 5:5-7:27), Yahweh's clash with an immoral, unjust, and violent inducing iconism begins. Several things are worthy of notice. Yahweh's indictment begins by contrasting Israel's intended purpose with what it has become. Significant in this regard is its relation with 'the nations' (Ez 5:6), the implication being that Israel was to be the instrument in which all the nations would recognize Yahweh's kingship. In a sense, Zion was to be not just a unifying icon for the tribes of Israel, but also for the nations. Sadly, instead of being a beacon of light for her neighbors, Israel proves to be the epitome of evil (Ez 5:6), being 'more turbulent' than

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<sup>121</sup> See literary outline section VI.

<sup>122</sup> See literary outline section V.

the nations (Ez 5:7).<sup>123</sup> This has come about because Israel has: ‘distorted my commandments and statutes for wickedness, even more than the nations.’<sup>124</sup> Pathetically, Israel could not even match the conventional protocol of the nations (Ez 5:7). Finally, Yahweh declares Israel His enemy: ‘I am against you’ (Ez 5:8), and promises that the crisis to follow is brought on by Yahweh and is intentionally before the nations.

All of this is summed up in the word *hbewt*—abominations (Ez 5:9).<sup>125</sup> In Ez 5:11, abomination is parallel with *Kyuwqs*—detestable things<sup>126</sup>—making an indistinguishable connection between an object<sup>127</sup> of some kind and what it evokes. Even the use of *hbewt* in some contexts refers to both disgusting actions and the objects associated with them. *hbewt* is a general term, mostly Deuteronomic, referring to repugnant actions of a ritual or ethical sense (Kutsko 2000a:30). But from the perspective of the Holiness Code (H) and the Priestly tradition (P), from which the word is predominantly used, there is no distinction—ritual and ethical behavior are indistinguishable, mainly because both find their impetus in the cult. Yahweh declares that both despicable objects and behaviors have polluted ‘my sanctuary.’

In Ez 5:11, *hbewt*—a detestable thing or abomination—is in parallel with *t amj*—to pollute or defile. Both words connote nearly the same range of meaning. Some of the objectionable references seem by modern standards to be rather harmless, such as: offering a defective sheep, a woman wearing men’s clothing, paying a vow with money earned from prostitution. Predominantly, however, they refer to the most horrific disregard for all of creation and human life; one particular act most embodies ‘detestable things’—child sacrifice.

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<sup>123</sup> BDB PG 549. The word ...connotes make turbulent, to be a loud, noisy disturbance.

<sup>124</sup> My translation based on a word study from BDB PG 598—the word *hrm* has a strong connotation of distortion or refraction and translating the *lamed* as purpose ‘for’ and *min* as comparative. The emphasis is not so much an out-and-out rejection of Yahweh as much as on a perverted one. This is in keeping with Ezekiel 20:25, which is a derogatory reference to the distortion of the law of the first-born.

<sup>125</sup> My conclusions of *hbewt* are based on comparative word studies from BDB PG 1072.

<sup>126</sup> In Deuteronomy, it always refers to idols, while P uses the term for creatures not fit for consumption (Kohn 2004:162).

<sup>127</sup> Kutsko (2000a:30) affirms that it refers to objects, especially idols.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 18:9ff associates *hbwṭ* with several common divination practices, including sacrificing children and necromancy. Of peculiar interest, are the *sxn̄m*, ‘omen interpreters,’ and the *Nnwem*, ‘dealers in phenomena’<sup>128</sup> because of their standard practice of incorporating symbolic objects with clairvoyance? Indeed most divination required a death of some kind and the use of body parts. This corresponds with the ancient mindset where parts of the body are symbiotically linked to particular spiritual attributes. For example, the feminine noun form of glory is the liver. Since the liver is the heaviest of the internal organs, it is associated with weightiness, honor, abundance, or burdens.<sup>129</sup> It is no wonder that both the act and the object would be considered repugnant.

In addition, Deut. 27:15ff—‘cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol—a thing detestable to the Lord, the work of the craftsman’s hands, and sets it up in secret’—also clearly connects the object and the ritual act with a list of ethical behaviors considered repugnant, such as dishonoring parents, removing boundary markers, sodomy, incest, and murder. This passage is significant because it directly states the problem: made by humans for private use. It is also significant that in this list of curses all the other violations have to do with sexual aberrations (sodomy, incest) and injustice. Child sacrifice is the epitome of all detestable practices.<sup>130</sup> Interestingly, Psalms 106:36-37 directly connects idols with demons<sup>131</sup> with the shedding of innocent blood (child sacrifice) and figuratively calls it prostitution (Ps 106:39). Perhaps a good synonym is ‘sick.’

*ṭamj* is predominately found in the Holiness Code. In this regard, Cook (2004:188-189) has cataloged how ‘rooted’ Ezekiel’s thinking is in the theology of the Holiness Code. Significantly Cook (2004:188) concludes: ‘Unrestrained “bloodshed,” God’s chief complaint, is defined elsewhere in Ezekiel based on HS [holiness code] regulations.’ *ṭamj* hardly makes distinctions between ritualistic purity and human rights. Leviticus

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<sup>128</sup> BDB pg 778

<sup>129</sup> BDB pg 458

<sup>130</sup> Deut. 12:31, Jer.32:35, Ps106:34ff Halperin (1993:161) concludes: ‘Ezekiel’s accusations refer less to Jerusalem’s generalized “bloodshed” than to the specific practice of ritual child sacrifice.’

<sup>131</sup> BDB pg 994 *Ḳṣ* -violent destroyer

19 interchangeably weaves ethical and ritual purity together and always with negative reference to certain kinds of iconism with a propensity toward a morbid, sordid preoccupation with death. For example, immediately preceding the prohibition against idols is a commandment for acceptable sacrifices (Lev 19:4ff). Significant in the command is that leftover body parts be disposed of immediately. Also, the prohibition with eating bloody meat is parallel with the prohibition not to practice divination that requires use of body parts. The prohibition is no clearer than in Lev 19:31: 'Do not look to necromancers and omen interpreters, for they will pollute you.'

Similarly, Ezekiel's most common word for idol, *לולג*, also refers to both the object and practices. Kutsko (2000a:34) has noted that this is Ezekiel's preferred term for idolatry and suggests that it is employed expressly because it lays emphasis 'on course objects' as well as on 'scorching mockery.' In this case, the object appears to be inherently abhorrent along with the practices associated with them. Leviticus 26 is helpful here. The setting up of images and idols is representative of a turning away from obedience to all of the Torah. These images hold a powerful sway, and again are directly related to ethical action. The word itself means round thing, and probably refers to a log or rolled up clay made into a doll-like figurine. The term, here, may in fact have a cynical connotation in that its rolled up shape resembles human defecation.<sup>132</sup> Again these private, individualized idols represent a shallow scope on life. Leviticus 26:2, like the Decalogue, counters idolatry with Sabbath and 'reverence for my sanctuary,' pointing to the properly maintained icon of Yahweh's involvement.

The similar 'thus says *Adonai Yahweh*' speech in Ez. 13:3ff<sup>133</sup> directly and clearly condemns this wrong-headed iconism and its devastating consequences. Yahweh condemns the prophets in Israel who 'prophesy out of their own imaginations' (Ez 13:3). Note the contrast between the private imaginations of the false prophets and Ezekiel's vision that is outside of him and offered to all of Israel. This emphasizes one of the most critical aspects of glory—*visibility to the assembly*. Yahweh insists: 'they have seen

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<sup>132</sup> As Kutsko suggests (2000a:75): 'Ezekiel berates idols by labeling them *gillulim*, a highly pejorative expression connoting a quite literal grossness.'

<sup>133</sup> See literary outline section V.

nothing!’ (Ez 13:3). The view is persistent throughout the prophecies of Ezekiel—there is no *functional* distinction between ethical and ritual acts and the icons that accompany them. False iconism has devastating consequences:<sup>134</sup>

Woe to you women who sew magic charms on all their wrists and make veils of various lengths for their heads in order to ensnare people. Will you ensnare the lives of my people but preserve your own? You have profaned me among my people for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread. By lying to my people, who listen to lies, you *have killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should have died* (Ez 13:18-19).

Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things: he eats at the mountain shrines; he defiles his neighbor’s wife; he oppresses the poor; he commits robbery; he does not return what he took in pledge; he looks to idols; he does detestable things; he lends at usury and takes excessive interest (Ez 18:10-13).

Pivotal to Kutsko’s (2000a:35) hypothesis is Ezekiel’s choice of words for idolatry all revolving around the effectual relationship between icon and those who look to them. False icons not only do nothing to draw Israel toward Yahweh; they, in fact, lead only to degenerative violence. For all of this, Yahweh juxtapositions his guiding icon against false iconism: ‘I am against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations’ (Ez 13:5ff).

Ultimately polluted iconism leads further than a morbid obsession with death; it induces outbreaks of horrific violence, which tragically, our human history knows all too well. In his seminal work *Violence and the Sacred*, Rene Girard proposes a fundamental principle of religious ritual—it is an attempt to harness humanity’s unrestrained, ruthless, and senseless slaughter of each other. Girard (1984:18) states:

In primitive societies the risk of unleashed violence is so great and the cure so problematic that the emphasis naturally falls on prevention. The preventive measures naturally fall within the domain of religion, where they can on occasion assume a violent character. Violence and the sacred are

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<sup>134</sup> Kutsko (2000a:70-76) provides an extended discussion of the link between idolatry and shedding blood linking it with the Priestly tradition of the *imago Dei*: ‘The frequent charge against Israel shedding blood generally occurs in the same context as the charge against Israel worshipping *gillulim*.’

inseparable. But the covert appropriation by sacrifice of certain properties of violence—particularly the ability of violence to move from one object to another—is hidden from sight by the awesome machinery of ritual.

Religious ritual has only limited success, however, and when it breaks down, Girard (1984:49) suggests that it actually ‘fuels the renewed violence.’ This mainly happens when there is a ‘sacrificial crisis’ (1984:49):

The *sacrificial crisis* that is, the disappearance of the sacrificial rites, coincides with the disappearance of the difference between impure violence and purifying violence. When the difference has been effaced, purification is no longer possible and impure, contagious, reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community.

Girard’s ideas clarify several things pertaining to the attack on perverted iconism discussed above. For one, he demonstrates the clear connection between ritual, the objects in ritual (Girard’s main emphasis is on the sacrificial object), and reciprocal violence. In addition, his discussion on sacrificial crisis provides insight into how religious ritual can go bad, exasperating the very thing that a community is trying to prevent. As will be discussed, the loss of distinctions and communal boundaries that Girard calls ‘a sacrificial crisis’ is directly dealt with by the glory of Yahweh in the book of Ezekiel.<sup>135</sup> Finally, Girard’s ideas may provide clues into Yahweh’s indictment against a distorted Yahwism—it leads to a ‘contagious violence.’

**4.4.2 Like the pillar of fire and cloud of the wilderness.** With such an intense struggle between competing images at hand, it is easy to see why Ezekiel likened his storm cloud encounter with the story of Yahweh’s victory at the Reed Sea and His guidance of the Israelites in the wilderness as a dominant metaphor for the current crisis. As discussed above, all iconism has to do with effectiveness, and it is apparent that Jerusalem and the exilic community were scrambling for a replicate image in place of the apparent

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<sup>135</sup> Cook (2004:184) reinforces this view with his detailed look at the cherubim who have an important ‘boundary-keeping’ role when it comes to handling the churning fire of God’s presence: ‘They surround the fire and contain it, preventing an uncontrolled, explosive burning of everything lying below them...They also channel the fiery power out to humanity, for purposes that may involve salvation or judgment.’

remoteness of Yahweh whose throne was captive in Babylon.<sup>136</sup> Of note, a similar complaint about the apparent lack of access to a deity while Moses was on the mountain of Sinai prompted the swift construction of a suitable icon to replace it. Although the imagery in Ezekiel chapter 1 is a composite sketch drawing on a full array of traditional images of glory associated with the Ark and Zion,<sup>137</sup> Ezekiel's vision of *how glory is acting* is primarily comparative to the fire-cloud, 'standing thing,' in the wilderness. Glory is a guiding, confronting, and separating presence through hostile territory and has a clear objective—to gain glory (establish a right to rule) over Yahweh's enemies and his people.

Several features of the fire-cloud pillar in Exodus 13-16 find a counterpart in Ezekiel's description in chapter 1. The most obvious one is the overall picture of a fiery cloud, the significance of which has been examined in the previous chapter. Along with this, Exodus 13:21 states that the fiery cloud is called a pillar or 'standing thing.' The word *dwme*,<sup>138</sup> essentially means *stand or hold ground*. In this case the pillar does both; it stands up, holding the ground and something else together. A pillar is strong, foundational, inflexible, and immovable. The word is also used of a sentinel, one who stands guard. The 'standing thing' is guiding, guarding, and giving light. The verb, *hxn*,<sup>139</sup> means to lead or turn the eyes toward, to point. It is often used, especially in the Psalms, as pointing in a right direction to a sure thing, 'lead me to the rock.' It is a sure thing leading to a sure thing, like using the North Star to find one's way. Usually, it is a weak or vulnerable object that is in need of being guided, like sheep or ships at sea.

Ezekiel's picture of the fiery cloud also accents these features. The living creatures are said to have column-like rigid legs that sparkle with light, emphasizing both stability and illumination. Cherubim were commonly understood as tutelary beings in the Ancient

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<sup>136</sup>Halperin (1993:140) suggests this situation mostly reflects the exiles in Babylon. Swartz (2004:64) agrees, adding that the exiles: 'surely understood (the destruction of Jerusalem) to be the end of Israel's existence as YHWH's people and certainly the end of the worship of YHWH.'

<sup>137</sup>Greenberg (1983:54-57) especially presents the composite nature of glory and connects it directly to Ezekiel's intent to accent the very nature of glory as Yahweh's majesty.

<sup>138</sup>BDB pg 765

<sup>139</sup>BDB pg 634



Near East.<sup>140</sup> The oft-repeated number four<sup>141</sup> evokes a sense of stability and completion. The immovable nature of glory is described in terms of both the living creatures and the wheels attached to them being mono-directional emphasizing the focused determination of the one on the throne.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, the guiding and leading features are also included. The four faces of the living creatures and the movement of the wheels with eyes describe omniscience or omni-presence.<sup>143</sup> They also emphasize the freedom to move and to act at will.<sup>144</sup> Cook (2004:182) describes this apparent tension between surety and stability and freedom of movement as symbolized in the cherubim: ‘...we may expect to encounter them as mirrored opposites, interlocked with some dangerously holy locale...Opposing forces seemingly battle within them.’

It is likely that a conscious attempt was made to connect the cloud pillar at the Reed Sea with Ezekiel’s at the Kebar. Also of note is that they both appear near a body of water with possible reference to critical junctures in Israel’s journey—the Reed Sea and the Jordon. Greenberg (1983:40) and Zimmerli (1979:116) are willing to entertain a possible significance to receiving the vision by a body of water<sup>145</sup> in terms of a place of worship. It can be noted, however, that in the case of the Jordon River (Josh 3) and especially the Reed Sea (Ex 14), the Israelite ‘encampment’ is described in military terms. The water crossing, therefore, becomes a symbol of battle and no return. The similarities with Ezekiel should be noticed. At the Reed Sea, the Jordon, and the river Kebar, Yahweh’s glory is revealed. Yahweh miraculously intervenes in what appeared to be a hopeless situation and establishes the authority of his servant (Ex 14:31, Josh 3:7). Also, Ezekiel’s image of the cherubim/wheels, like the one at the Reed Sea reestablishes two central

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<sup>140</sup> Cook (2004:179) ‘Well known in the ancient world as boundary keepers.’

<sup>141</sup> Cook (2004:181) connects this preoccupation with the number 4 with Jung’s concept of the ‘quaternity,’ (Jung: *Psychology and Religion*) saying: ‘a four-fold arrangement...giving three-dimensional depth to the flat images of ancient seals, it symbolizes the notion of a holy cosmic center and the creation of the work that emanated in all directions from it.’

<sup>142</sup> Greenberg (1983:51ff) describes what I call the immovable features as a ‘unity as they move.’ Greenberg understands the ‘spirit’ of the creatures as meaning ‘will—the animating impulse that moved and directed the creatures, originating from him who sat enthroned.’ He views the cherubim/wheel features, as do I, as a composite sketch of well-accepted iconography of the Ancient Near East. Overall the depiction is to impress ‘God’s ability to work as he wishes’ (Greenberg 1983:58)

<sup>143</sup> Cook (2004:188) ‘The cherubim have four faces, representing their omni-directional interests.’

<sup>144</sup> Cook (2004:188)

<sup>145</sup> Block (1997:84) dismisses any significance as speculative.

ideas of Yahweh's rule. It is fixed yet flexible, immovable yet mobile, girded yet guiding, omni-directional yet unifocal. Cook (2004:189) summarizes: 'The cherubim's innate quality of mobility had previously symbolized how God's holiness extended out dynamically from a stable center.' All of them point to a God who has the prerogative, determination, ability, and experience to 'go to war' against his enemy and to rule over His people.<sup>146</sup>

The most prominent feature in both vision accounts (Ez 1 and 8) is of course the man on the throne. This particular feature is closely connected to another function that glory is carrying out, that of a separator, one that divides, makes distinctions, sets boundaries.<sup>147</sup> Although this is an obvious reference to kingship, the primary emphasis is on a king who is able to judge and defend his throne (Ps 2:9). Three things emanate directly from the throne: the spirit, the voice, and the hand. Zimmerli (1979:117) has noted that the phrase 'hand of Yahweh' in particular hearkens back to the 'imagery of the exodus tradition' where Yahweh was discovered to be 'a warrior' (Ex 15:3). All of these reinforce Yahweh's direct and forceful ability to implement that which He wills.<sup>148</sup>

Thus, the picture of the *hwhy-dwbk* is immediately presented as a combative counter image to ones being conjured up by Ezekiel's counterparts. By deliberately making connections with the cloud pillar at the Reed Sea, Ezekiel reminds a floundering Israel that Yahweh is perfectly able to provide an authentic and reliable representation of his living and active Presence. Like the cloud pillar at the Reed Sea, the *hwhy-dwbk* is able to conquer Yahweh's enemies and their gods/images of false and destructive hopes. With this in mind, Ezekiel's vision of *hwhy-dwbk* seeks to set itself above all rival conceptions of Yahweh's involvement and whereabouts. The next section explains this further.

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<sup>146</sup> Kutsko (2000a:152) explains this paradoxical picture of glory in terms of 'complimentary aspects of God's absence and presence.'

<sup>147</sup> Cook (2004:190) speaks of the boundary setting activity of glory in terms of setting up 'firewalls' of protection.

<sup>148</sup> See chapter 3 on the anthropomorphic depiction of Yahweh in the glory vision.

#### 4.5 Emphatic Affirmation – The Authentic Icon of Yahweh’s Engagement in Crisis

The meticulous attention given to the precise nature of the ‘surrounding brightness,’ not only evokes careful listening by the prophet and his audience, but also lays out a critical apologetic against idolatrous confusion pervasive among many of Ezekiel’s compatriots. Ezekiel makes the important clarification; he sees *hwhy-dwbk twmd harm*. This phrase holds valuable insights into the nature of glory. The prominence of the glory visions to the entire book compels us to explore why the elaborate visual dimension is necessary in regards to glory, all the while appreciating the guarded and precise employment of the imagery.

The phrase *twmd harm* (Ez 1:28) seems carefully chosen to distinguish between an obvious and real presence of Yahweh from the contrived and misleading visuals conjured up by leaders in the Jerusalem temple who are desperately seeking guidance (Ez 8:10).<sup>149</sup> First, it is an appearance of some kind. The root, *har*, is the most basic word for looking at something with the eyes. The noun derivative is simply the object being observed.<sup>150</sup> It is a sighting as in a thing to look at (Ex 3:3 of burning bush), a visual more than a dream, a presenting, or exhibition. For example, as it applies to humans, it refers to the outward appearance or presentation ‘i.e. personal presence...especially Ezekiel’ (Brown et al.1980:909). *harm* is a sighting, a visual, and a re-presentation. As Kutsko (2000a:67) states: ‘...I would emphasize that Ezekiel’s language gives the additional impression that it is bridling something potentially dangerous because, in fact, *damut* and *mar’eh* imply concrete representation. We must remember that Ezekiel, even more explicitly than P, is talking about the physical appearance of God.’

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<sup>149</sup> Block (1997:107-108) affirms: ‘Although the terms *selem* and *demut* may be used as virtual synonyms, Ezekiel’s preference for the latter seems deliberate.’ As do I, Block makes an etymological appeal to its use in Ezekiel chapter 1, saying of *demut* that it is ‘more abstract.’

