

## EZEKIEL

Comments by Kathryn Darr in NIB unless otherwise noted.

- 1) – Ezekiel means "God strengthens." He was carried off to Babylon with Jehoiachin in 597 BC. He was probably 25, if 1:1-2 means **his** 30th year, the 5th year of captivity. This would make him 20 years younger than Jeremiah, who was still back in Judah with Zedekiah as king. He may even have been a disciple of Jeremiah's before his deportation to Babylon. He lived in Tel Abib (3:15), on the river (or canal) Chebar, which ran southeast from Babylon to Erech. He began his preaching mission in 593, aware that there was a plot being prepared jointly by patriots in Jerusalem and exiles in Babylon to overthrow Babylonian domination. Like Jeremiah, he was opposed. His ministry covered about 20 years. Tradition holds that he died in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and was buried at Kefil near Birs Nimrud.
- 2) 1:10-13 – Of the four faces, the human always "leads," that is, faces in the direction of movement.
- 3) 1:15-21 – The "wheels within wheels" are most likely meshing wheels, like gears in a machine. The eyes are nails or some other decoration, symbols for the "all-seeing power of the Rider on the throne. So what is this all about, the flying creatures and wheels? It's "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."
- 4) 1:26-27 – Echoing Genesis 1:26-27 where man is formed in the image of God. Here God appears to resemble a man.
- 5) 2:1 – "Mortal" in the NRSV is used 93 times in Ezekiel, means literally "son of man," a in NIV and New American.
- 6) 2:5 – Ezekiel's success does not depend on the Israelites return to God's way. Only when Ezekiel's prophecies come true will they recognize that he was right.
- 7) 2:8 – Normally, scrolls were written on one side only, so this is a "distressing superabundance" of woes, lamentations (Zimmerli).
- 8) 2:9 – Very similar to Jeremiah's "ordination," where the Lord puts *words* in his mouth (Jer 1:9). The eating of the scroll indicates that God has literally put his oracles into Ezekiel in a form that cannot be changed. It also functions as a defense against charges of false or seditious prophecy.
- 9) 3:5 – Such as Jonah's rapid conversion (40 days) of the Ninevites?
- 10) 3:15 – Tel Abib means "hill of the flood" – a reference to a mound deserted since the primeval deluge.
- 11) 3:16-21 – Elie Wiesel asks why Ezekiel is so fervent in pointing out Israel's weaknesses and transgressions. He answer himself (paraphrase): "God wants them to think of their plight as punishment rather than gratuitous cruelty." JB asks: Why should Ezekiel be held responsible for warning the Israelites about God's wrath when they've know for centuries what God demands of them?
- 12) 2:22-27 – Probably added much later, after the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, when Ezekiel's role was more symbolic than oral reproof (rebuke). His role as *arbiter* only (between God and man) is refuted but he can prophesy in other ways when God opens his mouth. In v. 26, the word translated here as refute or rebuke, is elsewhere in the Bible always used to indicate arbitration between God and man (Amos 5:10, Isa 29:20, Prob