<sup>150</sup> As Kutsko (2000a:67) states: ‘*Mar’eh* often indicates quite concrete objects.’

harm can refer to a dreamlike vision; however, Numbers 12:6-8 is helpful in clarifying the connotation in Ezekiel.<sup>151</sup> In an apologetic against others claiming to have a word from God, a subtle distinction is made between the visions of others and Moses. In Numbers 12:6, harm is paralleled with dreams. ‘In visions to him (a prophet) I make known, I speak to him in dreams.’ In contrast, Moses’ harm is ‘face to face,’ literally mouth to mouth (Num12:8). Intimately and directly Yahweh speaks with Moses (Ex 33:11).<sup>152</sup> The New International Version translates harm as ‘clearly’. It is in contrast to murky or circumlocution. ‘harm is clearly raised above the perception of ordinary men’ according to Zimmerli (1979:116) and distinguishes a select few who were chosen to receive it. It seems that appearance or presence is here making things distinct and clear—beyond interpretation because it is linked to a conscious, sober experience, for Moses can even behold the form of Yahweh. It is apparent from this passage and from Exodus 33 that it is the accompanying word, dialogue not monologue, that brings the experience into its clearest focus. The distinction is expressly made—Moses cannot *see* the face of God, but he can *speak* with God ‘face to face’ (Ex 33:11, 22). That Moses is allowed to see the backside of God is viewed by Terrien (1983:146) as a ‘sublime concession.’ There is no need, however, to pit the visual against the audio. It is the total sensory experience, a *heightened awareness* granted by Yahweh, that best validates the reliability of the vision. The visual makes it *real*, and the word makes it *true*.<sup>153</sup>

Whatever can be said of the passage, there are two things that can be certain concerning harm: it distinguishes Moses from other prophets, and it corresponds in some way to an actual appearance. The distinction of Moses is that Yahweh appeared to him, not in a hazy or dreamy vision, but *actually*. The emphasis is on a more immediate and certain presence of Yahweh because of the added dimension of an appearance, a visual, or sighting. Greenberg (1983:51, 54) places the significance of harm almost entirely in its validation of leadership, especially Moses: ‘...the Majesty [glory] appeared to signify God’s proximity to and presence amidst his people. Moses’ plea to see God’s Majesty

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<sup>151</sup> Num 12:6-8 is attributed to a Priestly redaction, and this reminds us once again that the issue of clarity of vision and authoritative interpreters was a dominant concern in the exilic period.

<sup>152</sup> A phrase (E) exclusively applied to Moses (Kohn 2004:164).

<sup>153</sup> I am indebted to Jacques Ellul (1985:5-42) for a full treatise of this concept.

(Ex 33:18) indicates that its revelation to an individual is the highest token of divine favor.’<sup>154</sup> Thus for Greenberg (1983:54): ‘The divine appearance to Ezekiel expressed powerfully, and in concentrated form, God’s support of an intimate presence with the prophet.’ It is this appearance, *harm*, that not only adds to the certainty of Moses’ encounter with God but the clarity and superiority of the words of God conveyed through Moses.

Added to the appearance of glory is another crucial qualifying word for image, *ṭwmd*. *ṭwmd* is mostly late, ‘an Aramaic loan word... of external appearance, chiefly in Ezekiel’ (Brown et al 1980:197). It is almost exclusively used in Ezekiel with the exception of Daniel 10:16, Genesis 1:26, 5:1,3 (P) and Isaiah 40:18, 13:4. We can confidently say it is an exilic term for comparison, similitude, or resemblance.<sup>155</sup> It is used in 2 Kings 16:10 in regards to the pattern or design of the altar. In Genesis 1:26 and 5:3 it is in parallel to *mḷu*, a word most often associated with idolatry,<sup>156</sup> but mostly referring to the general shape, form, or pattern of a three dimensional figure. Because Adam’s son is in his image, *ṭwmd*, and likeness, *mḷu* (Gen 5:3), Adam names him Seth, likely derived from the root *ṭys* meaning to set, establish or constitute. In other words, Seth is constituted like Adam in both quality and appearance. In this regard, it is best to understand the comparison as similar in overall impression.

The noun cognate is the Hebrew word for blood, *md*. *md* is usually in reference to blood made visible and therefore more often refers to bloodshed, guilt of shedding blood, and blood avenging. Blood is often paralleled with the soul of a man as in the Leviticus passage ‘the soul is in the blood’ (Lev 17:14). Hence, the correspondence is living, animated, and real-to-life.<sup>157</sup> *md* is likely derived from the verb *hmd* to pay a price. There is a reasonable association with the verb meaning to compare or to make like,

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<sup>154</sup> In contrast, Terrien (1983:144) interprets this passage as a tract against sinful desires to want more concrete assurances.

<sup>155</sup> Kutsko (2000a:66) asserts that *ṭwmd* ‘came into being during the exile as reactions to Mesopotamian ideology.’ I agree with Kutsko that the word has strong apologetic overtones when it came iconism, but I assert that glory is primarily addressing an internal issue among Israelites.

<sup>156</sup> Halperin (1993:149) says of *mḷu* that it is the most common word for ‘the kind of image that is worshipped’ (Num 33:52, 2 Kings 11:18, Amos 5:26).

<sup>157</sup> Cook (2004:187) thinks the cherubim as ‘living beings’ (Ez 1) also are meant to emphasize that: ‘God’s sacred power is dynamic and animate, projecting itself into reality in the form of wondrous, living beings.’

likened. For in order to have a rightful recompense for a violent act causing death, there must be a similar act—the shedding of blood. A payment must resemble in kind the loss—life for life. The correspondence is on equality—equal in value, quality, kind or condition, but most importantly, it is a *live* correspondence. It is an *infallible* comparison, a similarity not failing to reveal the other.

Greenberg (1983:53) thinks that *ṭwmd* downplays the attempt to: ‘commit oneself to the substantial identity of the seen with the compared. He calls it a ‘buffer term;’ even so, he agrees that Ezekiel is attempting to be ‘faithful and exact.’ I find one thing problematic about his ‘exact parallel’ from comparative sources. Both examples are ‘dreams,’<sup>158</sup> but Ezekiel carefully avoids such a term (as does Numbers 12:6). Zimmerli (1979:124) perhaps is more in line with the intent of Ezekiel: ‘No vague presence of deity passed him by, but Yahweh, the God of Israel.’

Moreover, in an apologetic against idolatry in Isaiah 40, the use of *hmd* not only emphasizes a comparison of substantial equality, but also its evocative effect. Curiously, the verb is used to contrast God with a negative use of *ṭwmd* –images. The question is asked: ‘To whom will you liken (*hmd*) God or to what likeness (*ṭwmd*) compare with him?’ (Isa 40:18). At first glance, this passage may seem to go completely against image, but more properly, the question is: what is the right or proper image to look at to impress upon the worshipper a trusting response.<sup>159</sup> Isaiah asks his audience to redirect their gaze away from human fabrications to visible objects that accurately reflect the true nature of God and can inspire the viewer toward a good and proper response toward God (Isa 40:26). Even a heavenly gaze, however, is inadequate without an accompanying word of God. Hence, the audience is asked to recall what he has been told, especially that Yahweh ‘sits enthroned above the circle of the earth’ (Isa 40:21-22).

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<sup>158</sup> ‘...of Egypt’s King Merneptah: “Then his majesty saw in a dream as if it were the image of Ptah...” (Greenberg 1983:53).

<sup>159</sup> Aaron (2002:127ff) offers an insightful commentary on this apologetic against idols. ‘The fact that Isaiah is able to draw attention to this paradox, highlights the clash between the semantics of idols for the idolater and the semantics of physical representation for Isaiah himself.’

In sum, there is a three-fold emphasis in the calculated use of *ṭwmd* when describing the glory of the Lord. The comparison is: first, of equality in value, substance, worth, or condition; second, able to impress upon the viewer a trusting response, especially in precarious times; and last, of a living, real correspondence – a living, animated (spirited), interactive, vibrant one that corresponds to life. With such an emphasis, it is easier to understand the struggle in Ezekiel to find a living correspondence to God—humanity. Kutsko (2000a:68) can confidently conclude: ‘Fundamentally, P and Ezekiel are dealing with the same answer [against the royal Mesopotamian cult], approaching it from separate angles: man is like God, and God is like man. In this answer, both P and Ezekiel remove other gods from the equation.’ Hence it is *life-like* or even *authentic*. It is a visual that brings to light what is really real, a clearer reality. It is in contrast to the false prophets who create false images in order to ‘whitewash these deeds (violence) for them by false visions and lying divinations’ (Ez 22:28).

As in all true prophetic visions, however, it is only the accompanying word that can bring in the truthfulness of what is seen. Without the word, no image can be trusted, and by design, a faithful image draws the viewer toward a more attentive ear.<sup>160</sup> Ezekiel is overly clear in making this point. It is a ‘speaking sound’ (Ez 1:28) that he hears, and if there is still doubt, it is a scroll that he is to consume (Ez 2:8-3:3). *ṭwmd* is a way to establish clarity to ‘presentation’ since, as in the Numbers 12:6-8 pericope, *harm* can be a real or a dreamy image. *ṭwmd* should be interpreted as emphasizing the real and living correspondence to the appearance or sighting. It is the definitive word that comes from the encounter that critically verifies the visual.

The *ṭwmd harm* is the *realistic presentation, a life-like appearance, an authentic representation* of the glory of God. Glory is a manifestation of Yahweh. The tension is not that Ezekiel saw a likeness of glory, for he emphatically states: ‘I [really] encountered the glory of God’ (Ez 3:23; 8:4). The tension is rather in how closely glory corresponds

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<sup>160</sup> Allen (1994:38) notes the fusion of word and sight here and also connects it with a sacramental infusion into a living reality.

to Yahweh himself. Terrien's (1983:259) words are helpful here: '...the visual elements did not amount to an accurate photograph of the Deity...in all seriousness...Ezekiel's film was overexposed...Ezekiel saw God in a blinding light—as effective a mask of the Deity as darkness. The *essentia* of God eluded him, as it had eluded Moses.' It is a way for Ezekiel to simply say that in the midst of so many competing versions and visions of Yahweh's whereabouts, his encounter at the river Kebar is really the icon of Yahweh's guiding, guarding, and confronting involvement in the crisis. Ezekiel's encounter with the glory of Yahweh counters the distorted pictures of Yahweh's whereabouts.

#### **4.6 Mustering Presence – Glory as the Separator of Battle Lines**

Significantly, the guiding icon for the Israelites in the wilderness, the fiery pillar, leads the people out of Egypt, but immediately turns around to create a decisive battle with Yahweh's opponent (Ex 14:1). The Exodus account clarifies the military strategy of Yahweh. The Israelites were not a part of Yahweh's army, but only lures to entice His enemy. Ironically, for Yahweh to gain glory over His enemy, He must first place his own people in a predicament. Predominantly, the Reed Sea incident is about Yahweh gaining glory (Ex 14:4). That the Israelites are spared in the process is quite secondary. Thus, the pillar's leading of the Israelites is made to appear as a frantic retreat to Yahweh's foe who is tricked into giving chase (Ex 14:5ff). Once this is accomplished, the cloud pillar makes a decisive maneuver; it moves from going before the people to standing ground behind them (Ex 14:19). It goes from leading to defending, from guiding to guarding and confrontation. The movement from front to rear is also one from low to high ground. Having won the high ground, Yahweh 'looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion'; then, the enemy declares, 'Yahweh is fighting' (Ex 14:24-25).

A similar scenario plays itself in Ezekiel's glory episodes. In this, a third function of glory becomes apparent. Glory functions not only to separate and distinguish between friend and foe, but to solidify the 'sides' in order to engage in battle. As in the Reed Sea account, so also in Ezekiel, glory is not so much the weapon or army of Yahweh as much



as it is His shield.<sup>161</sup> Glory guards those who seek protection and keeps separate those who oppose Him. In another sense, however, glory seems to be a boundary eraser, or perhaps more accurately, a boundary adjuster. Glory is eliminating accepted divisions of geographical and political posturing. In the glory episodes, Yahweh scrambles the current party alignments and realigns them according to a simple formula—those who are for Yahweh (epitomized in the son of man) and those who are against Him. With the two episodes of glory (Ez 1-7 and 8-24), Ezekiel witnesses a decisive moment with Yahweh and His people, for the *glory of Israel* has made the critical move and is mustering for battle. Ezekiel observes the glory of Yahweh make three strategic moves, all of which coincidentally are reminiscent of the Reed Sea account.

The boundary setting activity of glory happens thrice within each of the two glory episodes. In every case, it proceeds directly from Ezekiel's encounter with glory. The movement of glory precipitates every consequent action of Yahweh. This happens in three successive stages. Each one builds on the preceding one until finally the stage is set for battle with glory firmly entrenched between the enemy of Yahweh and an awestruck yet humiliated constituency. Once glory is in place, the battle begins. In the book of Ezekiel, Yahweh does battle first with the son of man,<sup>162</sup> then through the son of man's symbolic actions and then through his words. Like the parting of the waters at the Reed Sea, so the 'thus says the Adonai Yahweh' speeches become the battleground for a Yahweh War.<sup>163</sup>

**4.6.1 Glory's first move – approach.** The first stage follows an inaugural encounter with glory discussed above.<sup>164</sup> It is then initiated by the voice commanding the 'son of *adam*' and concluded with a rhetorical question concerned with listening.<sup>165</sup> Glory

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<sup>161</sup> In discussion of Ez 28:11-19, Cook (2004:187:191) further clarifies the role of a cherub as a 'shield' (v14), not only guarding the sacred center but forming an 'axis' between the between celestial and earthly realms and enabling God's power to emanate outward.

<sup>162</sup> This will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. Zimmerli (1979:121) points out that the movement of the living beings and wheels is 'irresistibly...towards him.'

<sup>163</sup> The war imagery is especially strong in connection with Ezekiel's role as a watchman. (Ez 3:17-21; 33:7-20) where YHWH is 'implicitly symbolized in the figure by the approaching army.' (Schwartz 2004:66).

<sup>164</sup> Literary outline section I.

<sup>165</sup> Literary outline section II.

initiates every engagement with the prophet, and in this first stage, Ezekiel sees glory ‘approaching from the North’ (Ez 1:4). Immediately, the ability or willingness of the ‘son of *adam*’ to respond is pitted against a collective force variously called Israelites, a rebellious nation, a people, and often times, simply ‘they.’ In this first stage (Ez 2:1-3:11; 8:5-18), Ezekiel responds to three Yahweh commands. The first command calls on Ezekiel to simply pay attention. Both the word ‘stand’ (Ez 2:1) and ‘lift up your eyes’ (Ez 8:5) can refer to a call to be especially attentive and aware.

That Ezekiel is asked to take note of things is hardly passive however. The son of *adam* is to be a watchman (Ez 3:16) and a witness, one whose testimony along with Yahweh’s can indict. Of significance is the similarity between this command and the one given to Moses at the Reed Sea (Ex 14:13): the words are spoken in direct response to an expressed loss of courage (terror) on the part of the subordinate; Yahweh speaks directly to an intermediary; there is the dual command to take a stand and to watch or look. All these features von Rad (1991:41ff) has outlined as key components of ‘Yahweh war.’ What follows the first command is an introductory speech whereby Yahweh presents His grievance with his people.<sup>166</sup> This first cycle of command and Yahweh speech is repeated in the third command.<sup>167</sup> The second command is first signaled by the phrase ‘I looked and behold’ whereupon the prophet is called on to perform a gesture that will put in effect the plans of Yahweh. Here again there is a similarity with that of Moses at the Reed Sea. After being commanded: ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance of the Lord’ (Ex 14:13), Moses mimics with his extended staff Yahweh’s dividing of the waters (Ex 14:21).

So glory thrusts itself into the life of Ezekiel (and secondarily into the life of the elders in exile), and then, through commands given to the prophet, Yahweh proceeds to pour out his grievance with His people. Through this voice from the center of glory, the posturing of combatants comes into focus.

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<sup>166</sup> Ez 2:3-6, Ez 8:6

<sup>167</sup> Refer to literary outline II D.

Following the first command, Yahweh's target is identified—the people of Israel, a nation of rebels (Ez 2:3), or the children of Israel (Ez 8:6). Although the intrigue between numerous factions both in Jerusalem and in exile was intensifying, yet for Yahweh, it is all the same. Poignant is the repetition of designations: 'a people', 'a house', 'a nation,' or simply 'they.' And as if to make sure no one party may deceive itself into thinking it is exempt, the added emphasis on the name 'Israel' is repeated, conjuring up the archaic ideal of a united federation. To make sure it is not just one or two generations targeted, the phrase 'they and their fathers' (Ez 2:3) is added. Greenberg (1983:62) adds: 'The prophet's mission is to "Israel" at large, no distinction being made here between exiles and those in the homeland (after the fall of the northern kingdom "Israel" came to designate...the ideal whole nation).'168 Furthermore, Yahweh's enemy is not restricted geographically. The intrusion of glory makes indistinguishable the distance from Jerusalem to Babylon<sup>169</sup> as witnessed by the ease that the spirit transports Ezekiel, or by Yahweh's reminder to Ezekiel that 'briers and thorns surround you' and that 'you live among scorpions' (Ez 2:6).

Here in this first dividing speech, the problem is also made simple. They are rebellious (Ez 2:3). Block (1991:120) says of the verb, *ḏrm*, that it: 'refers fundamentally to the insubordination of children towards parents.' It is no wonder then that its sarcastic tone is applied to 'the house of Israel.' The other verb (Ez 2:3b), *esp*, 'is often employed in the derived sense of violating one's vassal duties' (Block 1991:119). Hence both northern and southern kingdoms are lumped together. Yahweh's word to the prophet echoes that of Yahweh to Moses on the shores of the Reed Sea: 'Do not be afraid of them' (Ex 14:13; Ez 3:8). The object of fear ironically holds a double meaning. Moses is exhorted to stop fearing the Egyptians as well as the grumbling Israelites (Ex 14:12). Ezekiel, also, is admonished to stand firm against adversaries in both Jerusalem and Babylon.

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<sup>168</sup> Halperin (1993:58) also understands a collective opponent, albeit imagined, to Ezekiel represented by the elders of chapter 8 and 11.

<sup>169</sup> To be reminded, Glory is introduced for the purpose of realigning the *spatial* dimension. For Cook and Strong, glory is the intersection between the cosmos and the world (Cook 2004:187) and between the pure and ordered parts of the world or the unclean and chaotic regions of the earth (Strong 2000:73). Zimmerli (1979:119) describes the spatial concern in terms of a 'tension between the heavenly throne and the chosen earthly throne.'

**4.6.2 Second move – mobilizing.** The second time glory intervenes to make clear the battle lines also proceeds directly from a movement of glory.<sup>170</sup> This stage is signaled in both episodes by a definitive mobilizing of glory. Strong are the images of clamoring for battle.

In the first episode (Ez 3:12-21), there are rumblings of movement in the lower regions of glory as the living beings and wheels engage (Ez 3:12-13). Ezekiel is swept up in this movement, and for the first time, the Spirit lifted up and transported him to the shores of the river Kebar. Also for the first time, the movement of the son of *adam* is paralleled with that of glory.<sup>171</sup>

Again an imperative is issued: ‘Hear the word I speak and admonish them’ (Ez 3:17). Ezekiel is designated a *hpu*, a watchman, one who can guard against intrusion. He is also, as Block (1997:144) points out, a key component in the military defense of a city, monitoring the enemy’s movements and blowing the horn to muster the soldiers for battle. This carries the obvious connotation of one who has a visual advantage—either by being stationed on high ground, like a hill or a watchtower, or by having an inside view, like a spy or scout. And again through Yahweh’s word, distinctions are made, this time between the ‘wicked’ and the ‘righteous.’ Carley (1975:37, 44) suggests that the reference to ‘sitting in a house’ (Ez 3:15) hearkens back to the days of Elisha where both legal and military deliberations were made. Wickedness, *esr*, connotes a waywardness or disconnection. The wicked are those who are loosed from the constraints of law and order. They are free from obligation.<sup>172</sup> The emphasis lies more in the wholesale reshuffling of categories. Yahweh is not interested in the nuanced distinctions between factions. The wicked are simply those who have liberated themselves from their obligation to Yahweh’s family or his monarchy. Even here, however, Yahweh makes sure no one escapes culpability, for every last person is responsible.

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<sup>170</sup> refer to literary outline III

<sup>171</sup> This will be addressed in some detail in chapter 5.

<sup>172</sup> BDB pg 957

In the second episode (Ez 9:1-10:14), the second movement of glory is characterized by the visitors, *ṭwdqpp*, mustering for slaughter (Ez 9:1-2). Like the watchman guarding a city, so the ‘visitors’ arrayed for battle and a ‘man clothed in linen’ are standing guard beside the altar. One can readily find a parallel here with the armed cherubim guarding the Garden (Gen 3:24). The man in linen<sup>173</sup> is an official recorder. The *rpō* could have several functions from court recorder to accountant, but they were also employed to muster armies for battle, their task being to draft soldiers.<sup>174</sup> 2 Kings lists a *rpō* among the prisoners captured, ‘charged to enlist the people of the country.’ De Vaux (1965:225) points out that according to Dueteronomy 20:5-9, ‘there were several *sopherim*, who were responsible for recruiting.’ The *rpō*, in this case, is commanded to simply single out those who would be protected from the on-coming slaughter. One might wonder if the man clothed in linen is a mirrored image of Ezekiel. Both are priests whose task is to record for future reference and ‘realign human hierarchies’ (Patton 2004:85,88).

This activity echoes a similar scene at the Reed Sea where a clear distinction is made between enemy and comrade. Significantly, the ones being defended by Yahweh are the ones crying out in a kind of anguished abandonment (Ex 14:10, Ez 3:14; 9:4). Interestingly, in both the situation at the Reed Sea and in Jerusalem, Yahweh especially responds to the boastful rallying cry of His opponent. In the case of Ezekiel, the group targeted by Yahweh has a rallying slogan that particularly sets Yahweh off—‘Yahweh doesn’t see us. He has abandoned the land’ (Ez 8:12).

Proceeding once again from the stirring of glory, Yahweh marks out the battle lines (Ez 8). In a scene reminiscent of the Passover night in Egypt, the man clothed in linen<sup>175</sup> is to pass through<sup>176</sup> the city singling out the ones to be spared from the ones destined for destruction. In the Passover account, this separation is explained: ‘Then you will know that the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel’ (Ex 11:7). This demarcating

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<sup>173</sup> Cook (2004:185) has noted that linen is normal garb for priests in the temple whose function parallels that of the wheels where ‘celestial reality makes contact with earth.’

<sup>174</sup> BDB PG 709 ‘2 Chron. 26:11 uses for muster-officer.’

<sup>175</sup> Block (1997:304) and Allen (1994:148) confer that the reference is likely to a priest-like figure or an angelic one.

<sup>176</sup> *ṭbe* is used in Ez 9:4 and Ex 12:12

of sides only begins on the Passover night, but it is the entire wilderness journey where Yahweh is able to gather a people to Himself. As for the situation in Jerusalem, only those who anguish over the atrocities in the city will be spared. Ezekiel embodies such a posture. He is well acquainted with being overcome with an incapacitating amalgam of anger, bitterness, grief, fear, exhaustion, and loss (Ez 3:14-15; 9:7; 24:15ff). A similar sense must have come over the Israelites as their giddy confidence crumbled at the sight of Pharaoh's army descending on them at the shores of the Reed Sea (Ex 14:12).

**4.6.3 Third move – facing the enemy.** Yet a third time glory moves in preparation for engagement. Again, the battle lines are drawn.<sup>177</sup> Again it immediately proceeds from a glory encounter, and like before, it is precipitated by a movement. Whereas before (Ez 3:12; 9:2), there was only a mustering, now there is mobilization and transport signaled by dual actions—going out and standing. The verb *auy*, to go out or send out (Ez 3:22; 10:18), is found in the preamble to the Ten Words: 'I am the Yahweh who *brought you out* of Egypt' (Deut 5:6). As this stage is described in the first episode (Ez 3:22f), the Spirit transports the prophet. In the second episode, the whole glory epiphany goes from inside 'the House' and stations itself 'at the entrance of the east gate (Ez 10:19). In both episodes, the movement concludes with glory standing at attention.

Like before, the prophet acknowledges that Yahweh is speaking directly and clearly to him (Ez 3:24; 11:2). A command follows. In the first episode, the command is retreat and be silent (Ez 3:24), but in the second, the command is to boldly prophesy (Ez 11:4). In both cases, however, the actions of glory and the prophet are directly countering a certain common foe, designated mostly as 'they.' And like the previous stage at the temple (Ez 8), they also are rallying behind a pair of slogans which angers Yahweh. 'It won't be long until we can again build houses. We are the choice portions of meat' (Ez 11:2), and 'They are far away from the Lord; this land was given to us as a possession' (Ez 11:15). As with the encounter with the 'visitors' and the 'man in linen' (Ez 8), so here, the glory of the Lord distinguishes between friend and foe. Significantly, now it is Ezekiel, but more importantly his prophecies that clarify the lines of contention.

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<sup>177</sup> Refer to literary outline IV.

The phrase, *hwby ynda rma hk*, signals the last of the demarcating speeches within the glory episodes (Ez 11:7). There is much commentary on this important phrase,<sup>178</sup> but one important aspect is revealed in these episodes—the phrase activates the separating activity of Yahweh. The saying: ‘whoever will listen let him listen, and whoever will refuse let him refuse,’ (Ez 3:27) summarizes the demarcating activity coming from Yahweh in the first episode.<sup>179</sup> Rich with irony, one wonders how anyone will be able to listen to a speechless prophet (Ez 3:26); all the more, however, this points to the visual message of the prophet. The son of man images Yahweh’s word.

The second episode clarifies once again the true sides in the battle. This time, however, the speech has gone from an indirect third person perspective to a direct second person confrontation, for both the glory of the Lord and the leaders of the people are found at the east gate (Ez 10:19, 11:1). I am reminded of the preliminary confrontation of boxers at weigh in. There they face their opponent for the first time, and exchange boastful predictions for the outcome. De Vaux (1965:251) reminds that combatants in the Ancient Near East did not formally declare war. Instead: ‘...only when a commander had pitched his camp in enemy country and shown his power would he lay down conditions, the refusal of which would unleash hostilities.’ The comparison may be more accurately a prosecutor rehearsing his case before the trial, for even here, it is only within the vision that Yahweh is confronting. Block (1997:330-332) identifies a common ‘refutation’ form of the speech: ‘a typical prophetic speech involving the explicit quotation of a popular opinion that demands explicit exposure and refutation.’<sup>180</sup> But within the scenario the decisive moment has begun. Yahweh has set his face against the enemy.

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<sup>178</sup> In his book, *I am Yahweh*, Zimmerli (1982:7) states: ‘...this is not merely an incidental use of the formula of self-introduction...A fully conscious theological reflection has placed the formula precisely here.’

<sup>179</sup> Zimmerli (1982:7): “Where did the formula of self-introduction have its original life? What did it mean in that original setting? We are fortunate enough to hear an extremely precise answer to this question from within the Priestly literature...In this context the narrative (Priestly Writing) and the prophetic priest (Ezekiel) complement one another and vivify the background against which we can view the employment of the formula of self-introduction within the framework of legal discussion.

<sup>180</sup> Blenkinsopp (1990:62) also confirms the form as typical disputation speech.

A triad of players has been building throughout the glory episodes, and it is no more evident than in the confrontational climax envisioned in chapter 11. On the one hand, there is Yahweh: a father, a sovereign king, a righteous judge, and warrior; on the other, there is a rebellious house, a recalcitrant people.<sup>181</sup> Glory stands between them as a fiery cloud and as a ‘son of man,’ watching, spying, revealing, guiding, dividing, and confronting. This all comes to a head at the east gate of the temple (Ez 11:1f). There glory, along with Ezekiel, has already moved and positioned itself for a climactic showdown which definitively draws the line between those who are for Yahweh and will be spared and those who oppose him and will be subject to judgment.

There is one critical factor of ‘Yahweh war’ that needs emphasis here. Von Rad (1991.44) sums it up in the phrase: ‘Yahweh alone.’ No one but Yahweh fights His battles. Significant in this respect is the definitive demarcating of the enemy as ‘Yahweh’s enemy’ or ‘Yahweh’s battle,’ not Israel’s.<sup>182</sup> The Reed Sea incident portrayed in Exodus 14 most idealized the notion that Yahweh fights His battles *alone*. The construction of the episode carefully distinguishes Yahweh and His enemy, on the one side, and a dormant, deflated people cowering behind Him on the other. Those spared by Yahweh are not combatants, only helpless, terrified victims (Ex 14:10ff). Similarly, Ezekiel pictures glory ‘encamped’ on Jerusalem’s eastern mount (Ez 11:23) squared off against His opposition; however, those in Babylon are not viewed as Yahweh’s army. Like the Israelites at the shores of the Reed Sea, so too are the exiles; they are defeated, humiliated, grumbling, and terrified. In a sense, Yahweh defeats both sides, one by placing them in a no-win situation in which they can only cry for help, and the other by luring them into self-destruction. Both sides will understand that *Yahweh is Lord* (Ex 14:18).<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> I will contend below that the ‘elders’ of Ezekiel 8 and the ‘leaders of the people’ (Ez 11:1) are two different representative groups contemporaneous with events leading up to Jerusalem’s fall in 586. But it is critical to keep in mind that from the perspective of glory, they are equally Yahweh’s enemy because they are equally rebellious.

<sup>182</sup> See von Rad (1991.44). They are Yahweh wars because the enemy is Yahweh’s enemy 1 Sam20:36, 1 Sam.18.17, 25.28.

<sup>183</sup> The sight of the dead Egyptians did not produce a cocky confidence, but rather a reverent fear (Ex 14:30f), as if the glory of Yahweh could have easily turned the other direction.



Significantly here, the confrontation has also widened beyond the Temple precinct to include the ‘whole city’ (Ez 11:3,5,11). Here Yahweh’s opponent is again clarified. First, they are *Meh yrv*—*leaders of the people*. Even though two of them are singled out by name (Ez 11:1), they are only representative of a larger counsel and of ‘the sons of Israel’ (Ez 11:5). Once again a collective enemy is in view. They are Ezekiel’s ‘brothers’ and ‘kindred’ (Ez 11:15), those who ironically ought to be most empathetic to the exiles.

Ezekiel chapter 11 has created a variety of interpretations as to the identity of the *Meh yrv* and the precise nature of Yahweh’s contention with them. Halperin (1993:64) represents a view that the *Meh yrv* are essentially the same group as the elders in Ezekiel 8. (64) ‘...the villains of 8:11 and 11:1 are visionary representations of the “elders of Judah” who sit before Ezekiel in 8:1.’ Halperin (1993:62) argues this based on understanding Ezekiel 8-11 as one literary unit and seeing linguistic similarities with Ezekiel 14 and 20 that clearly indicate the elders in Babylon. Other similarities appear telling as well. In both cases there is a group of twenty-five who are at the east gate of the temple (Ez 8:16, 11:1). The name of one ‘Jaazaniah son of Shaphan’ (Ez 8:11) is remarkably similar to a ‘Jaazaniah son of Azzur’ (Ez 11:1). Although I argue below that the leaders of the people should be viewed as distinct from the elders of chapter 8, I would agree with him and with Block (1997:332) that they are representative (perhaps characterized) of all of those who oppose Ezekiel’s (and Jeremiah’s) view that Jerusalem is doomed.

There are compelling reasons, however, to distinguish the two groups. De Vaux (1965:8,225-226) attests that a *rv* is not the same as an elder, although perhaps coming from elders, and in particular the designation has strong military connotations.<sup>184</sup> A *rv* was certainly a royal dignitary ‘who goes before the king, one of his confident advisors’ (De Vaux 1965:121). The *rv* captured by Nebuchadnezer (2 Kg 25:19) is described by De Vaux (1965:225) as: ‘a commander-in-chief, or a civilian in charge of the administration of the army, i.e. a minister of national defense.’ Most significantly, from

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<sup>184</sup> Block (1997:331) acknowledges this understanding but argues for an exception in this passage.

their two rallying slogans, it is evident that they are opposite the group of elders in Ezekiel chapter 8, who feel Yahweh has abandoned them and are looking for cultic alternatives. Indeed they leaders of the people may be in opposition to the elders in Ezekiel chapter 8.

For one, the *Meh yrv* are saying, ‘Will it not soon be time to build houses? This city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat’ (Ez 11:3). The proverb has proven tricky to clarify,<sup>185</sup> yet it appears to be coming from Yahwists who are tenaciously holding onto the idea that Yahweh will always defend Zion. Halperin (1993:72-78) has placed this prophecy with the historical event of Jeremiah’s letter coming to the exiles. Central to Jeremiah’s prophecy was the ‘building of houses’ (Jer 29:5) which Halperin keys in on to understand the slogan marshaled in Ezekiel 11:2. Jeremiah’s command to ‘build houses’ stirred up vehement denial and opposition with anyone hoping for a quick reversal of Jerusalem’s troubles. Halperin (1993:75)<sup>186</sup> suggests the proverb of the meat in the pot is best understood as a mocking response to Jeremiah’s letter (whether in Jerusalem or Babylon) by: ‘those who felt themselves so securely tied to Jerusalem that it was madness to doubt they would soon be returning to it.’

The second saying is even more telling, for they are saying: ‘They [the exiles] are far away from the Lord; this land has been given to us as our possession’ (Ez 11:15). This saying clearly indicates them as Yahwists who hold a supreme confidence in Yahweh’s unflinching loyalty to Zion. They may in fact be staunch Yahwists out of the Josiah reform mold, Halperin (1993:72) argues:

There is no reason to doubt the widespread view that his [Jaazaniah ben Shaphan’s] father was Shaphan ben Azaliah, the scribe who conveyed the newly found book of the Torah to King Josiah (2 Kings 22:3-20), and that this brothers included the distinguished scribe Gemariah (Jeremiah 36:9-12), the ambassador Elasah (29:3), and Jeremiah’s powerful patron Ahikam (26:24, cf. 2

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<sup>185</sup> Halperin (1993:74) and Blenkinsopp (1990:61) concede that the proverb is enigmatic.

<sup>186</sup> Halperin’s commentary here is exclusively directed at the elders who are before Ezekiel. Even though he feels this whole scene is hallucinatory, Halperin (1993:74) places it within a definite historical setting and that the ‘pot of meat’ saying is an accurate reflection of sentiment in both Jerusalem and Babylon: ‘...the speakers [of the parable] feel themselves and Jerusalem to be inseparable.’

Kings 22:12)—who was the father of the future governor Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:22, Jeremiah 40:5).

There is little reason to doubt the historical situation presented in the Biblical texts (2 Kgs 24-25, Jer 21-52) of the situation leading up to the final destruction of the city.

According to Blenkinsopp (1990:61): ‘Zedekiah, a weak individual, was torn between the faction that advocated submission to the Babylonians and *the war party*, which looked to Egypt for support.’ The issue of property—building houses—certainly was of paramount concern for both Jerusalemites and exiles. Thus Blenkinsopp (1990:63) explains: ‘We have here [in the sayings of the leaders] what is, in effect, a theological explanation of exile from the side of the non-exiled, an explanation that had additional advantages of justifying the expropriation of the property abandoned by the deportees.’ Even more importantly, the *war party* is decisively distancing itself from their exilic counterparts. Effectively, they are writing them off and declaring themselves the true Israel.<sup>187</sup> This comes out especially strong in the latter part of the second saying: ‘The land has been given to us as a possession’ (Ez 11:16). Block notes the strong Deuteronomistic connotation of the words ‘possession’ and ‘given’ in which: ‘those who remain within “the territory of Israel” repudiate all claims of the exiles to the land and promote themselves as the only true heirs of the ancient patriarchal promise (Ex 6:8).’

Their slogan of the cooking pot suggests a couple of things. First, like glory, they are also dividing up the sides, determining who will be spared and who will be destroyed. In their view, the city and the temple need only to be purged. They are clearly Yahwists themselves as evidenced by their confident claim that Yahweh has sifted out the trouble, and by Yahweh’s indictment of them that they have badly misjudged and ill managed Yahweh’s intentions stipulated by the law (Ez 11:12ff). Second, they think themselves as Yahweh’s partners in the purge, deliberately, cunningly and forcefully following through with it. That their partnership with Yahweh is of a most treacherous kind is definitively revealed by Yahweh: ‘You have multiplied the slain in this city and have filled its streets with them’ (Ez 11:5). The dead are not those who have suffered from disease or

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<sup>187</sup> Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles (Jer 29) also included a parable of ‘good figs’ and ‘bad figs,’ indicating an intense debate over the identity of Yahweh’s people.

starvation often associated with siege. The word, *halal*, means to pierce or perforate and has an obvious connotation of death by sword or spear.<sup>188</sup> In addition, Yahweh ironically pronounces that their weapon of choice will be the very thing they get, the sword (Ez 11:8). It is my suggestion that Ezekiel was himself a victim of their treachery.<sup>189</sup> There is a profound willfulness and an intention to coerce through intimidation by this party, for they have set the slain in the street.<sup>190</sup>

Yahweh makes clear that he knows what they are thinking, and in a fashion reminiscent of Pharaoh at the Reed Sea, Yahweh cleverly uses his enemy's battle strategy against his enemy. This strategy of luring the enemy and turning the enemy against himself is a classic characteristic of Yahweh war.<sup>191</sup> Simply put, it is the enemy's own thinking that is his downfall. With great irony Yahweh pronounces that their very fear of the sword and their consequent willingness to wield it has sealed their fate (Ez 11:8). Like Pharaoh at the Reed Sea, the allowing for a hardness of heart is ingeniously set up by Yahweh to defeat His enemy at his own game.

It is plausible that these leaders in Jerusalem were responsible for the massacre at the Temple mentioned in chapter 8. For one, the elders at the Temple had quite a contrary slogan, for they were saying that Yahweh has abandoned the city. Block (1997:334) suggests: 'This pot is Jerusalem, offering security to those inside, particularly the *nouveaux noblesses* represented by *anahnu*, "we.'" By their syncretistic behavior, the elders of chapter 8 appear to be advocating an appeasement to Babylon or perhaps to Egypt. The leaders of the people were at odds not only with the 'elders' of chapter 8, but also with those in Babylon.<sup>192</sup> Block (1997:334) states it well: 'The new rulers are the

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<sup>188</sup> BDB pg 319

<sup>189</sup> For different reasons than what I present here, Halperin's (1993:64) hypothesis hinges on a perceived or projected hostility coming from 'elders' or 'leaders.'

<sup>190</sup> The word *mvn* in the phrase *Mtmv rsa Mkyllx* (Ez 11:7) consistently connotes that of careful planning and intention (BDB pg 962) thus rendering it something to the effect: 'Your slain you have carefully arranged for' (my translation).

<sup>191</sup> Von Rad (1991:49) notes: 'This overview makes clear that Yahweh's intervention in the form of a confusing divine terror was an indispensable element of the tradition.' See Lev 26:37.

<sup>192</sup> Again, I would advocate understanding both 'groups' as characterizations of certain trends of thinking going on in both Jerusalem and Babylon. It is not necessary to hold to hardened political agendas. In the end and from Ezekiel's (Glory's) point of view, they all are a common enemy.

prime cuts of meat, supposedly invulnerable within the city walls, as opposed to those who have been discarded as waste and obviously no longer enjoy the protection of God.’ They may have had a Deuteronomistic bent to them as already discussed, and thus had a Josiah type purge in mind. Second, as previously discussed, there was certainly a good deal of political/religious turmoil going on as well as competition for control. Along these lines, it is important to notice the identification of those ‘filling the city with the dead’ in the glory episodes, the *ṭwdqṭp* (‘visitors’ Ez 9:2) and the ‘leaders of the people’ (Ez 11:6). Ezekiel 9:6 especially singles out the ‘elders’ in the temple. In comparison, the indictment of the *Meh yrv* is strikingly similar, having ‘filled its streets with the dead’ (Ez 11:6f). We can imply that the temple massacre is a vision of when the Babylonians finally breach the walls, yet the emphasis of Ezekiel’s vision is more towards providing the reason *for* the sacking of Jerusalem rather than a vision *of* it (Ez 9:9-10). As Davies (1989:58) states: ‘...Ezekiel’s responsibility [is] to establish the grounds of the disaster rather than to fend it off...’<sup>193</sup>

The massacre in Ezekiel 9 may be a veiled reference to an actual event of scapegoating violence. Rene Girard’s theory of sacred violence is helpful here. Girard (1984:263) has demonstrated how objects, rituals, and even language around the sacred are in fact a way to veil or cryptically reference horrific acts of violence.<sup>194</sup> Fire, for example, is an almost universal expression of communal or scapegoat violence.<sup>195</sup> It is not uncommon either to refer to massacres in terms of animated gods, spiritual mediators, or even extraordinary natural occurrences. For Girard (1984:288), mankind’s untenable problem of contagious violence is only dealt with through the ‘metaphorical displacement of sacrifice.’ This displacement of language to talk of scapegoating violence is often in terms of mythic super-beings [in this case the ‘visitors’].

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<sup>193</sup> The theme of a god abandoning a land, city, and temple is common in Ancient Near Eastern texts: ‘Stories of ancient gods forsaking their temples date back to ancient Sumerian times’ (Block 1997:275). A primary reason for such accounts is to explain that: ‘The divine wrath was precipitated by the wickedness of the deity’s subjects, expressed in both cultic and moral perversion’ (Block 1997:276).

<sup>194</sup> Girard (1984:282): ‘Many languages...contain terms that reveal the nondifference between violence and the sacred...lexicographers have a tendency to put asunder that which primitive language has joined; to suppress the scandalous conjunction of violence with the sacred.’

<sup>195</sup> Bailie (1997:170) ‘The god who answers with fire is god indeed. What a central tenet of primitive religion this sentence is. In the Old Testament, fire is a frequent synonym for sacred violence.’

Even more so, reciprocal violence is especially spoken of in terms of ‘expulsion, purgation, or purification,’ (Girard 1984:888) in pharmaceutical terms of poisonous ‘remedy’ (i.e. medicine or antidote). Girard (1984:263) explains: ‘The translation of this violent process into terms of expulsion, evacuation, and surgical operations is made in the most diverse cultures. Hence, for Bailie (1997:169-173), the reference to fire coming down from heaven to consume the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel is a veiled reference to an act of scapegoating violence where they were massacred. Certainly Ezekiel gives witness to an escalating situation of unrestrained violence in the city (Ez 22). That violence and impure (demarcations of differences) acts commingle makes complete sense from Girard’s (1984:280) perspective: ‘For if violence involves a loss of difference, all loss of difference involves violence, and this violence is contagious. The slightest loss of differences...is capable of plunging the entire community into a sacrificial crisis.’ If Girard’s connection between language, the sacred, and violence be the case, it can be reasonably suggested that the terrestrial visitation of the city is a veiled reference to an internal act of scapegoating violence.

There is one more reason to consider this possibility, for one of the key strategies of Yahweh war is to throw the enemy into a kind of self-destructing panic. The Reed Sea account provides the classic example of this maneuver. There, ‘Yahweh looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptians and threw it into confusion’ (Ex 14:24). It was at this decisive turning point in the battle when the enemy realizes that Yahweh is fighting against them (Ex 14:25). A similar realization awaits those in Jerusalem. Clearly the princes and their counsel will suffer by the hands of the Babylonians (Ez 11:9), and when they do, ‘they will realize that I am the Lord’ (Ez 11:10, 12). Then they will realize that Yahweh was not their partner, but their adversary.

In contrast, glory has separated (spared) the targets, the exiles, of their popular slogan: ‘they have gone far from Yahweh’ (Ez 11:15). The verb here, *wqxr*, leaves open various interpretations.<sup>196</sup> Greenberg (1983:189) understands it as an imperative, as if those in

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<sup>196</sup> Block’s (1999:347) translation is quoted in the text above.

Jerusalem were commanding the exiles to: ‘renounce the privileges of YHWH worship.’<sup>197</sup> Greenberg (1983:189) explains: ‘Here expulsion from YHWH’s land is equated with a severance of ties with YHWH and hence of title to his land. By this reasoning, the homelander claimed all property left by exiles.’ If, as presented above, this group of leaders considered themselves Yahweh’s partners, it is reasonable that they would feel like they helped Yahweh get rid of those now in exile. Their ‘wicked plot’ could serve a double purpose—it could eliminate all opposition in Jerusalem to their agenda *and* placate the Babylonians from sacking the city. Ezekiel possibly was one of their victims.<sup>198</sup> The verb, *wqxr*, can be understood more benignly as if they had simply left, implying that they went astray both physically and religiously. In either case, however, the point is clear—based on the notion of *terra sancta* (Block 1999:347), they are far from Yahweh, and Yahweh is still entrenched in Zion.

Yahweh rebuts the Jerusalemites’ confident saying and claims sole responsibility for their absence from Jerusalem. But He insists that he has provided for them: ‘I have been a small sanctuary to them’ (Ez 11:16). This statement remains elusive to interpreters.<sup>199</sup> Since the term, *sdqm*, referenced among other things the transient tent of the wilderness wanderings, it is reasonable that this picture fed the exiles with the notion that Yahweh was *able* to be with them. For the Ancients, divine presence always had a physical and local presence. As Terrien (1983:163) states: ‘In the absence of representations of the Deity, the sense of the divine nearness could hardly survive among the people at large.’ Greenberg’s (1983:189) interpretation of the Jerusalemites saying (Ez 11:15) is based on the assumption that: ‘territory and worship [are] combined.’ This being the case, it is likely that the reference to a *sdqm* in Babylon had an objective correspondence.<sup>200</sup> Given the prominent role and symbiotic relationship between *the glory of the Lord* and *the son of man*, it is conceivable that Ezekiel was considered an embodiment of

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<sup>197</sup> New Jerusalem Publication Society (1988) ‘go far away from Yahweh.’

<sup>198</sup> Note literary outline IV. Section C where those who incarcerated Ezekiel in Babylon are paralleled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> episode with the ones ‘plotting wickedness.’

<sup>199</sup> Block (1999:344) reviews the varying views not only pertaining to the integrity of the text, but also the variety of possible variance here. He says of the saying: ‘The statement is without parallel,’ and concludes with Greenberg (1983:190) that it is intentionally vague.

<sup>200</sup> Later Jewish interpreters understood the little sanctuary to be the synagogue according to Greenberg (1983:191); thus, giving witness to how strong the notion that Presence has place.

Yahweh's abiding Presence. Terrien (1983:267) fully entertains the notion that Ezekiel (as well as Jeremiah) was a precursor to a 'kenotic theology' developed by the early Christians (Phil 2:7): 'Ezekiel acted as a stand-in for the Divine actor.' By acting out the 'self-immolation' of Yahweh, Ezekiel innovatively presents a 'theology' of 'divine anthropology' (Terrien 1983:268). This idea will be explored further in the next chapter. In any case, Yahweh is clear; He is with the exiles in some way. But in Ezekiel's view, the glory of Yahweh is guarding those who have a posture of shame and humility, regardless of where they are.

When one reads what follows this statement (Ez 11:17ff), it is easy to understand *sanctuary* in the sense of a refuge. Here Yahweh speaks directly to the exiles and promises not only to preserve them but to transform them as well. Here the exiles are separated not for what they are, but for what they will become. He promises that they will return with a changed attitude and new resolve to obey Him. When this occurs: 'They will be my people and I will be their God' (Ez 11:21). Also in this final dividing, a definitive view of recovery emerges. Only from the stand point of exile will there be a hope for the future.

**4.6.4 The final stand of hwhy - dwbk.** The chapter 11 account ends with the final movement of glory.<sup>201</sup> Like the *standing thing* on the shores of the Reed Sea that looked down upon Yahweh's enemy, so Ezekiel sees 'the glory of the God of Israel' standing above the mountain just east of the city confounding all attempts to oppose Him. In both cases, it is not a retreat on the part of Yahweh that is envisioned, but rather a brilliant and decisive maneuver for victory in battle. The last image of glory we have (until Ezekiel 40) is of glory standing guard over the city, and it is an image of a warrior readied for battle and positioned for victory. Yahweh *alone* is firmly positioned to decisively defeat His enemy. The weapon becomes the symbolic actions and prophetic word of Ezekiel. Significantly, the battleground is both Jerusalem and the exilic community. The ultimate objective is not the destruction of Israel but its deliverance.

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<sup>201</sup> According to the literary outline the mirrored account (Ez 3:27) simply ends with the phrase 'whoever will listen, will listen, and whoever will refuse will refuse. This phrase leaves open a question which is essentially answered in chapter 11. It is paramount to Yahweh asking, 'who's side will you be on?'



## 4.7 Summary

The hwhy-dwbk in Ezekiel has been clarified not only by exploring the visual dimensions and their meaning (chapter 3), but also to an even fuller extent by what it does. In this regard, hwhy-dwbk moves and maneuvers as an army readying for battle. The glory pericopes of Ezekiel 1-24 depict an epic and critical historical battle being played out. Surprisingly, the battle is not between Israel and Babylon or even more so between conflicting socio/political/ideological parties within Jerusalem. Rather, through action of glory, the true combatants come to the fore—Yahweh and his people. ‘Basically, the enemy is God,’ says Greenberg (1983:203).

Ezekiel draws on the image of the pillar of cloud and fire in Israel’s conflict with Pharaoh and Israel’s Yahweh war tradition (romanticized or idealized by Zion traditions) to help put the crisis in focus. Like the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness or the ark in the Holy of Holies, hwhy-dwbk is the clear, reliable, and rallying icon of Yahweh’s active engagement. It will provide a real-to-life guiding Presence to those who will fix their gaze upon it, as the son of man does. Furthermore, Yahweh’s Presence is not a showpiece, for it aggressively confronts the wayward, misguided, and destructive motivations of the people reflected in their choice of alternative icons. Through Ezekiel’s vision of the hwhy-dwbk, Yahweh insists on only one alternative icon to the ark in Zion for Israel to rally around—the one Yahweh provides. And the guiding and confronting picture of Yahweh is a precursor to the third role of glory especially exemplified in its movements. hwhy-dwbk moves to demarcate the battle lines and to muster for a decisive battle. It strategically aligns itself in classic Yahweh war fashion exemplified in the battle of the Reed Sea. There, Yahweh fights alone. One side is a defeated foe whose own arrogance was their demise, and on the other a humbled, trembling, but trusting constituency.

It is to this constituency that glory plays one more crucial role; it must prepare a receptacle to hold and safely mediate the encounter with hwhy-dwbk. In this, a final

role of glory is revealed, to condition the son of *adam* to be the suppository of Yahweh's guiding, confronting, and separating Presence. To this the next chapter addresses. The *hwhy-dwbk*, as encountered and embodied by Ezekiel, becomes the real-life guiding, guarding, and separating icon for those who lament and cry out to Yahweh, whether in Jerusalem or Babylon.

## 5 THE PREPARATORY ROLE OF GLORY TO THE SON OF ADAM

### 5.1 Introduction

The guiding, confronting, and separating activity of glory is first and most immediately experienced through Ezekiel. Indeed, it is through the ordeal of Mda-Nb, the son of *adam*, that a fourth role of glory is revealed—that of preparing and shaping the son of *adam*. By reviewing the relationship and interaction between the son of *adam* and the *hwhy-dwbk*, it becomes apparent that the son of *adam* is being shaped into a unique icon of it. In him, images of Yahweh's long ordeal with his people converge into one unique composite effigy.<sup>202</sup> Through his encounter with glory, the prophet embodies idyllic elements from Israel's past, becoming a surrogate type of ark, holy place, prophet, priest, and king. All of which, should have accurately reflected Israel's encounter and on-going relationship with Yahweh. Ultimately, I would suggest, the character of Ezekiel is an embodiment of Israel. This happens primarily, however, through Ezekiel's role as a conscripted soldier in a Yahweh war.<sup>203</sup>

Ezekiel's encounter with glory commissions him to the role of prophet along the lines of traditional prophetic visions. However, Ezekiel's encounter goes well beyond simply commissioning, and I suggest that as a call narrative, Ezekiel's is more about a *conditioning* of the prophet than simply a *commissioning* of one. Few other cameos of prophets extend the *ordeal* around the call, as does Ezekiel. Ezekiel's initial self-debasing response is common with many a prophet's calling, yet few other prophetic call narratives emphasize so dramatically and personally this struggle. Certainly Habakkuk would be included in such a category. Ezekiel's vision account is autobiographical in style like Habakkuk's, but Ezekiel's is more narrative. Unlike Habakkuk, however, Ezekiel rarely questions God. The extended personal ordeal narrative of Ezekiel comes

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<sup>202</sup> Patton (2004:88) describes this in terms of the literary role of Ezekiel within the book: 'Ezekiel as priest functions as a transparent figure: the audience inside the text, as well as the reader of the text, sees God through him.' Block (1997:162) describes Ezekiel as: 'a "living idol" infused with the spirit of him whom he represents.'

<sup>203</sup> As to who is portraying Ezekiel in such a way, refer to the discussion in chapter 2.4

closest to similar narratives of Elijah and Moses<sup>204</sup>, and it is quite possible that Ezekiel finds his own comfort in comparing himself with them.<sup>205</sup>

Even to a casual reader, Ezekiel's encounter with the glory of Yahweh is primarily and exclusively for Ezekiel. The cycle of encounter, address, and symbolic action has a progression all its own. First, it moves, like glory is moving, from an encounter directed exclusively at Ezekiel to one that includes his immediate audience, the exiles. By the time Ezekiel embarks on the extended speeches in chapter 12, all involved—Ezekiel, the elders, and the greater exilic community have been preconditioned to receptivity by a bold, rude, and forceful intervention by Yahweh. This is the main function of the symbolic actions within the glory pericope—to condition all who would survive, with a new set of eyes and ears and to equip them with a new kind of sensitivity towards their god. As with Ezekiel, so it is with the survivors—they must be converted, conditioned, and prepared; hence, it is his encounter with the *life-like, authentic representation* of the *hwhy-dwbk*<sup>206</sup> that initiates a process of reconditioning for the prophet to embark on an unwelcome, necessary, yet salvific journey.

Clearly, the glory pericope in Ezekiel (Ez 1-24) portray an extended ordeal on the part of one young priest, a son of Buzi.<sup>207</sup> Smith (2004:148) has argued that much of the more difficult passages in Ezekiel (like Ez 16) must be considered in light of Ezekiel not only being a prophet but also a refugee: '...post-traumatic stress disorder in soldiers, refugees and refugee workers, and disaster and relief workers may shed light on the famous "acts" of Ezekiel.' Nothing within the information of the years prior to Jerusalem's fall prohibits us from entertaining the idea that Ezekiel came to Babylon sometime later than the first group in 597 B.C. It is possible to understand Ezekiel as having active

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<sup>204</sup> The formula "the hand of the Lord was upon me" is a familiar motif in the Elijah-Elisha cycle (Kutsko 2000a:10). Greenberg (1983:78) takes note of Ezekiel's 'adherence to traditional themes and phrases drawn from the stories of Moses in Egypt' as well as a wide array of other Israelite traditions.

<sup>205</sup> Odell (2000:197) argues that the genre of Ezekiel goes beyond that of prophetic literature and finds more significance in comparison and contrast to a first person narrative style of royal reconstruction genre of the ancient Near East. The significance of this comparison will be discussed further in this chapter (Odell, 2000.209).

<sup>206</sup> My translation of Ez 1:28 – see chapter 4.5

<sup>207</sup> Interestingly, the word, *yzwb*, means contempt or despised

involvement in the temple at that time, perhaps acquiescing to those embracing the inviolability of Zion. Ezekiel was banished from the temple amidst the highly suspicious atmosphere in Jerusalem. The definitive account of Ezekiel's arrival to the exile community comes only after his initial encounter with glory. Only then does the text say he 'was among the exiles' (Ez 3:15)<sup>208</sup> in a condition of *Mymsm*—variously defined as traumatized, dazed, horrified, terrified, or appalled. He is angry and bitter, forcefully bound, incarcerated, and silenced (Ez 3:14ff).

A group hostile to Ezekiel is involved and responsible (Ez 3:25). Halperin (1993:218), entertaining a psychoanalytical approach, concludes that Ezekiel's adversary is born of a 'radical misogyny' and is purely a projection of his own illness. Patton (2000:237) agrees that Ezekiel's own experience of abuse profoundly influenced many of his more lurid prophetic speeches, but insists on a viable external opponent:

The prophet identifies with the sacrificed children, because he has been sent off to Babylon as a prelude to its destruction...The images assumed in the beginning of Ezek 16 are not necessarily from a repressed infant memory but from the real experience of chains, imprisonment, futility, and defilement...Ez. 23 works precisely because men like Ezekiel understood the image of sexual violence, understood it at a gut level. The text does not mean that male authors were insensitive to abuse, but that they had actually experienced it.

Patton (2000:237) further explains how such a traumatic experience came to be understood by Ezekiel. 'God is in power, even when God looks powerless. Ezekiel has taken the experience of violence and turned it into a horrifying insight into both God and themselves: God did this to us (as audience) because we were nothing but whores.'

The critical contributing factors to Ezekiel's conversion process are thus two-fold. First, there is his horrific abuse suffered by a group opposing him. I maintain that this adversary is primarily Israelite as this is the plain reading of Ezekiel 3:25. 'He was either banned by the community and its leaders, placed under house arrest, or forbidden to take

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<sup>208</sup> Greenberg (1983:40) also makes the point that Ezekiel was away from the exilic community during his inaugural vision.

part in ordinary social interaction' (Blenkinsopp,1990:31).<sup>209</sup> For one, throughout the book, the scathing review against Israel and especially its leadership is so persistent that any critique of Babylon goes virtually unnoticed.<sup>210</sup> In the book of Ezekiel, Yahweh's adversary is strictly an internal one. Certainly, those who brought Ezekiel to Babylon were in collusion with them, but Babylonians are mostly out of the picture, especially when it comes to the glory visions.<sup>211</sup> The second contributing factor in Ezekiel's conversion is of course the intrusive encounter with the glory of Yahweh with the somewhat bewildering comment that overall, Yahweh is making it happen (Ez 3:14).

## 5.2 Designated Mda -Nb

Immediately proceeding from each initial encounter with glory, Ezekiel hears a 'speaking sound' (Ez 2:1, 8:5).<sup>212</sup> There can be little doubt that this voice comes directly from the man on the throne. A call to pay attention follows accompanied by a forceful lifting up by Yahweh. Two things are implied here: one, an incapacitated demeanor born of despair is rudely denied the prophet; two, this apparent uncaring response by Yahweh is fueled by urgency. When a commander faces a battle, there is no time for self-doubt. Yahweh calls him Mda -Nb, *son of adam*. This sole designation given to Ezekiel occurs with such astounding consistency and repetition that one is compelled to explore the meaning of it. Halperin (1993:219) says the designation is: 'a form of address practically without parallel in the Hebrew Bible.'

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<sup>209</sup> Blenkinsopp (1990:31) offers this as one of many views of this odd passage. His own conclusion is that held by many that a traumatic experience effected him physically. Block (1997:151-160) extensively argues against the psychosomatic readings, but still reads Ezekiel's condition as self-induced, ignoring the thrice third person plural reference in both the Greek and Hebrew and even in his own translation (Block 1997:151). Zimmerli (1979:160) concludes: 'It [3:25] points to a hostility towards the prophet from those around him.'

<sup>210</sup> Smith (2004:154-155) suggests that Ezekiel suffered abuse from his captors as is in the 'word-game...semantic relationship of the terms for "strip" and "exile."' Furthermore, he explains why his captors are not mentioned under a 'self-blaming' phenomenon among 'defeated peoples' saying: 'Self-blaming ideologies attempt to take away the ultimate victory of the conqueror by attributing defeat to one's own failures or sins, and not to the superior culture, superior force, or superior ability of the opponents.' (Smith, 2004:155).

<sup>211</sup> As already discussed in the previous chapter, Kutsko (2000a:28ff) views the glory imagery as an apologetic against a 'royal ideology,' but only as it is directly affecting the Israelites.

<sup>212</sup> Refer to literary outline chapter 4 sec. II A

**5.2.1 Exalted connotation of son of *adam*.** Given the uniqueness of the term, son of *adam*, in the book of Ezekiel, the meaning of it is best determined by its use there. That the son of *adam* is defined by his interaction with the *hwby-dwbk* is especially in view. Even so, given Ezekiel's abundant propensity for reverberations from Israel's past, there may be some connotations with earlier traditional elements.

The phrase *Mda-Nb* has both exalted and humble connotations, and often the two appear contradictory. On the positive note, Psalms 8:4 marvels at God's majestic creation of *Mda-Nb* proclaiming that God has made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor (Ps 8:5). *Adam*, although parallel with *šya*<sup>213</sup>, holds more a connotation of generic or common humanity. This positive picture seems mostly a Priestly construct.<sup>214</sup> It is connected with the primordial story of God shaping man from the dirt and breathing life into him (Gen. 2:7). The *adam* of the garden is one who is utterly dependent and subordinate to his maker, all the while having a dignity that is founded in a bond of fellowship with Yahweh.

Verses such as Psalms 8:4-5 and Genesis 2:7 point to a royal, dignified status given to *Mda*. Genesis chapter 1, recognized as a Priestly document, clearly ascribes to mankind a royal dignity connecting with both Yahweh's image and his ability to rule. Callender (2000:185) has recognized in Ezekiel an extensive use of a 'primal man' imagery (especially Ez 28:11-19) and identifies the image given to man in Genesis 1:26 as a representative or seal 'suggestive of royal statuary.' Noth (1972:17) confers that these notions of a royal *adam* were being subsumed by a priestly class: 'If we are to find a date for P, the terminus a quo is primarily the end of the Judean Kingship of the line of David in 587, as the "High Priest" in P has already taken insignia and cultic functions of the Jerusalem King.' Certainly, the role of establishing a temple and receiving a new set of laws (Ez 40:48) places Ezekiel in a royal capacity (Patton 2004:81).

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<sup>213</sup> BDB pg 35 'man' more in the sense of distinct from male and female or as a social creature.

<sup>214</sup> Odell (2000:215). But she asserts that scholars and lexicographers have failed to recognize the theological contribution that the book of Ezekiel makes to the term.

It is possible that this exalted view of *Mda-Nb* was developed by the priestly class in exile in order to demonstrate the possibility of a human leadership that could have the right posture before God. Patton (2004:84) suggests: 'Ezekiel as priest, by being one closest to God, models the perfect leader.' In a discussion of *Myhla Mlu* in Genesis 1:26, Kutsko (2000a:129) suggests Ezekiel's strong association with Priestly theology, which was making serious attempts at counteracting Mesopotamian royal ideology.

From a different angle, Carley (1975:43) also sees a royal connection with the prophet and connects it to a pre-classical prophetic form associated with the prophetic activity of Elijah. 'Clearly, if the form of II Kings 6:32ff, and of Ezek. 8.1ff. owes anything to the "royal novel," the content of the form has altered greatly. The prophet, as Yahweh's spokesman, has displaced the monarch as the central figure in the story.'

Margaret Odell has also recognized certain royal elements within the book of Ezekiel. First, Odell (2000:209) recognizes in the particular first person narrative style of Ezekiel a similarity with royal reconstruction genre of the ancient Near East where: 'the central persona is a royal figure.' The exception in the book of Ezekiel is that Yahweh is the central figure rather than a human king. Even so, Odell (2000:203) secondly makes a case that Ezekiel's gesture of wearing the turban and sandals (Ez 24:17-24) is not associated with mourning; instead, it signifies a 'status transformation' or 'the acquisition of a new status' associated especially with royalty. Interestingly, her insights lead her to an opposite conclusion than what I am suggesting. For Odell (2000:214-215), Ezekiel as son of *adam* is an 'anti-royal persona.' 'Ezekiel has appropriated a genre that extols the deeds of human kings but has used it to assert the opposite. The task of ruling humankind (or in any case, the House of Israel) is reserved for God alone.' She (2000:215) asserts that the son of *adam* is certainly a central iconic figure in the book, but starkly contrasts the role of prophet and king, saying that it is 'consistent not only with Yahweh's central role, but also with the generally negative assessment of kingship in the book.'



Odell's insights, however, can easily point in the opposite direction; the son of *adam* is a type of a royal figure. First, I agree that son of *adam* (2000:215) designates 'the proper subjection before the divine king,' (Odell, 2000:215) but this applies first to Israel's leadership especially that of Judah's king. None of this denies a royal figure after the ideal of David—an intermediary figure who solely trusts in Yahweh. It is far from settled as to whether Ezekiel has a negative view of human kingship and the cult.<sup>215</sup> Also Odell refers to Ezekiel 28:29 concerning the king of Tyre: 'you are *adam* not *el*'. This again only points to the *humanity* of kings not the denial of them. The son of *adam*, in Ezekiel, is not an anti-monarchical symbol, but an ortho-monarchical one, albeit, to borrow a term from Carley (1975:43), 'displaced.' Ezekiel's encounter with glory demonstrates the relationship the kings of Israel *should have had* to Yahweh's Kingship.<sup>216</sup> Throughout the Old Testament there is a dynamic tension with monarchy, but it is never flat out denied. The human leadership, especially that of king, was to be an obedient and faithful vassal to Yahweh's kingship. That Israel's kings repeatedly overstepped those bounds is part of the tragic problem of their history. The son of *adam* is the icon of a proper human leadership, one that points to a living, dynamic and trusting relationship with God's glory. I agree with Odell (2000:215), however, that the term son of *adam* is a deliberate attempt to counter the predominant notion in the ancient Near East that kings belonged to the realm of the gods. All kings, whether Israelite or not, were to be in subjection to king YHWH.

**5.2.2 Humble connotation of the son of *adam*.** In contrast, Mda-Nb is mainly viewed in negative terms. Seemingly in response to Psalms 8 is Psalms 4:2: 'How long, *son of adam*, will you turn my glory into shame. How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?' Even this verse alludes to an original dignity, but understands it as having been thoroughly corrupted.<sup>217</sup> This negative use of Mda-Nb exemplifies precisely what Davidic kings were to avoid. There is a critical issue in regard to this—in a life-

<sup>215</sup> Contrast Odell (2000:195-219) and Teull's (2000:97-116) negative assessment of king and cult with that of Strong's positive view (2000:69-95) Patton also (2004:78) argues that modern scholarship as often associated the priesthood and cult with 'negative aspects of God' and solely with social 'conservatism.'

<sup>216</sup> Ezekiel's final vision of restoration (Ez 40-48) according to Patton (2004:79); 'implies that the ideal reconstruction of the nation will include adjustments to social categories, such as the demotion of the king to a *ayasn*.'

<sup>217</sup> Ps 80:17, Isa 51:12

threatening crisis, who or what will a king and his people *trust* in? Ollenburger (1987:99) sees this issue exposed in two strands both of which derive from a Zion tradition. From the Psalms he concludes:

While the poor are characterized by trust in Yahweh, the arrogant, who do not recognize that they are merely swna , are characterized by their repudiation of Yahweh and their assumption of power in his place. In Ps 118, the point was made by contrasting the impotence of Mda to the power of Yahweh. These two, human power and that of Yahweh, are presented as options for trust. The Psalm emphasizes the futility of trust in the first and the appropriateness of trust in the second. It is because of the power of Yahweh's right hand that the speaker in Ps 118 claims to have no need to fear Mda .

From Isaiah 30:1-5 and 31:1-3, Ollenburger (1987:109) expounds on the contrast between trusting in Mda vs.la or rsb vs xwr (spirit vs flesh). He concludes:

The assumption of this application is that Yahweh's plan and wisdom are contrary to the plans and wisdom of the Jerusalem court. Further, the plans of this court are doomed to fail because they rely on human power, or the power of armaments, rather than the power of Yahweh. There is here in Isaiah the same coordination between Yahweh's exaltation and human powerlessness that we have seen in other texts in the symbolic design whose central symbol is Zion. The exclusive prerogative of Yahweh seems to be rooted in this coordination.

For Ollenburger (1987:128), both the positive and negative connotations of Mda are held in tension in what he defines as 'the anthropology of Zion.' 'That is, in the language of the Jerusalem cult and its Zion symbolism, the exaltation of Yahweh entails at the same time the humility of all humankind and indeed the humiliation of all that is proud.' Greenberg (1983:61) also reads the son of *adam* in Ezekiel as a way to squarely place the prophet within the 'class' of humanity (translating it simply, 'Man'), but it also serves: 'to single him out from the divine beings that fill this scene.'

This 'anthropology of Zion' designated by the phrase 'son of adam' appears to be also present in Ezekiel's encounter with glory. It shapes him into a model of trusting

response, especially in a crisis. Just as *hwhy-dwbk* is a composite sketch,<sup>218</sup> blending a wide array of features from Israel's earlier traditions, it is likely that a similar composite portrayal is being incorporated by the term 'son of adam.'<sup>219</sup> Given the accepted redactions in the book,<sup>220</sup> the designation probably took on more meaning as the book was being worked. It appears that just like glory which is suspended between heaven and earth, the terrestrial and the celestial, the holy and the profane, the wicked and the righteous, and Babylon and Jerusalem, so the term *Mda-Nb*. It is a designation rich with connotation and reminiscence. The *Mda-Nb* holds in suspension what Israel and its leaders were, are, and should be.

**5.2.3 Son of adam an enigma.** The *Mda-Nb* is a walking paradox of sorts. Halperin (1993:219) suggests that the term is intentionally ambiguous. Ezekiel's prophecy of the king of Tyre (Ez 28:1-19) and Pharaoh, as compared to Assyria (Ez 31), accentuate the theme of pride versus trust by primary allusions to a fallen perfection in the Garden. Ecclesiastes 7:29 holds the tension best when it states: 'thou hast made *adam* upright, but they have gone after many things.' The NJPS does well to translate the phrase as 'O mortal,' capturing the emphasis on frailty, waywardness, and humility all the while expressing Yahweh's longing for *genuine* humanness. Or it is as the Orthodox requiem service prays: 'thou hast made man a mixed creature, both humble and exalted.' Patton (2004:89) expresses the paradoxical nature of *Mda-Nb* when she states:

The book plays with irony in this exploration of the absurd condition of the exile. Ezekiel cannot speak, but he "out-communicates" the prophets. He cannot sacrifice, but he ends up in the place of the high priest. He is no "man of God," but a lowly "son of man."

Finally, both Greenberg (1983:61) and Zimmerli (1979:132) remind that the term is clarified by what immediately follows the address, especially the son of *adam*'s encounter with the *xwr*. Zimmerli (1979:132) comments: 'The introductory scene [Ez

<sup>218</sup> Greenberg especially holds this to be true (1983:55-58)

<sup>219</sup> Davies (1989:59) speaks of such a function for the book of Ezekiel as 'archival speech,' characterized by 'marking and filing' and by a confrontative dialogue with and reformation of Israel's traditions (1989:127).

<sup>220</sup> See my earlier summary in chapter 2.7.

2:1ff] serves to make clear that, before the power of the divine appearing, man's power to hear is no longer an obvious fact. He must be prepared for it.<sup>221</sup> Thus in the end, the son of *adam* in the glory pericope is best understood as one *conditioned* to responsiveness. This is what is entertained below.

**5.2.4 Son of adam as conscripted soldier in a Yahweh war.** There is one other avenue that must be mentioned in regard to the designation Mda-Nb, for in some sense it must be connected to Ezekiel's role as prophet and even more so by his unique encounter with hwhy-dwbk. The connection is made most clear in the prophet's role in Yahweh war.<sup>222</sup> In the ancient world, nothing more legitimated a king's authority than his ability on the battlefield. The notion that Yahweh *alone* is king in Zion is reinforced and played out in a similar and more antiquated notion, —Yahweh as warrior, who fights his battles *alone*.<sup>223</sup> It was primarily the role of the prophet who insisted all throughout Israel's history that reliance on Yahweh and his miracle was the fundamental posture of those who would desire deliverance.<sup>224</sup> Lind (1980:32) states: 'In Israel's foundational event, the exodus, Yahweh the divine warrior overcame Egypt, not by means of human warfare, but by means of a prophetic personality who heralded a message brought to pass by miracle. There was, indeed, human activity, but it was the action of a prophet, not a warrior.'<sup>225</sup> Lind (1980:140) argues that the prophet was always a central player in Israel's warfare. The prophet's involvement in Israel's conflicts appears longstanding (Jud 4:4ff; 1 Sam 13), for it was the prophet who always insisted on Yahweh war, where Yahweh is the primary fighter. This type of warfare required exclusive trust in Yahweh alone as both king and warrior, and according to Lind (1980:132,144) is the primary cause of tension between prophet and king in Israel. I disagree with Lind that the prophet

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<sup>221</sup> Zimmerli (1979:132) notes that: 'in Daniel 10:8-12 we find a stylized heightening of this feature.'

<sup>222</sup> Terrien (1983:161ff) extensively clarifies the inter-related traditions of the ark as 'The cultic object inseparable from the belief in Yahweh, the Hero of Battle, triumphant over cosmic as well as historical enemies' (Terrien 1983:174) with Yahweh war (both at Shiloh and later on in Jerusalem) and the role of the prophet. In this regard, Moses is 'the prophet *par excellence*, mediator of the Godhead to man, a human bridge between Yahweh and the entire community of Israel' (Terrien 1983:178). 'The 'Song of the Ark' (Num 10:35), according to Terrien (1983:164) explicitly connects Moses, the prophetic singer of songs, with that of a strategic military role.

<sup>223</sup> For von Rad (1991.44) 'the one who acts alone' is one of the key characteristics of Yahweh war.

<sup>224</sup> Isaiah's confrontation with Ahaz (Isa 7-8) and Hezekiah (Isa 36-37) are prime examples.

<sup>225</sup> Due to his pacifist tradition, Lind strains to make a distinction between prophet and warrior, yet there is no reason why one cannot think of the prophet as a type of warrior.

was a counter figure to the warrior. The prophet is a type of warrior, one whose trust is solely in Yahweh's might and intervention.<sup>226</sup>

Understanding the prophetic role as the critical partner in Yahweh's battles is a prominent feature of the *son of adam*, Mda-Nb, in the book of Ezekiel. First off, the *son of adam* has a direct ear to the voice speaking – the man on throne. The voice, however, immediately and forcefully sets the agenda, for it is a commanding voice. This initial command (Ez 3:12; 9:1) drafts the unwitting soldier into service.<sup>227</sup> Immediately, *the voice, the hand, and the spirit* work to enlist, convert, and condition the *son of adam* to comply and implement Yahweh's strategy. In no uncertain terms, the draftee is first informed of whose side he is on (Ez 3:17; 9:4-5). Glory begins to condition the prophet to empathize with Yahweh's cause; he is made to feel the way Yahweh feels about the crisis and to see things from Yahweh's perspective. Terrien (1983:241) aptly describes the process in prophetic encounter where: 'Ideas follow images...The visions move from emotion to thought and from thought to deed.' He explains:

The ardor of Yahweh the Judge reaches a climax with the frenzy of Yahweh the Executioner, and the prophet himself is bidden to act as the Executioner's assistant...Presence calls him to be a speaker and an actor with God, almost an actor for God...the vision introduces the "prophetic act," by which the presence is so intense that the prophet becomes the impersonator and the living incarnator of divinity.

Hence, the initial symbolic actions taken by Ezekiel in the glory episodes test the servant's responsiveness to command.<sup>228</sup> Ezekiel responds simply: 'I did' (Ez 2:9, 8:8). Significantly, the threefold command given to Ezekiel echoes that given to Moses on the

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<sup>226</sup> Again, I remind that extended narratives of personal struggle mostly center around critical times of conflict. Moses' conflict with Pharaoh and Elijah's conflict with Baalism are prime examples. I would also include David in this group, although he is not quite the same since he actually did the fighting; nevertheless, he is held up as the ideal for his astounding trust in his god for all victories. For an extended discussion of David in this regard, see Brueggemann 1985:13-18.

<sup>227</sup> Zimmerli (1979:131) especially attributes the title 'son of adam' to the enlistment of: 'a servant, who is summoned by his master in an act of unprecedented condescension by his divine Lord.'

<sup>228</sup> Terrien (1983:227-269) discusses at length the extended ordeals, 'tempest of the soul,' of Moses and Elijah as models of the prophet's crisis encounter with Yahweh as the precursor to mission. He (1983:233) connects the prophetic crisis encounter with: 'the epiphanic visitations to the patriarchs and from the mosaic theophany to the prophetic vision of call and commission.'

shores of the Reed Sea (Ex 14:13): ‘Do not be afraid, stand firm, and you will see’ (Ez 2:1, 6, 9). Finally, in the initial address to the *son of adam* (Ez 3:22;10:1-15), Yahweh instructs his fresh enlistment on the extended ordeal that awaits him, one necessary to make him battle ready (Ez 2:3-3:9). The mission is evident—Yahweh wants many to follow the *son of adam*’s example—be attentive and responsive to Yahweh’s word (Ez 3:27). Most importantly, however, *the son of adam*’s ordeal of exile becomes an icon<sup>229</sup> of Yahweh’s ordeal with His people. Thus Davies (1989:71) writes: ‘Cast in the role of narrator, Ezekiel speaks of God in commanding and interpreting the sign-actions as a vivid depiction of Israel’s fate. But in representing his performance of them, Ezekiel shows his own profound and costly involvement in the people’s suffering. Ezekiel 12:17-20 point to both aspects of the sign.’ The outlook is generally gloomy with a tinge of hope, for there is a hearing problem. Most are not listening, but some will begin to get it (Ez 3:11, 8:18).

### 5.3 Son of Adam – Mirrored image of Glory

When glory moves for the second time, Ezekiel moves with it.<sup>230</sup> Herein lies another dimension to the *son of adam*—his actions and movement parallels that of glory’s. The son of *adam* mirrors or shadows glory. This happens twice within the glory episodes with slight variation between the first and second episode.

**5.3.1 First shadowing of glory by Ezekiel.** In the first episode, it is Ezekiel who is moving in tandem with glory (Ez 3:12), but in the second episode, it is the *visitors* and *the man clothed in linen* (Ez 9:1ff). What proceeds from this first case when the son of man parallels a glory movement is intriguing. First, Ezekiel is asked to pay attention and to take note while Yahweh makes distinctions between enemy and ally (Ez 3:17-21).

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<sup>229</sup> Davies (1989:70) speaks of the sign-acts as ‘a form of quasi-visual presentation’ and ‘visible narration.’ Terrien, (1983:242f) speaking of Hosea as the precursor of sign-acts, says of prophetic acts: ‘Hosea thus endured public shame and dishonor in order to portray not only an unfaithful Israel but also a dishonored and shamed Deity. Through the performance of prophetic acts, presence became “incarnational.” Representing God, the prophet suffered in his own life the agony of God.’ Later, Terrien (1983:267) applies the idea with Ezekiel as does Greenberg (1983:125)

<sup>230</sup> Literary outline III.

What follows next in the first episode is simply a summary statement charged with meaning: ‘the strong hand of the Lord was upon me’ (Ez 3:22).<sup>231</sup> This statement comes at the lowest point in the prophet’s encounter with glory. The language of defeat and terror (Ez 3:14f) indicate that Yahweh’s first battle was against the son of *adam*.<sup>232</sup> Certainly, Ezekiel was terrorized. Von Rad (1991:48) understands the element of *divine terror* as the key element in a Yahweh war. In order for Yahweh to draft his compliant warrior, he first defeats him in battle. This narrative of stunning loss echoes similarly for others who became warrior leaders in Yahweh wars: Moses, Elijah, Gidion, and David. Von Rad (1991:45) states the dual outcome of divine terror: ‘This activity of Yahweh is what determines—in a psychological respect, first of all—the behavior of Israel as well as that of the enemies.’ In order for Yahweh to have a compliant soldier under his command, Yahweh first demonstrates his overwhelming force against him.

In the second episode (Ez 9:1-10:15), however, an intense scenario is played out in the inner court of the Temple, replete with another elaborate description of supernatural men, cherubim, wheels, and burning coals. This scene has several common elements with the temple vision found in Isaiah chapter 6. For one, both incidents take place within the inner sanctuary, but where the distinctions between heaven and earth are blurred and the activity is dominated by extraterrestrial beings. In addition, both describe a fire that purifies and destroys and is in direct response to a listening problem. Finally, in his vision, Isaiah boldly proclaims: ‘my own eyes have seen the King, *twabu hwhy* (Isa 6:5); Ezekiel does likewise (Ez 10:20).

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<sup>231</sup> Greenberg (1983:42) says of this formulaic phrase: ‘God’s “hand” is a manifestation of his power. When it lights upon a prophet [he is] charged with...supreme tension.’ Greenberg concludes that the internal ‘tension’ of encounter with God is what caused Ezekiel to fall into a traumatized ‘seizure’ or ‘trance.’

<sup>232</sup> Significant in this regard is the use of the phrase ‘hand of the Lord’ in Exodus (Ex 9:3), where it directly refers to Yahweh inflicting a blow to his enemies and in fact, a way to clarify the enemy (Ex 9:4). Deuteronomy 2:15 makes the phrase even more explicitly a battle term. That Yahweh is in some sense struggling with the prophet is revealed in the kind of ambiguity around Ezekiel’s opposition. Yahweh appears to be in partnership with them. They will tie him up, but Yahweh will cause him to be silent (Ez 3:25). Even more so, Yahweh ties the prophet up himself (Ez 4:8).

In Ezekiel's temple vision, he observes the rapid and efficient response of the *man clothed in linen* to Yahweh's command as well as the wheels to the cherubim.<sup>233</sup>

Significant is the repeated emphasis on the wheels ability to shadow the omni-directional activity of the cherubim and the cherubim's immediate response to the leading of the man on the throne. In the temple vision, Ezekiel witnesses a model of responsiveness that he must master. Like the wheels and the man clothed in linen, the *son of adam* is one who carries through with the King's orders with unflinching and willing obedience.<sup>234</sup>

**5.3.2 A second shadowing of glory.** What follows is yet another incident where Ezekiel's movement mirrors that of glory's.<sup>235</sup> In the first episode (Ez 3:22,23), it is Ezekiel who arose and went out. In the second episode (Ez 10:18), it is the cherubim/wheels who rise up and go out. The *son of adam*'s movement parallels and foreshadows that of the cherubim/wheels, as extensions of glory. In the first episode, the *son of adam* goes out to 'the plain' with glory 'standing' above him (Ez 3:22f), while in the second episode, it is the cherubim who go out of the Temple precinct with glory 'standing' above them (Ez 10:18). At least within the visions, Ezekiel's location and gestures in exile correspond to *hwhy-dwbk* in Jerusalem. The son of *adam* mirrors the tutelary role of the cherubim as a sentinel or guard (Ez 3:17ff), but even more importantly, he is an implementer of Yahweh's commands.

That the action and movement of the son of *adam* so closely imitates the action of glory lends itself to understanding the son of *adam* as related in some way to the 'little sanctuary' of Ezekiel 11:16.<sup>236</sup> Kutsko (2000a:152) sees the direct connection between the cherubim/wheels and Yahweh's presence: 'The function of the *kabod* is manifest,

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<sup>233</sup> There is considerable consensus that the wheels of the cherubim portray Yahweh's ability to move freely and effortlessly (Kutsko 2000a:152). Greenberg (1983:45) places almost every feature of the cherubim/wheels to unrestrained movement.

<sup>234</sup> Patton (2004:88) confirms such a picture being painted of Ezekiel when she states: 'Ezekiel is the ultra-servant of God; even though he does not perform sacrifices or rituals, he does everything God asks, mediates God's presence, and controls access to God. As a sign, he is a model of responsiveness to God; ...he always fulfills God's commands.'

<sup>235</sup> Literary outline III D.

<sup>236</sup> This discussion was introduced in chapter 4.6.3.



through the image of the wheels...emphasizing God's availability (presence) in exile.' Unfortunately, he fails to see how the son of *adam* functions in similar fashion.

There is considerable latitude as to how this phrase, *j'em sdqm*, is understood. Block (1997:350) reviews the possibilities, suggesting for one a time reference: 'for a little while;' however, he lays emphasis on Yahweh's personal involvement or commitment: 'I have become their sanctuary.'<sup>237</sup> Greenberg's (1983:190) view is helpful as a general starting point for my discussion: 'Since the divine Presence is fully manifest only in the Jerusalem sanctuary [it is] a reduced presence among the exiles...In this statement of deprivation, it is obliquely conceded that the exiles enjoy a measure of divine nearness.' Greenberg is an important counterview to those who view in this statement a radical paradigm shift where God's presence needs no physical, tangible, or real correspondence.<sup>238</sup>

Kutsko's (2000a:100) view is exemplary: 'God is not consigned to sanctuary, for God *is* a sanctuary.' I can agree that the need to emphasize Yahweh's transcendence was important, especially in light of the arrogant claims coming from Jerusalem.<sup>239</sup> But it is not very convincing, for one, that up until this point in time, the Israelites had never conceived of Yahweh's transcendence.<sup>240</sup> Also, the wilderness traditions that Kutsko (2000a:152) clearly connects Ezekiel with seem to be consistent in the insistence that a sanctuary of some kind is the point of contact between the two realms. Kutsko (2000a:155) argues that the priests of exile especially understood this. Interestingly, Kutsko (2000a:156) concludes his thesis by affirming that: 'Ezekiel presented a vision of a God who could make his revelations known and his power felt...and the presence of God...perceived.' One still must conclude from this statement that the sum of Ezekiel's

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<sup>237</sup> The New International Version follows this understanding: '...yet for a while, I have been a sanctuary for them.' What is important about this view is that it emphatically places emphasis on divine presence represented by personality not locality.

<sup>238</sup> Later Jewish interpretations understood the 'little sanctuary' as the synagogue (Greenberg 1983:190).

<sup>239</sup> Greenberg (1983:204) reminds that the 'main burden' of the passage 'is to reject the Jerusalemites claim.'

<sup>240</sup> This is based on the assumption that Aaron's (2002:152) thesis combats—that the ancients did not or could not distinguish between 'conceptual ascription and ontological identity.' Certainly, Israel's liturgical tradition had always maintained that 'The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord is on his heavenly throne' Ps 11:4. (Terrien 1983:279)

encounter with glory, his life, his oracles (both written and spoken), and the exilic communities burgeoning understanding of the significance of his life (liturgically celebrated<sup>241</sup>) were the real-to-life means by which the exiles *knew, felt, and perceived* Yahweh's Presence.

Since the *j'em sdqm* signifies a presence of Yahweh in exile, the question still remains as to *how* that is? Patton (2004:81) argues: 'The powerful opening vision unquestionably establishes Ezekiel as the one who has fullest access to God's presence.' Significantly, she makes this point within a larger discussion demonstrating that Ezekiel is more characterized as a priest than any other—prophet, king, or elder (Patton 2004:74). Tuell (2000:108) concludes a similar possibility when discussing the *j'em sdqm* of Ezekiel 11:16 :

But how can the presence of YHWH, unmediated by the cult, be understood—particularly since, in Ezekiel's priestly worldview, direct confrontation with the *kabod* was generally deadly? Ezekiel himself has become in some sense the point of intermediation between God and God's people.

Tuell (2000:108) suggests this point of contact is more Ezekiel's words rather than his 'personality,'<sup>242</sup> but placed in the context of the glory episodes, this doesn't fit. The text presents Ezekiel's dramatic encounter with glory and his subsequent actions as the only point of contact before the fall of Jerusalem. The text reminds us that it was only after Ezekiel's long ordeal with glory culminating with the death of his wife that Yahweh opens the mouth of the prophet and allows him to speak (Ez 24:27). This, in my view, is a weakness of Davies' (1989:71) thesis. She doesn't view the sign-acts as having any significance beyond establishing the authority of the text.

Furthermore, like Moses and Elijah, as well as the Ark, Ezekiel becomes a rallying point for a people in crisis. Certainly one of the more prominent connotations associated with

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<sup>241</sup> See chapter 2.3.1

<sup>242</sup> Davies (1989:133) concurs with Tuell: 'Authoritative speech is no longer person dependent but text dependent.'

Zion was as a place of rest and refuge. As Ollenburger (1987:75) states: ‘The development of Zion as a symbol of refuge is most likely associated, traditio-historically, with the Ark sanctuary as a place of refuge—i.e., the site of the Ark was a sanctuary in the true sense of the term.’

Interestingly, Yahweh’s dwelling as place of refuge and rest are mentioned as the primary outcome of His victory over not only Pharaoh at the Reed Sea, but all the nations: ‘You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength, you will guide them to your holy dwelling’ (Ex 15:12f). This proclamation exudes from the mouth of the Israelites who after seeing the awesome deeds of Yahweh: ‘feared the Lord and put their trust in Him and in Moses his servant’ (Ex 14:31). Likewise, Isaiah speaks of the establishment of a sanctuary as the direct outcome of a Yahweh victory, this time over ‘both houses of Israel’ (Isa 8:13-18). The closest possible connection is made between ‘the Lord Almighty who dwells on Mount Zion’ and the prophet and his children as ‘signs and symbols’ (Isa 8:18). The cohesive element is trust in Yahweh *alone* (Isa 8:17).

Like the lower elements of the churning effulgence, Ezekiel is conditioned toward a listening response to Yahweh’s cause. He embodies the dialectic between ‘whoever will listen, let him listen, and whoever will refuse let him refuse’ (Ez 3:27). Significantly, both the listeners and the non-listeners are under the same roof from Yahweh’s perspective ‘because they are a rebellious house’ (Ez 3:27). The difference lies only with those who mournfully acknowledgement the sorry state of Israel’s recalcitrance (Ez 11:13, 9:4). Ezekiel embodies the kind of demeanor essential for Yahweh’s Presence, especially during a crisis—trust in Yahweh alone.

The son of *adam* certainly is the point of contact, as is glory, between Yahweh and his people in exile as is demonstrated in Ezekiel’s parallel movements with glory. Ezekiel is conditioned to move with glory because glory first moved upon him. The exiles are able to ‘see’ Yahweh’s presence not only in Ezekiel’s accounting of the *hwhy-dwbk*, but also by Ezekiel’s symbolic actions and his written words. Certainly, for some in exile,

Ezekiel's remarkable life and presence were a token (icon) of Yahweh's marvelous presence, just as the ark in Jerusalem had been. The son of adam's symbolic gestures, discussed below, further clarifies the picture of Yahweh's involvement in the crisis.

#### **5.4 Son of Adam – Embodiment of Shameful Realities**

The symbolic actions performed by Ezekiel within the glory encounters reveals the conditioning function of glory, first on the prophet and then on the prophet's audience. A radical paradigm shift must occur, and it begins with the prophet himself. The symbolic actions serve different purposes within the two episodes. Glory functions not just to commission a prophet or condition the prophet; even more so, *glory works to make the son of adam*.

Preliminarily, the meaning of Ezekiel's symbolic actions creates a certain interpretive dilemma, for all of them are performed within the prophet's encounter with Yahweh. Like Isaiah's temple vision, it is the prophet *alone* who experiences it. So the question is thrust upon the reader—did Ezekiel perform these actions before the exilic community, since all that is reported are the instructions to do so?<sup>243</sup> It seems best to understand most of them as having been performed before an actual audience as evidenced by the repeated injunction to 'go to the exiles' and the pronouncement that Ezekiel will be a sign to Israel.<sup>244</sup> Nevertheless, this does not preclude the possibility that Ezekiel rehearsed them before hand. Still there is a sense in which the symbolic actions were to affect Ezekiel as much as his recipients. For one, Ezekiel only 'speaks to the exiles' after an extended ordeal/encounter with glory (Ez 11:25). In this regard, Patton (2004:82) has pointed to Ezekiel's significant connection with Job and Noah as models of a 'perfectly righteous

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<sup>243</sup> Davies (1989:67-71) surveys the dialogue on this question, pressing it further: '...it is odd that there is so little indication of any public response to these actions. When we hear (through Ezekiel) of what the people think of him, it is striking that they only characterize him in terms of his *words*.' She (1989:69) concludes: 'The question of actual performance is certainly muted in Ezekiel's representation.'

<sup>244</sup> The discussion of Ezekiel as a 'sign' will be discussed below. Allen's (1994:63) statement is a good starting point: 'The description of its [Ezekiel's dumbness] as a "sign" in 24:27 indicates a verifiable, objective experience.' Allen's review (1994:60-67) of the issue is thorough and his comment above demonstrates what I conclude is a consensus—the symbolic gestures are directly related and subordinate to Ezekiel's speechlessness.

man suffering a horrible fate.’ This is most apparent by the signal command at the very end of the entire glory pericope (Ez 24:27); only when news of Jerusalem’s destruction arrives in Babylon is Ezekiel granted speech by Yahweh. Thus, the Yahweh speeches presented before chapter twenty-five imply a dress rehearsal on the part of the prophet. In order for the *son of adam* to illicit responsiveness on the part of others, the *son of adam* must be reconditioned toward proper response himself.

**5.4.1 First episode - The first symbolic gestures.** The first two symbolic gestures (Ez 2:1, 3:1ff) are exclusively for the prophet’s sake. Critically, the *voice*, the *spirit*, and the *outstretched hand*, all of which proceed unimpeded from the man on the throne of glory, initiate them all. Also, all are initiated by simple command. First, the *son of adam* is ordered to: ‘stand on your feet’ (Ez 2:1). This command is in direct contrast to the posture the prophet chose—prostrated, face down. The man on the throne, it would appear, is not in the mood for self-effacing gestures of humility. Responsiveness to injunction is particularly in view here. Both Allen (1994:86-87) and Greenberg (1983:124) have noticed the strong affinities of Ezekiel 4-6 with Leviticus 26. This being the case, the preamble (Lev 25:55) to that passage points to a call to servitude: ‘The Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’

Yahweh’s order to Ezekiel to stand further accentuates the issue of responsiveness. The word to stand, *dme*, has already been discussed in connection with glory. After all, glory in the Reed Sea account is called the *standing thing* (Ex 13:21, *dwme*), but more important is the role of standing: at attention, on guard, and readied for battle. Important in this regard is the spirit’s aid, for although the imperative is to Ezekiel, it is the spirit who entered into him and caused him to stand. This forceful compliance is the first indication that the *son of adam* did not readily volunteer for such a mission. Davies (1989:59) confers with such a view when speaking of Ezekiel’s eating of the scroll and vivid response to Yahweh’s commands: ‘These comments are less useful as clues to the prophet’s psychological condition than as self-conscious attestations to his status as the unwilling bearer of the message rather than its author... With a passion for

veracity...Ezekiel even “footnotes” his own learning process within the revelatory experience (10:13, 20).’

The next symbolic gesture within the first episode is again signaled by command, ‘open your mouth and eat what I give you’ (Ez 2:8). This command appears to be a remedy, for it immediately proceeds from the warning: ‘Do not rebel like that rebellious house.’ The word rebel, *hꝛm*, is the preferred way to speak of the wilderness debacle. It connotes more a contentious resistance and non-cooperation than apostasy.<sup>245</sup> It is often in parallel with the testing or provoking of Yahweh who is pictured as a father or husband.

Yahweh’s warning to the prophet appears warranted. Ezekiel is tempted to resist the content of the message—Zion is doomed. ‘The initial acts and speeches of Ezekiel bear the marks of modification caused by his *desolation*,’ says Greenberg (1983). If this is the case, then the commands coming from the *hꝛy-dwbk* are initially functioning to equally condition the prophet towards acquiescence. The cure for such a chronic malady of passive aggression<sup>246</sup> is for Ezekiel to ‘open your mouth and eat’ (Ez 2:8, 3:1).<sup>247</sup>

Interestingly, a similar cure for recalcitrance is offered to the Israelites grumbling about food and water in the Desert of Sin (Ex 16ff).<sup>248</sup> There, Yahweh assures them that upon eating manna in the morning: ‘you will see the glory of the Lord’ (Ex 16:6) and ‘you will know that I am the Yahweh your God’ (Ex 16:12). As with the Israelites in the wilderness, so it will be with Ezekiel. Eating what God has provided both *indicts* and *cures* the recipient.

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<sup>245</sup> BDB pg 598

<sup>246</sup> Greenberg (1983:123) solves many of the questions raised by the symbolic acts by attributing the cause to Ezekiel’s ‘intimidated personality.’ Although not taking it as far as Greenberg, my thesis that glory is working to condition the prophet as well as his audience is based on a not-so-obvious resistance, passive aggressive.

<sup>247</sup> Greenberg (1983:73) confers: ‘The passage is an implicit dialogue in which the iterations of God’s command to eat answer precisely to stages in the prophet’s apprehensiveness and incredulity...the eating of the scroll is as much a test of the prophet’s obedience, in contrast to the people...as a stocking of the prophet with a content by which to counter the defiant words of the people.’

<sup>248</sup> Von Rad (1962 :283) expressly connects the manna story with Israel’s evolutionary view of the wilderness from positive to its most negative ‘devastating verdict’ (Ez 20). For von Rad, Ezekiel’s view of the wilderness as ‘a type and pattern of the coming judgment’ probably would apply in miniature to the manna incident.

These first two symbolic gestures of Ezekiel in response to the voice of Yahweh most clearly point to a converting and conditioning of a reluctant recruit. The next series of symbolic actions continue to function this way for Ezekiel, but with an additional aim of drawing others into his experience.

**5.4.1.1. The next and most prominent symbolic gesture in the first episode** is found in a cycle of them spiraling around the central theme of the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>249</sup> These proceed after the three decisive moves of glory discussed above where Ezekiel's movement mirrored that of glory, implying that Ezekiel's behavior among the exiles mirrors that of glory in Jerusalem. The symbolic actions more immediately proceed from yet another time when the spirit must enter and raise the *son of adam* in order to aid his sluggishness (Ez 3:24). At this time, Yahweh shuts the mouth of the prophet, causing him to be dumb. This seems ironic in light of Yahweh's command for the prophet to open his mouth. The closed mouth of Ezekiel holds a double purpose: first, it is a sign for others.<sup>250</sup> It provides a visual of what Israel looks like from Yahweh's perspective: closed and unresponsive; second, it mimics Yahweh's posture, for Yahweh is not going to answer them (Ez 8:18); a season of reproof in hopes of turning things around has passed. The *son of adam* is made to empathize with both an angry god and a wayward people. Abraham Heshel (1962:21) says it well: 'His (the prophet) true greatness is his ability to hold God and man in a single thought.'

This series of symbolic gestures (Ez 4:1-5:4) brings home the point—for the moment, both Yahweh and Ezekiel will speak through actions rather than words.<sup>251</sup> But Ezekiel's gestures function to prepare his listeners toward receptivity, for the 'hwhy ynda rma

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<sup>249</sup> Literary outline IV

<sup>250</sup> The silence of Ezekiel is the topic of vigorous debate partly because of the tension with *when* he actually spoke to the people (Ez 24:27) or how he conveyed his message (hence Davies' (1989:127) thesis that it was mainly written). Greenberg (1983:120f) does not see it as a sign per se, but more of a concession to Ezekiel being so overwhelmed by the message of doom that he is incapacitated. Even so, he (1983:102) admits that the people would read into it that Yahweh has given up trying to reprove them.

<sup>251</sup> The question as to whether Ezekiel prophesied to the people along with these acts will be clarified under the discussion of 'sign' below. Allen views the sign-acts functioned to 'reinforce the prophetic word.' I disagree with this simply on sequential grounds—the sign-acts come first in the literary structure and we may assume in Ezekiel's experience. They are there to condition the listener to receptivity, and they were an integral part of the message.

hk' prophecies immediately proceed from these symbolic actions.<sup>252</sup> The glory initiated symbolic gestures serve first to convert and condition a reluctant priest toward receptivity and responsiveness. In turn and simultaneously, they perform in the same way towards the prophet's audience.

The first series of symbolic gestures are centered on two essential commands from Yahweh: first, the son of *adam* is to 'lay siege' (Ez 4:2); second, he is to 'take balances for weighing and divide' (Ez 5:1). With the symbolic gestures the unique iconic role of the son of *adam* as a mirrored image of glory is further accented. For just as glory stands and acts as a conduit between heaven and earth, Yahweh's enemies and His allies, Jerusalem and Babylon, so does the son of *adam*.

That the son of *adam* is an icon of glory is especially revealed when examining the triad of roles he plays in the symbolic gestures, for the son of *adam* assumes both the character of Yahweh and his people. Indeed, it can be said that the son of *adam* as a third character in the dramatic portrayals is created from the fusing together of the other two. Greenberg (1983:127) effectively says as much:

In view of the ambiguous role of the prophet in these acts—now he seems to be the people, now God, now himself—one is inclined to see the people (we can imagine the prophet wasting away as the months wore on), of sympathy with God's passion, and a deflection upon himself of anger at the hostile people for having driven him into withdrawal.

**5.4.1.2. The first cycle of sign acts of the siege.**<sup>253</sup> In the first cycle of sign acts (Ez 4:1-8) the son of *adam* assumes Yahweh's role. The first cycle is divided into three basic signs: a mock up siege of Jerusalem, a lying bound on the left side, and then a lying bound on the right side. The summary statement sandwiches the three symbolic gestures

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<sup>252</sup> Greenberg (1983:120) notes, as I have, that the structure of the symbolic actions is intended to set up the speeches that follow. He even suggests 'they were intended as the verbal accompaniment of the actions (which were to go on day after day), its repetitive, spiraling quality would be very appropriate.'

<sup>253</sup> Refer to literary outline V



in: ‘turn your face towards Jerusalem’ (Ez 4:3, 7).<sup>254</sup> In the first sign act (Ez 4:1-3), the son of *adam* stunningly portrays Yahweh, not Nebuchadnezzar, as the one who is (or who will be) commanding the siege of Jerusalem.

The battle image is effectively dramatized by the rapid-fire imperatives coming from Yahweh—‘take,’ ‘put,’ ‘lay siege,’ ‘erect,’ ‘build.’ Truly the son of man is to implement the battle strategy of his commander without delay. This battle scenario plays out similarly to that of the Reed Sea incident (Ex 14:12ff). Seemingly incapacitated and trapped (like Ezekiel, Ez 3:24f) the Israelites cry out. Yahweh’s response appears insensitive: ‘Why are you crying out to me?’ (Ex 14:15). What follows is a command to immediately implement Yahweh’s battle plan. Through this act, the Israelites joyously discover that ‘Yahweh is a warrior!’ (Ex 15:3).

The following two sign acts, lying bound on the left (Ez 4:4-5) and then on the right side (Ez 4:6-8), are also accompanied by their interpretive meaning—to bear the sins of Israel and Judah. The bearing of the sins act creates several interpretive difficulties,<sup>255</sup> so I offer my interpretation tentatively. Pertinent to my discussion is the question of the subject of the ‘bearing of sin.’ It is clear that the sign act before and after has Yahweh as the subject. Since verse 4:8 is a recapitulation of the first three sign acts, a dramatic shift of subject only occurs in verse nine. This means Ezekiel is portraying Yahweh as the bearer of iniquity in this sign act.

Several considerations lend to reading the sin bearing acts this way. First, Block (1997.178) supports the numbers (390 days, 40 days) to be retrospect not futuristic. Hence the days cover all the years of the monarchy starting with Solomon. Second, although the verb, *avn*, can mean to bear responsibility or be accountable for, it can also mean, as in the case of priestly maintenance of the cult, to take responsibility for by

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<sup>254</sup> For Greenberg (1983:104), this is ‘a command that often precedes the text of a prophetic harangue...this appears more clearly in vs. 7, in which the prophet is ordered not only to “direct his face” toward the besieged city but to “prophecy against it.” The symbolic actions are explicitly a part of the prophecy (1983:120).

<sup>255</sup> See Block (1997.176-179) for review.

compensating for the troublesome assembly.<sup>256</sup> This use is found in Ezekiel 36:6 where the mountains bore the shame of Israel's sin.<sup>257</sup> Importantly, it is the priests who share with Yahweh this putting up with the shameful behavior of the Israelites.<sup>258</sup> The idea of Yahweh bearing (putting up with) a contentious, refractory people is certainly common in the wilderness story. Curiously then, the binding of the son of *adam* by Yahweh that follows (Ez 4:8) reflects not only that Yahweh was bound by His commitment to suffer with Israel's sinfulness, but that He is bound to turn His face against it for the same reason. Greenberg (1983:124) reads Ezekiel's sign acts in this way, and takes it a degree further: 'From the prophet's angle, this means that the sin and God's siege had been going on together for centuries, were still going on, and would continue until the allotted term was filled.' Once again one purpose for the glory visions is evident—Yahweh is providing a case *for* Jerusalem's destruction more than a picture *of* it.<sup>259</sup>

Ezekiel assumes a shift in character in the proceeding series of commands centered on the food arrangements of the siege (Ez 4:9ff). Clearly, he portrays the plight of the Jerusalemites mainly under siege, but also of exile. There are two things of note here. First, the food instructions are for the time Ezekiel is laying on his side for 390 days. So here, the son of *adam* plays the roles of both Yahweh and his people. Second, as in the Desert of Sin incident (Ex 16), the eating of food is an indictment.

There is an even more critical feature of the food sign, for in it, a third character is revealed—the son of *adam* characterizes the whole situation.<sup>260</sup> He depicts the relationship between the two, for the relationship between Yahweh and His people has

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<sup>256</sup> Patton (2004:85) sees this as the role of the priest: 'who atones for the sins of the people.'

<sup>257</sup> Habel (2004:134) discusses the 'unjust' and innocent suffering of the mountains (Ez 6:1-14). This can be connected to Patton's (Patton 2004:82) view of Ezekiel as a righteous or innocent sufferer of Yahweh's judgment. The mountains too innocently bear the brunt of Israel's sins.

<sup>258</sup> In Exodus 28:28 Aaron was to bear the names of the sons of Israel on a breastplate as a memorial. Numbers 18:1 is also significant because the priests were to bear responsibility for sins by proper temple maintenance. Along with this is a notion of putting up with, enduring. In Exodus 18:22 and Numbers 11:17 *avn* means to share or help carry a burden, which in Numbers references the Israelites' contentiousness.

<sup>259</sup> As Albertz (2003:356): '...the book offers a theological explanation of why this destruction could take place.'

<sup>260</sup> Greenberg (1983:126) suggests that the eating sign here: 'represents the static exilic situation of the whole community.'

become despicable, reprehensive, and appalling (Ez 4:17). Heshel (1962.6) confirms such a view of the prophets, when he states:

The prophet does not see the human situations in and by itself. The predicament of man is a predicament of God Who has a stake in the human situation. Sin, guilt, suffering, cannot be separated from the divine situation. The life of sin is more than a failure of man; it is a frustration to God.

In a sense, Yahweh has raised up the son of *adam* to be a spectacle or exhibition of Yahweh's long and agonizing relationship with His people. Just as the ark in the Holies of Holies was the icon of Yahweh's glorious victories over his enemies, so now the son of *adam* signifies the struggle over His enemies.<sup>261</sup> When the exiles look upon Ezekiel—bound, speechless, despondent by polarized emotions of anger and love, eating defiled food—they too might be aghast at how bad things have gotten. Perhaps they will be as appalled by the degenerate state of their relationship with their god as Yahweh is.

**5.4.1.3. The second cycle of sign acts in the first episode** is centered around the command to take a set of weights and divide (Ez 5:1-4). Ezekiel enacts the end result of the siege. Here again, the double-sided role of the son of *adam* comes into view, for the son of adam is to shave *himself*. Thus Ezekiel portrays a captured exile whose hair is shaved *and* a conqueror whose sweeping victories over cities shaves the land bare.<sup>262</sup> The central sign is of weighing out and dividing. Deciding the fate of a city's inhabitants was the first task of the victor.<sup>263</sup> Clearly, Ezekiel images Yahweh here. Lest there be any doubt the extent of Yahweh's involvement and intentions, a further pronouncement is made especially to those who might think to have escaped the siege: 'I will pursue them' (Ez 5:2). As noted in the previous chapter, *hwly-dwbk* performs a dividing, separating

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<sup>261</sup> The concept of being an 'enemy of God' was a critical component of Paul's theology, and it certainly follows the perspective discussed here—a perpetual breaching of covenant that had turned the relationship between a god and his people into a hostile one. Kutsko (2000a:104ff) documents well the idea of a god turning against his own adherents, 'divine abandonment,' because of sin was well known in the Ancient Near East, especially in Mesopotamia.

<sup>262</sup> Isaiah 7:20

<sup>263</sup> de Vaux (1965.256) 'People, as well as things, fell into the hands of the victor.'

act.<sup>264</sup> Once again, the son of *adam* mirrors or reflects glory. In the inaugural vision, the *hwhy*-*dwbk* dramatically wedged itself between the encampments in Jerusalem and Babylon, clearly demarcating the battle lines and making a decisive and victorious move over the enemy. Here in this sign act, the son of *adam* lives out that same reality.

**5.4.2. The second episode - The last two sign acts** within the glory pericope dramatize the aftermath of the siege, the sacking of the city (Ez 12:1-19). Like before, the two acts are performed within a series of rapid-fire commands. Ezekiel plays two roles particularly targeting those who might be thinking that they have escaped the carnage. Unlike before, however, these actions are not within the vision (Ez 11:24); now they are clearly performed among the exiles. Most significantly, the presence of Ezekiel in Babylon is paralleled with the ‘glory of Yahweh’ in Jerusalem (Ez. 11:23-24). Just as the glory of Yahweh ‘went up from within the city and stood above the mountain,’ so Ezekiel was lifted up by the Spirit and brought to the exiles.

In the first act, Ezekiel is to ‘pack for exile’ (Ez 12:2ff). The explanation of the action clearly ‘represent dynamically the exile of the king and his entourage’ (Greenberg 1983:126), who is called ‘the prince among them’ (Ez 12:12). Here, the son of *adam* plays a royal figure, the prince of Jerusalem,<sup>265</sup> as well as a corporate one, the house of Israel (Ez 12:10). The second act depicts those who are left in the land, the ‘people of the land.’ Lest they imagine that once everything settles down, the land will be theirs and Yahweh’s favor will be with them, Ezekiel depicts their situation as full of fear and trembling. Again, it is in the eating and drinking that those left in the land will: ‘will know that I am Yahweh’ (Ez 12:20).

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<sup>264</sup> Greenberg (1983:126) points to a three-fold act of dividing as a sign of the thoroughness of the judgment, as comparative with Moses’ destruction of the golden calf (Ex 32:20, see also Zech. 13:8f). One can also notice in the 3-fold movements of glory (see literary outline) that each one ends with a separation.

<sup>265</sup> Tuell (2000:104) uses his discussion of *ayvn* as demonstrative of Ezekiel’s anti-royal agenda. Ezekiel’s choice of *ayvn* over *Klm*, however does not necessarily lead in this direction. My contention is that for Ezekiel, *ayvn* more accurately describes what kings of Israel should be in regards to Yahweh’s kingship. The ‘son of adam’ becomes a model of Yahweh’s *ideal* king.

## 5.5 Son of Adam as a Sign

The son of *adam* is molded by his encounters with glory into a mirrored image of it. The symbolic actions and prophetic speech of Ezekiel parallel the appearance of glory and Yahweh speeches. What glory was in the visions to Ezekiel, Ezekiel was becoming for the exiles. Although Greenberg (1983:123) does not draw the same conclusions as I, he does notice that a process of emergence is clearly presented by Ezekiel's interactions with the *hwhy-dwbk*. 'There seems to be a record here of Ezekiel's gradual return to his environment, after an initial period of extreme withdrawal from it.' Greenberg (1983:123) attributes this to Ezekiel's 'intimidated personality.'<sup>266</sup> What is presented here is that the glory pericope give testimony to a process of Ezekiel's self-understanding especially through his personal ordeals, and that process was incorporated into the message and was part of it.

Ezekiel is designated a *sign*, which provides the clearest summary description of his role. More than anything else, the son of *adam* was a sign, and it was his encounter with the glory of Yahweh that made it so. The designation of a sign in conjunction with Ezekiel's dramatic portrayals happens three times within the glory pericope, and there is a clear progression to the sign pronouncements and to what is meant by them.

**5.5.1. The first mention of a sign** (Ez 4:3) coincides with Ezekiel's dramatization of the siege of Jerusalem (Ez 4:3). This sign has several characteristics that distinguish it from the next two. First, the demonstrative *ayh* ('this will be a sign') indicates that the dramatization is the sign, not necessarily Ezekiel. Allen (1994:64) clearly outlines 'siege warfare' being dramatized: '...this representational assembly of a grim war game.' It is the 'scene' that is being represented. He reviews the various views as to the nature of 'signs' from 'street theatre' to a magical-type efficacy. Allen (1994:64) holds a similar view to Greenberg (1983:122) that the sign-acts are an inseparable part of the prophecy.

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<sup>266</sup> Greenberg's perspective is appreciated here for his willingness to integrate the personal make up of the prophet into understanding the text.

The issue of the intended target of this first ‘sign’ and whether Ezekiel spoke oracles along with them must resume here. The fact that Ezekiel is depicting a scene perhaps reveals Ezekiel’s propensity to be aloof and uninvolved, as perhaps many exiles were. This disposition Yahweh must forcefully dispel. An audience is mentioned (Ez 4:12), but this is incidental in comparison to the attention given to Ezekiel’s objection that follows (Ez 4:14-15). Ezekiel objects to the extremes of Yahweh’s commands. That Yahweh wants Ezekiel to do this in public only serves to push Ezekiel to a crisis, like a parent insisting a child perform in front of adults.

I agree with Greenberg (1983:130) that there must have been oracles that accompanied the gestures based on Yahweh’s direct command to ‘prophecy’ (Ez 6:2). Two things, however, should modify what is being emphasized here. The fact that Ezekiel’s prophecies are to the mountains (Ez 6:1) and to the land (Ez 7:1) points to circumlocution.<sup>267</sup> The real audience is only indirectly being addressed. Second, the prophetic speeches oddly switch back and forth between second and third person (Ez 5:6f; 6:7f; 7:3; 7:9f). Yahweh, it would appear, must first explain to Ezekiel the meaning of such gestures. Why? Is it Ezekiel who doesn’t understand yet? Ezekiel’s reluctance, so prominent to Greenberg’s understanding, can refer to more than his fear of public confrontation. He may, in fact, not *believe* Yahweh yet himself. Ezekiel probably did perform these signs and prophecy with them, albeit intermittently as Greenberg (1983:121)<sup>268</sup> suggests. But this was done as equally for Ezekiel to accept the unacceptable as it was for his audience. That the passage indicates secondary revisions by the exilic community<sup>269</sup> reveals the importance of Ezekiel as a model for those struggling,

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<sup>267</sup> Block (1997:222) states: ‘Although Ezekiel’s real audience consisted of his fellow exiles, and his primary goal was their mental and spiritual transformation...for rhetorical purposes he pretends to address a third party.’ Allen (1994:86) suggests a ‘nostalgic’ longing for the loss of grandeur that was the gift of God to his people.’ Put together, along with Greenberg’s (1983:123) insistence that Ezekiel had a hard time ‘facing his audience,’ Ezekiel’s mixture of emotions is understandably being projected on an inanimate audience.’

<sup>268</sup> For Greenberg (1983:121), the news of Jerusalem’s fall ‘released’ him from his reluctance to engage the exilic community and Yahweh’s concession to Ezekiel’s propensity to withdraw. The news enacted: ‘the restoration of the prophet to normal intercourse with his neighbors [and] reflected and expressed the great turn of God toward his people.’

<sup>269</sup> Allen (1994:55-57)

as did the prophet, to come to grips with an inconceivable perspective. How comforting to know that the bearer of the message resisted its truth himself.

Two other considerations help determine the sign's connotation here (Ez 4:3). The audience is designated simply the 'house of Israel' which includes both those in Jerusalem and Babylon. Along with this, the sign act is presented within the vision, leaving ambiguity as to its real-to-life correspondence. Last, this sign is not necessarily designed to provoke an immediate interrogation on the part of the audience (What does this mean?) as much as to answer a question or doubt—what will happen to Zion? This question could have just as easily come from the prophet even after his encounter with the glory of the Lord.

In this regard, the dramatization is called *htwa*. A sign in this sense connotes mostly the idea of providing assurance or reassurance (an omen) to a wavering constituent. It especially applies to a crisis of decision. The prime examples are the signs provided to Pharaoh to prompt him into letting the Israelites go (Ex 7:3) and to the Israelites to prompt them into trusting Moses (Ex 4:1f). Also, Isaiah and his children were signs to a wavering Ahaz (Isa 7-8). Signs of this kind can be ordinary objects, but usually refer to ordinary events that have an odd, extraordinary correspondence with the crisis at hand. An *htwa* can provide a reliable indicator either of protection and victory or disaster and defeat, in this case the curses of the covenant (Lev 26). As in the case of the signs to Pharaoh, they provided both. Greenberg (1983:122) states a sign: 'represents a present or future but impending event.' Most important, however, it is a visual display that accompanies and adds authority to a spoken word. Hence in Pharaoh's case, signs were provided in order to promote the right decision. Often, as with Pharaoh and others, the sign is refused. What is ultimately at stake in Pharaoh's case is a matter of kingship: Yahweh's or Pharaoh's

**5.5.2. In the next sign statement (Ez 12:10), significant changes are evident. This time it is more evident that the sign act was to be carried out in real life among the exiles; it is no longer within the context of a vision (Ez 11:24f). It is addressing the end result of the**

siege. This time the target of the dramatization is more clearly and narrowly defined—‘the prince of Jerusalem (a clear reference to Zedekiah) and the whole house of Israel who are there’ (Ez 12:10). Even though the target refers to the Jerusalemites, the sign’s intended effect is strictly for the exiles. Here another difference appears; this time, the sign act incites interrogation—‘what are you doing’ (Ez 12:8). This time the prophet makes it clear. It is not only the dramatization that is the sign, but also the prophet himself: ‘I am a sign to you’ (Ez 12:11).<sup>270</sup>

This time the word is *ṭpwm*. It is synonymous with *htwa* with two added dimensions—*ṭpwm* places greater emphasis on ‘a special display of God’s power,’<sup>271</sup> and only *ṭpwm* is used to reference a person, a use shared only with Isaiah (8:18) and the post-exilic high priest (Zech 3:8). As such, *ṭpwm* connotes not only an object of wonder—evoking awe, bewilderment, or consternation—but also a living sign—provided by Yahweh and carried in perpetuity. Block (1997:792) states:

‘...the portent or ‘sign’ points to a symbolic meaning for the prophet’s experience, analogous to *mens’* in which observable natural phenomena mysteriously portend historical or persona events with which they have no real connection...In the environment in which people were constantly looking for signs, the designation and the declaration focused attention on the prophet himself, enabling the man to transform his intense personal tragedy into a message of much more serious consequence for his hearers.’

Just as the *hwhy-dwbk* became a monsternce for Ezekiel of Yahweh’s presence and involvement in Israel’s life, both for judgment and salvation, Ezekiel is transformed into a similar ‘omen’ among the exiles. Ezekiel, like glory in the visions, is becoming a guiding, guarding, confronting, and dividing presence for the exiles. The son of *adam* is becoming the icon of *hwhy-dwbk*.

Even more important, this kind of presence can hardly be considered benign, for Yahweh’s signs and wonders are always mentioned within a battle context: ‘You brought

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<sup>270</sup> Greenberg (1983:122) notes the switch.

<sup>271</sup> BDB pg 68



your people Israel out of Egypt with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm and with great terror' (Jer 32:21). As with Pharaoh or Ahaz, so it is also with the exiles; signs and wonders are a frontal assault on recalcitrant response: 'They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people' (Ez 12:2). Signs are meant to convuls and consternate its target into reconsidering the current course. The presentation of the son of *adam* provokes inquisition, for he incites the response: 'What are you doing?' (Ez 12:8) or even more so 'What do these things have to do with us?' (Ez 24:19).

**5.5.3. By the last mention of the son of *adam* as a sign (Ez 24:15-27)**, it is the son of *adam*'s real life and his own suffering that is involved. Here he represents Yahweh, the exiles, and their relationship, but he is no longer enacting a part. Now his own life and circumstances are the sign.<sup>272</sup> Here, there is no dramatization, but a simple obedience with stunning effect. All through the glory visions Yahweh has set the stage for battle.<sup>273</sup> Yahweh's attack is swift and terrible. Oddly, however, Yahweh strikes the son of *adam* first: 'Son of *adam*, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes' (Ez 23:16). The word, *hpgm*, mostly references an injurious, fatal blow. It is the word used to reference the decisive defeat in battle. It is especially associated with the definitive sign to Pharaoh when Yahweh *struck* the firstborn Egyptians (Ex 12:23). The son of *adam* now takes on the long-suffering of Yahweh and becomes the sign of the way out. Salvation comes to those who empathize with Yahweh's grief.<sup>274</sup>

It is the suffering of the son of *adam* where all the warring parties find their common ground, for each character is epitomized in him. This last sign act is only a culmination of a lengthy ordeal on the part of the son of *adam* brought on by Ezekiel's encounter with

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<sup>272</sup> Greenberg (1983:122) attributes Ezekiel as a 'portent' for the people as representing an entire situation. Ezekiel plays out in his own life what he had witnessed the *hwhy-dwbk* do in the supranatural realm.

<sup>273</sup> I have attempted to show this out especially in the comparisons to Exodus 14. Allen (1994:86) tends to view the prophecies within the glory pericope in similar combatative terms especially because of the stylistic and structural similarities with Leviticus 26, wherein Yahweh 'will bring a sword against you' the predominant feature of Yahweh's curse.

<sup>274</sup> There is no reason to cast such spurious doubt, as does Halperin, over the phrase 'delight of your eyes,' concluding that Ezekiel 'unconsciously wished' for her death as a product of Ezekiel's psychosis. This view fails to notice the convergence of characters portrayed in this last sign-act.

the *hwhy-dwbk*. Ezekiel is commanded by God not to mourn the death of his wife (Ez 24:16f). In the speech that follows (Ez 24:20-24), Yahweh explains that he *alone* will strike Jerusalem; *He* will destroy it. Then in one small statement the convergence of roles finds their embodiment in the son of adam—‘you will do as I have done’ (Ez 24:22). Who is the ‘I’ in this statement: Yahweh or the son of *adam*? Mysteriously, it is both. First and foremost it is Yahweh who has stopped mourning for the delight of his eyes. Then Yahweh commands the son of *adam* to do the same. Finally, future Israel, the ones looking for a guiding light in their horror of darkness, find one in the sign—look at the son of *adam*, look to him, and *do* as the son of *adam* is doing (Ez 24:23f).

In the sign, all the key players in the crisis—Yahweh, the exiles, the competing parties in Jerusalem, glory, the king, the elders, the princes, and the people of the land—converge and are embodied in the son of *adam*. The situation—an unresponsive people and Yahweh’s battle with them—converge in the sign as well.

## 5.6 Summary

All that the *hwhy-dwbk* is and what it was doing find their culmination in the summary statement closing off the glory section of the book of Ezekiel: ‘At that time your mouth will be opened; you will speak with them and will no longer be silent. You will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am Yahweh’ (Ez 24:27). By Yahweh’s own design and through the primary image of glory, Yahweh has stepped into the situation as a warrior king. First through the storm cloud but then through the son of *adam*, Yahweh reveals himself as a fighter just as He did at the Reed Sea (Ex 14:14). Primarily, glory first encounters a despondent priest of exile in order to make him into the son of *adam*<sup>275</sup>—a sign, an icon, a mirrored replica of the glory of Yahweh, a living image of Yahweh’s willingness to fight for His most valued treasure, his people. Just as the ark in the Holies of Holies was the rallying icon of Yahweh’s victories over his enemies, the signature of his right and ability to lead and rule, and the physical, real effigy of

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<sup>275</sup> Odell’s (2000:214-218) directly connects the term ‘son of adam’ with ‘sign,’ and summarizes: ‘Far from diminishing human activity, this dimension of Ezekiel’s involvement suggests that divine activity must be incarnate.’

Yahweh's on-going encounter with His covenant community, so the son of *adam* becomes in the land of shame. It was Ezekiel's encounter with the *hwhy-dwbk* that made him into a spitting image of it.

Hence, the son of *adam* is the image of the Yahweh's kingship in partnership with human leadership. He is the picture that true Yahwism had always hoped the kings of Israel would be—an obedient, devoted vassal to Yahweh's kingship. He was to be one who would rule righteously and defend and protect Yahweh's possession. David's sons were depending solely on Yahweh's strength and cultivate the living relationship between Yahweh and his constituency.

The son of *adam* serves as model of Israelite kingship. Just as the king as an adopted son epitomized the symbiosis of Yahweh's kingship (Ps 2, 110) with his vassal servant, his sanctuary and his people, so Yahweh makes the 'son of man' display the same in exile. Through his encounter with glory, he becomes like glory: a sign, a guide, a definitive icon of Yahweh's Presence and rule in a foreign place.



## 6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 The Hypothesis Revisited

There is little doubt that the *hwby-dwbk* plays a pivotal role in Ezekiel's life and ministry and in the book called by his name. For the prophet then, Yahweh critically addressed the turbulent and volatile years leading up to and immediately following Jerusalem's fall by a dramatic, forceful, yet gracious intervention by the *hwby-dwbk*. Just as the *hwby-dwbk* is *the orientation* of the book, finding its fundamental structure by it, and the prophet's *primary referent* and impetus for engagement, so it was meant for the exilic community (and any reader). As envisioned by Ezekiel, the *hwby-dwbk* is the monstrance or icon of both Yahweh's presence and his involvement in the crisis of exile. By primarily relating to Zion's most treasured symbol of Yahweh's kingship with the people of Israel, the ark within the Holy of Holies, Ezekiel reinforces two of Zion's most salient features necessary for Israel's survival—Yahweh as Warrior able to actively mobilize, engage, and confront His enemies and Yahweh as King able to establish, confirm, defend, and govern over a people.

The hypothesis, here, presented Ezekiel's vision of the *hwby-dwbk* not as a radical rejection of or antithesis to Yahweh's choice of Zion and his promise to David. The employment of a *kabod theology* by Ezekiel was not intended to revolutionize, in the sense of a radical overturning, what Israel had realized in nearly a millennia of existence. Ezekiel's use of the *hwby-dwbk* was more adaptive than subversive. The *hwby-dwbk* did not usher in a superior, more enlightened replacement of Zion and David as his vassal; rather, it stood as an interim surrogate with the son of *adam* as its vassal. This approach, in my view, comes from what king David accomplished when he brought the ark to Jerusalem; he synthesized Israel's earlier exodus/wilderness, conquest, and tribal league traditions and history into an innovative approach to monarchical rule. Yes, there were tensions and polarities between them and with developing notions around the

Davidic monarchy,<sup>276</sup> but they were always held in a dynamic tension, one never denying the other. The ark was the definitive unifying icon for all polarities (admittedly as the Jerusalem cult wanted it to be seen). It subordinated all traditions to Israel's greatest innovation that Yahweh *alone* can be their king.<sup>277</sup>

That Ezekiel employed the imagery of the Ark, especially with its association with the *hwhy-dwbk*, was not an attempt to defend Zion traditions per se. I suggest it was simply the natural starting point for a Jerusalem priest turned prophet. Terrien (1983:212) asserts: 'Ezekiel's insistence in comparing the vision of the return of the glory (Ez 43:3 not only with the previous vision of the its departure (Ez 9:1) but also with this inaugural vision of the heavenly chariot...reinforces the thesis of his kinship with the Jerusalem priesthood.' Indeed it was Ezekiel's only paradigm in which to forcefully and emphatically insist that despite all circumstances and appearances, Yahweh was not absent or captive because of the exile; instead, He was at the very center.

Ezekiel's use of imagery from the temple demonstrated the extent in which he tried to address a vision problem both in Jerusalem and Babylon. Ezekiel does not, as some suppose, repudiate all imagery in order to force the point that the Israelites are relying on false imagery. Rather, he hearkens back to Israel's archetypal icon—the ark, symbol par excellence of Yahweh's demonstrative ability to defend, guide, judge, and rule over his people. By his very description of the *hwhy-dwbk* he pulls in the full array of symbolic elements that had become associated with it. The actions and movement of *hwhy-dwbk* are paralleled with Yahweh's classic battle maneuver at the Reed Sea, reminding the Israelites of what had been a central notion of Israel's sense of itself—Yahweh is a Warrior, one who alone can fight his enemies.

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<sup>276</sup> Brueggemann (1988:xi) addresses this tension in his book, *Israel's Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology*: '...the proposed world of Yahwistic faith, marked by righteousness, equity, and truth, becomes skewed by royal management. The Psalms then are distorted to symbolize a god (idol) who cannot act, and a social system (ideology) that cannot change or be criticized.'

<sup>277</sup> Although Brueggemann (1988:xi) discusses 'distortions' of Yahwism brought on by royal agendas, he insists that the Psalms still give witness to a 'peculiar...world [where] the Psalms of ancient Israel make available under the rubric of the *Kingship of Yahweh*.'

## 6.2 Summary

Several things had to be established in order to demonstrate the validity of the perspective presented above. Chapter two addressed the relationship between the literary work called by his name and the life and times of Ezekiel. Several perimeters for interpreting the hwhy-dwbk pericope of Ezekiel 1-24 were considered.

First, the possibility of an overarching agenda of the book was explored through the structure of the book and the highlight of unique literary features. A central *kerygma* is evident, and it is fundamentally theological—attempting to place Yahweh, the god of Israel, not just as *a player* in the crisis of Jerusalem’s demise and the exile, but *the player* in it. In essence, the book attempts to answer fundamental questions provoked by a monumental crisis, but decisively from one perspective—Yahweh’s. This is primarily done through the vision of the hwhy-dwbk. To the question where is God in this, Yahweh answers: right in the middle of it. As to what is going on, the prophet depicts a Yahweh war of exodus proportions. Why is this happening or who is to blame? In comparison to Yahweh, it is all of Israel from the wilderness of Sinai onward including Ezekiel’s contemporaries whether still in the land of Israel or in exile. Where shall the Israelites go from here or what shall they do? The response—Yahweh is making a decisive break with Israel’s sinful past, and as much as one can visualize the *glory of the Lord* both in and through the *son of adam*, Israel can begin to prepare itself for a new beginning.

Second, chapter two asserted the close proximity of the text to the early years of the exile and the prophet Ezekiel. The immediate audience of Ezekiel’s message was the *golah* in Babylon. The personal ordeal of an Ezekiel son of Buzi in the tumultuous years leading up to Zion’s destruction had a profound impact well into the exile and the prophet’s life. Ezekiel’s impact is revealed in the coloring or characterization of him by other’s who contributed to the makeup of the book. For those compiling and editing the book, Ezekiel had become an iconic presence of the very thing he claimed to have seen--hwhy-dwbk.

Chapter three explained the iconic composition of the hwhy-dwbk in terms of how it Ezekiel encountered it and how it was described literarily. Ezekiel's connection with Israel's exodus/wilderness and ark traditions were discerned, especially the incorporation of theophanic elements within those traditions. The hwhy-dwbk of Ezekiel chapters 1-11 was identified in terms of both a phenomenological encounter by the prophet and a literary depiction of it. Both were intended to have a profound impact on those confronted by it.

Ezekiel employs imagery from Israel's encounters with their god in his description of the hwhy-dwbk. It is presented in three progressive transparent layers. First, Ezekiel conjures up the theophanic imagery from Israel's experience of Yahweh's victory at the Reed Sea and revelation at Mt. Sinai, especially its association with a fiery dark cloud. It is a full-sensory experience, an approaching storm cloud, replete with Yahweh speaking to the prophet. Imagery of Israel's liturgical rehearsal of the theophanies in relationship to Yahweh's kingship on Zion are mingled in with the description of the hwhy-dwbk as a churning radiance originating from a man on a throne and emanating throughout the storm cloud. These distinctive features were incorporated in traditions of prophetic vision. By means of prophetic vision, Ezekiel had a phenomenological and personal encounter with the hwhy-dwbk. Ezekiel's encounter is conveyed to the broader exilic community through their encounter with the personal ordeal of Ezekiel and through the literary and liturgical rehearsal of it.

Hence a uniform perception was created, intending to impress and evoke—what a true icon should do. Ezekiel and the exiles are reminded of Yahweh as Warrior (Ex 15:3), able and ready to 'fight.' In unequivocal terms, Yahweh is not defeated or retreating. Conjuring up Yahweh war imagery from Israel's exodus, conquest of the land, and its romantic rehearsal of it within the liturgical tradition of Zion, Ezekiel creates a composite image for the scattered to direct their attention towards. Thus the visual encounter with the hwhy-dwbk provides a surrogate icon to the central and rallying icon of Yahweh's Presence—the ark in the holies of Holies—no longer present on Zion. In so doing, the



hwhy-dwbk not only preserves but also reasserts the traditions around Zion. Chief among them is that Yahweh is King, enthroned in majesty and able to defend his people.

By following the literary structure of the glory pericope, Chapter four reiterated the iconic nature of the hwhy-dwbk by ascertaining its roles or functions. The hwhy-dwbk functioned first to illumine or guide those who were lost or disorientated amidst the crisis. In this respect, the Ezekiel's elaboration description of hwhy-dwbk demonstrated its iconic function as essential not superfluous. It was argued that Israel held to a peculiar version of Ancient Near Eastern iconism, and once again Ezekiel's Zionism shaped how he 'sees' the hwhy-dwbk operating within the exilic context. For Ezekiel, there was only one image/icon that adequately expressed the unique relationship between Yahweh as king and warrior and to which Israel could be guided by—the Ark.

This being the case, Ezekiel also views the hwhy-dwbk as confronting alternative or competing versions of Israel's central rallying icon of Yahweh's presence and involvement in the crisis. Once again and especially here, Ezekiel conjures up images of Yahweh's seminal victory at the Reed Sea seeing the hwhy-dwbk in his vision as acting in a similar fashion to the *Nne dwme* before the armies of Pharaoh. Ezekiel understands the vision of the hwhy-dwbk as definitively defeating other versions of Yahweh's whereabouts precisely because it is the real-to-life authentic representation, *twmd* harm, of Yahweh's Presence. In the glory episodes, this is revealed to Ezekiel not just because of what glory was but what he saw it doing. He sees Yahweh through his *dwbk* battling and defeating His enemy, which had become recalcitrant Israel. In progressive maneuvers of the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel sees Yahweh decisively single out and defeat his enemy in classic Yahweh war fashion. Through glory, Yahweh first singles out *His* enemy and fights him *alone*. Ezekiel's vision of what the hwhy-dwbk is doing reverberates from Israel's war tradition as it had become encapsulated in the Ark in Zion and the liturgical celebration of it there.

The final function of the hwhy-dwbk in Ezekiel's vision had to do with its profound effect on the prophet as chapter five explicates. Here, a critical and inseparable aspect of

Zion's tradition is engaged—the symbiotic relationship between Yahweh as King and his vassal servant, David. The way that the glory of the Lord acted upon and interacting with 'the son of *adam*' appeared to shape a figure that was as unique to the time of Israel's exile as David was to the time of its birth as a nation. Once again, the glory pericope conjures up the '*anthropology of Zion*' (Ollenburger 1987:128) to provide a surrogate ortho-monarchical figure to the near decimated house of David. The making of the son of man was indeed presented as antithetical to what David's sons had become. But the son of man reveals what the kings of Israel should have been and what it needed to be if Israel would successfully be reconstituted.

The prophet's designation as 'son of *adam*' is an enigmatic mixture of royal dignity and human frailty. But more importantly, Ezekiel's shadowed movement with the hwhy-dwbk indicates Yahweh's attempt to shape the 'son of *adam*' into an iconic representation of the hwhy-dwbk. Just as the hwhy-dwbk is last seen standing over Zion as guiding, guarding, confronting, and separating, so Ezekiel had become for the exiles. Through his dramatic encounter with the hwhy-dwbk, his personal ordeal, his symbolic gestures, and finally through his spoken and written word, Ezekiel embodied Yahweh's ordeal and confrontation with his people. The hwhy-dwbk forcefully presented itself to Ezekiel as a living, real-to-life encounter with Yahweh's active presence and involvement in Israel's crisis. Fundamentally, this reaffirmed the highest tenant of Zion's tradition—Yahweh as ruler over his people.

### **6.3 Challenges to a Positive View of the hwhy-dwbk in the Book of Ezekiel**

The hypothesis above presents a theological outlook that has a positive and reaffirming view of the hwhy-dwbk and its relationship to other Israelite traditions and developments in the Old Testament. As the Ezekiel Project<sup>278</sup> and current commentaries on Ezekiel are demonstrating, the book has come to present multiple challenges in the field of Old Testament Studies. Certainly, a variety of views would be at odds with what

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<sup>278</sup> Many of the contributions to this work are from a compilation of articles produced as a part of the Journal of Biblical Studies' Symposium Series: the Ezekiel Project. See bibliography.

has been presented here. The scope of the work does not allow for elaborate response here; however, by way of closure, the assessment of Halperin, Kutsko, and Terrien will briefly be addressed, because their views found an active engagement in this dissertation.

**6.3.1 Halperin's negative assessment.** Halperin represents an opposing view to the one presented here. Halperin (1993:222-223) concludes: 'We must acknowledge that, as far as theology proper is concerned, the effect of our study is wholly negative. Neither our methods nor our conclusions are compatible with the belief that Ezekiel was in contact with a transcendent being...The practical consequence of this conclusion would seem to be that we must expel Ezekiel from the canon, if not dissolve the canon itself.' My fundamental objection to Halperin's view is his uncritical view of psychoanalysis as the basis of interpretation. It would be interesting to see how he would respond to Rene Girard's sustained and convincing challenge to such a premise, especially when interpreting religious themes. Girard (1984:169-192) seriously challenges the psychoanalytic model in his chapter 'Freud and the Oedipus Complex,' concluding:

Like all forms of mythical thought, psychoanalysis is a closed system that can never be refuted...In short, the complex is bound to appear, and if it does not, that circumstance only confirms its existence...It has become routine to ascribe all sorts of psychic disorders to an Oedipus whose Laius remains obstinately out of sight...Psychoanalysis vanquishes all challengers. It is everywhere—and nowhere. It finally dissolves into the banality of multisided familial and nonfamilial rivalries in a more and more competitive world.

Be that as it may, Halperin (1993:221) has supported the view presented here in opposition to Zimmerli's (1979:298) influential view that Ezekiel's personality is hidden behind stylization. He affirms that this view is: 'positively false...it bears throughout the signs of a powerful and very unusual personality.'

**6.3.2 Paradox of presence and absence, as evidence of Yahweh's rejection of Zion.**

Somewhat at odds with the view presented here is that of Kutsko and Terrien. Their ideas reflect an on-going dialogue in Old Testament studies that is triggered in large part by Ezekiel's vision of the hwhy-dwbk leaving the Temple. A fundamental starting point is an assumption that Yahwism was aniconic. As Terrien (1983:112) asserts:

‘Hebraism is a religion not of the eye but of the ear.’ To a large degree, this view<sup>279</sup> tends to blame the worship at Zion in symbiosis with the Davidic monarchy and a central temple for confusing Yahwism’s true aniconic faith. Because of this, the departure of Yahweh’s glory from the Temple precinct is understood as having taken to a breaking point ‘a profound tension between two opposite views of presence’ (Terrien 1983:198). The tension then can only be explained dialectically in terms of God being present in absence.

Kutsko’s (2000a:154) thesis explains the *hwby-dwbk* in terms of a: ‘paradox of divine absence and presence...a constructive theology that generates interrelated examples of his [Ezekiel’s] binary opposition.’ Kutsko (2000a:155) works out much of his presentation by asserting: ‘Fundamental to Ezekiel’s theology is the subtlety of the aniconic tradition.’

It appears that Kutsko (2000a:155) defines aniconic as ‘God’s power and position of Israel’s God in distinctly universal terms.’ But Zion theology or tradition had already affirmed such realities, at least in latent or incipient form. They need only to be accentuated to address the exilic crisis.

Kutsko (2000a:155-156) defines universal more as a ‘perceived and felt presence [he definitely views it as perceived] outside the parameters of Judah...limited by neither Temple nor land.’ My thesis does not push things in this direction. I suggest rather that the ‘*kabod* theology’ is simply one of suspension, rather than paradox. There are apparent polarities from a limited point of view, but from the point of view of glory, they are powerful forces held in a dynamic unity—stable yet freely mobile, fixed yet flexible, a churning radiance.

Kutsko does not seem to be consistent in his understanding of imagery and iconism. He (2000a:152-155) consistently speaks of ‘imagery of the glory of the Lord,’ ‘representation of God,’ and ‘conceptualization of Yahweh,’ and ‘the ark being the central icon of Yahweh’s victory.’ If this were the case, how can Israelite tradition be

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<sup>279</sup> See chapter 3 pp 57-67.

‘aniconic’? Kutsko, it would appear, has not adequately defined what he means by this term. I have gone with the same reasoning as Kutsko (2000a:151) that iconism is at the heart of concerns in Ezekiel’s vision of the glory of the Lord but from the presumption that Israel was not fundamentally opposed to icons. Rather, through the highly developed liturgical tradition at the Jerusalem temple, Israel had already in place a peculiar kind of iconism that was constantly in danger of being misapplied and confused with other kinds of iconism. The presentation here, has made the case that the peculiar iconism of Israel is rooted in their Yahweh war tradition, epitomized by the Reed Sea event, and ‘canonized’ by ark traditions as the Davidic and Zion traditions incorporated them. By reaffirming this in his vision of the glory of the Lord, Ezekiel seeks to address one of the fundamental questions of the exile—where is Yahweh in all of this?

For Kutsko (2000a:152), Ezekiel’s paradoxical aniconism explains what is perceived to be a great incongruence for the exiles: ‘[Ezekiel]...employs an image of God’s proximity whose sentient quality the prophet can communicate to those who have no vision. Thus Ezekiel’s description of the divine *kabod* stresses the reality of God’s absence from the Temple and his presence in the people’s midst.’ There is a fundamental flaw with this view. The glory of the Lord is never viewed as having transferred locations. Yahweh’s glory is quite ‘fixed’ in this regard. When last the vision ends, the *hwhy-dwbk* is standing guard over Zion, and in some limited way (Ez 11:16) Yahweh has provided a refuge in Babylon. That limited way, I have proposed, is mostly through the presence of the ‘son of adam.’

Kutsko (2000a:151) explains one of the pressing questions created by the exile through the paradox of divine absence and presence. ‘Ezekiel’s concern is far more basic: Could God be present in the face of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple...On the other hand, it is a subtle question, particularly for an aniconic tradition: How is Israel’s God to be perceived and worshiped in his apparent absence, when other so-called gods, represented by divine images, support the victorious enemy of Israel?’

For one, it is not apparent how the second question can arise from an ‘aniconic tradition.’ If Israel were truly aniconic, why would that question even arise. As to the first question, herein lies a difference between the way Kutsko frames the question and the way I do. Kutsko’s question is more what happens to a defeated god? Where is a defeated god? In Ezekiel’s case, as I have presented it, Yahweh is not defeated; therefore there needs to be no discussion of where Yahweh is. He does this primarily by reformulating some of the basic tenants within the Zion tradition. It seems to me that Ezekiel’s vision of the Glory of Yahweh is seeking more to put the question to Israel—where are you?

Kutsko’s thesis, however, contributes to the presentation here in several ways. First, he (2000a:150) affirms how critical and integral the issue of iconism was to the exilic crisis. ‘Idolatry—the misrepresentation of God’s image, the illegitimate expression of his presence—resulted in the removal of God’s presence and the destruction of his symbolic dwelling place.’ Second, he (2000a:23) affirms as do many others, that ‘Ezekiel’s relationship to other Israelite traditions is a significant feature of the book at the compositional level.’ He affirms that this is especially true of ‘kabod theology’ where ‘Ezekiel relies heavily on wilderness traditions [and it] indicates not a revolutionary concept, just perhaps one that had been underplayed with the temple worship’ (Kutsko 2000a:152).

Terrien extensively deals with the more pertinent theological issues around presence and absence. He emphasizes the position presented here, calling Ezekiel the great ‘expounder of the theology of glory’ or a ‘theologoumenon of glory’ (Terrien 1983:240). He affirms that the ‘theology of glory’ revived the mythology of Holy War with which the theologoumenon of glory through the ark was originally connected, and he adapted it to the situation of his time. This, Terrien (1983:212,145) insists is part and parcel with the Zion theology promoted by the priests of Jerusalem. Being as such, he also reiterates that Ezekiel does not view Yahweh’s presence as having moved via glory from Zion to Babylon: ‘...he was unable to speak of divine presence in a foreign land except by using metaphorical language derived from the institution of the Temple (Ez 11:16). For the

priest-prophet, communing with the Deity was in effect identical with adoring Yahweh in the temple' (Terrien 1983:209).

Terrien, however, views the 'theology of glory' associated with Zion as inferior to the 'theology of the Name.' He (1983:144) calls it a *libido theologica* and insists that in the end, 'Hebraism was a nomadic religion which sacralized time' (1983:186). It proved to be the true genius of Yahwism as it won out over the archaic and 'obsolete' notion of spatial theology—sacred space (Terrien 1983:392, 312, 152).

He does affirm (1983:145), however, that the Jerusalem priests never saw a conflict between the theologoumenon of presence through the *name* and theologoumenon of presence through *glory*. I do not see that as a weakness. The fault of Terrien is that which I have seen from others. As devastating as the Temple destruction was, it is fallacious to assume that the priests of Jerusalem could not have possibly conceived of Yahweh's transience and transcendence apart from the Temple. Central to the hymnody of the temple was not only the rehearsal of Yahweh's victories with David, but also over Pharaoh and at the Reed Sea. If anything, they above all others would understand the precarious balance between the visible and the invisible, and Yahweh's transcendence and his imminence. Such a balance is what I believe the vision of the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel is maintaining precisely at a time when confusion of boundaries and balances was acute.

In contrast to Terrien and Kutsko, Greenberg (1983:59) rejects the notion that Israel didn't understand Yahweh to be a transcendent god and that Ezekiel's vision of hwhy-dwbk is really a radical renunciation of a sense of Yahweh's Presence being associated with place: 'YHWH is nowhere in Scripture anything less than a god of universal dominion...' Greenberg (1983:80) also affirms that although Ezekiel was a non-conformist when it came to relating to the exiles the unhappy news that they would not be soon returning, he 'in accord with traditional imagery [of the temple] he communicated his vision to others.'

Greenberg (1983:80), as well as the thesis presented here, sees a repetition and progress in what was initially a private encounter with what Greenberg calls ‘the Majesty.’ He provides the primary reason for the encounter—an assurance to a wavering constituency ‘on critical occasions.’ Greenberg consistently views Ezekiel’s encounter with the ‘Majesty’ as a gracious concession to one ‘distressed, convinced of impending doom, and cast out by his community.’ The ‘disconsolate’ one was graciously consoled by such a vision.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

In a post-modern world in which boundaries are repeatedly challenged and the validity (authority) of religious institutions is questioned, Ezekiel’s vision of the *hwhy-dwbk* is worthy of revisiting. In the midst of tense, polarizing conflicts and degeneration, believing communities are pressed to ask as did the exiles of Babylon—Where is God in all of this, and how can we perceive and know that presence? In a real way, Ezekiel’s picture of the *hwhy-dwbk* addresses the heart of what is ‘theology’—the ability to perceive and understand God’s involvement in the affairs of the human race.

Old Testament theology in many ways reflects the intensity over competing versions (perceptions) of Yahweh. Certainly, scholars have come away with diverse and contrary perceptions of the presentation of Yahweh in the book of Ezekiel. As is the case, in the post-modern world of interpretation, it is often difficult to discern whether an interpreter is reading into the text what he/she already perceives or whether he/she is allowing the text to read the interpreter. Oddly then, we face today what Ezekiel and the early exiles faced—a crisis of perception, of vision.

Based on the conclusions of some scholars, we face once again the Marcion conflict over whether the ‘picture’ of Yahweh in the Old Testament is counter to one presented by Jesus and the early church. Is there any notion of a loving God in the book of Ezekiel, especially with its war imagery? Certainly, a picture of a loving god does not come leaping out of the pages of Ezekiel. But in keeping with the Old Testament’s view of



love—that it has to do with an unwavering and dogged loyalty, *dox*—Ezekiel’s view of the *hwhy-dwbk* as I have argued in my presentation is a bold attempt at reinforcing this central notion of the God of Israel—faithful to the end. The worse it looks, the more Yahweh is willing to engage.

If my read on Yahweh’s active engagement in Israel’s crisis is acceptable, then it provides a picture into how God is involved in our polarized conflicts, such as ‘conservative and liberal,’ and our highly suspicious view of human institutions and interactions. God stands in the very midst of turmoil, division, and conflict and insists on his exclusive prerogative over the affairs of men. All conflicts need an objective ‘outsider’ perspective. God stands in the middle as an outsider, able to retain His own purity (maybe purity to be understood simply as the ability not to be ‘taken down’ by the crisis) while at the same time decisively acting, both in judgment and redemption.

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