- 9:7-8, Job 31:35, etc).
- 13) 4:1-3 – Archaeologists have found sun-dried bricks with city plans and maps in the area of ancient Babylon. Here, the meaning seems clear. The besieged city is Jerusalem. The iron pan (or griddle) represents the impenetrable barrier Yahweh has placed between the city and Ezekiel. This a “sign act,” like Ahijah tearing his garment into 12 pieces and given 10 of them to Jereboam (1 Kings 11:30 ff), Hosea’s marriage to Gomer, the symbolic names of Hosea’s sons (Hosea 1-3), Jeremiah’s yoke (Jer 27), Isaiah walking naked through the streets of Jerusalem for three years (Isa 20:3)
  - 14) 4:4-8 – Echoes the punishment of the Israelites when Moses’s spies returned after 40 days and recommended that they not go up into Palestine because of the fearsome people who lived there. Yahweh then condemned them to 40 years in the desert, until all who rebelled are dead except Joshua and Moses. /// Also note that  $390 + 40 = 430$ , the number of years that the Israelites lived in Egypt (Ex 12:40).
  - 15) 5:1-4 – Shaving the head and beard was a sign of mourning, a gross insult if a military visitor did it to the conquered. The first \_ refers to those who died by either fire or famine or both in Jerusalem. The second \_ represents those who were killed when the city was sacked and burned. The third \_ represents those who escaped but Yahweh pursued and most did not survive. A few do (bound in the robe).
  - 16) 4:5-17 – This is Ezekiel’s response to what he believed: that God was punishing the Israelites. Darr doesn’t believe this and used the holocausts of history to refute the idea.
  - 17) 6:4 – The word used here for idols is gillûlîm, likely a coarse pun on gel\_îm, dung pellets.
  - 18) 6:6 – High places were not only in rural settings and not only on elevated ground, as in 2 Kings 17:9 where it states that they built high places “in all their towns.” And they weren’t all rustic altars and/or pillars. Some were large buildings and some were building complexes. They were of Canaanite origin, and although they were dedicated to Yahweh they were susceptible to syncretistic religious beliefs and practices.
  - 19) 6:9 – The Tanakh version of the Hebrew Bible translates this as God saying “Remember how *I* was broken hearted.”
  - 20) 6:11-14 – Clapping hands and stamping feet will publicly portray Yahweh’s malevolent delight in punishing Israel. See 2 Kings 25:6-7 for the story of Zedekiah’s torture and blinding by Nebuchednezzar. This happened in 487, *after* Ezekiel 6 was written, so it *presaged* the incident. Or, according to Zimmerli, the entire chapter 6 was added later. /// “Stretching forth his hand” is a further sign of military power. /// Ribla (Diblah) was a city in Syria, 65 miles south of Damascus, used here to indicate that God will lay waste to everything from the far south to the far north.
  - 21) **Chapter 7** – According to Blenkinsopp, based on Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Exodus, Psalms, and Genesis (Noah’s flood).
  - 22) 7:2b – Although “four corners of the land” usually means “all the earth,” it does not have that meaning here, as becomes clear later in the book.
  - 23) 7:10b - 11a – The flowering staff is a reference to Numbers 17:23 where Aaron’s staff buds, flowers, and produces almonds overnight, a warning to the erring Israelites.
  - 24) 7:13 – This is contrast to Jeremiah’s purchase of land in Anathoth as a signal that beyond the impending catastrophe was hope.
  - 25) 7:17b – The “knees turn to water” is literally “lose control of one’s bladder.”
  - 26) 7:19a, 20b – The word used here in both verses for “unclean” is niddâ,” which denotes bodily secretions, especially menstrual blood, a source of extreme contamination. ///

See Zephaniah 1:18 for a similar reference to the failure of gold and silver to save them.

- 27) none
- 28) 8:5 – Probably a statue of the goddess Asherah, a queen of heaven. Manasseh placed a statue of her in the Jerusalem temple (2 Kings 21:7), but Josiah destroyed it (2 Kings 23:6).  
Was a new one made or is Ezekiel seeing this in retrospect?
- 29) 8:7 – “Hole” better translated “recess.” Why dig a hole if one is already there?
- 30) 8:11 – In Numbers 11:16-30, Moses confronts 70 elders when the Israelites begin to complain about being hungry and thirsty. //// “Stood before” means engaging in cultic activity, that is, worshiping the idols.
- 31) 8:14 – Tammuz was the personification of death and rebirth of vegetation. Women in ancient agricultural societies bewailed the death and rejoiced at the rebirth. Similar to the **Greek myth** of Demeter and Persephone: Persephone is stolen by Hades, Demeter finds her and makes a deal for her to stay part of the year in Hades, explaining the growth cycle. There was a **Sumerian myth** before the days of Abraham: Dumu-zi (Tammuz) is the brother and lover of Ishtar, goddess of earth and sky. Tammuz is killed by a boar through some thoughtless act of Ishtar, who follows him to the underworld and ransoms him. This is the Tammuz of Ezekiel, for whom the women wail and rejoice. The heathen god is still honored in the Jewish calendar, despite Ezekiel. The Tammuz myth spread to the western half of the Fertile Crescent and was called "Lord" (Adonai) which became Adonis in Greek myth, Aphrodite's lover, and is killed by a boar. The Israelites undoubtedly worshiped Tammuz. In Judges 11:40, the writer may be making this practice by referring to their weeping for Tammuz as weeping for Jephthah's daughter.
- 32) 8:16-18 – According to Joel 2:17, priests positioned themselves between porch and altar to weep and pray, but here they are facing away from the altar and worshiping the sun, strictly forbidden in Deut 4:19 and 17:2-5. /// The word used here for “violence” is the same word used for the acts of the people of Noah’s day that provoked the flood. /// “Branch to my nose” is 1) gesture of entreaty, or 2) obscene gesture, or, 3) euphemism for “breaking wind.”
- 33) 9:2c – The bronze altar stood in the forecourt of Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 8:64).
- 34) 9:3a – Interpreted to mean that God left his seat on the cherubim of the Ark in order to address the people in the forecourt, a portent of his departure from the city, abandoning his people.
- 35) The mark “X” in the old Canaanite script was actually the Hebrew “T” (tau).
- 36) 11:1-12 – Scholars point to the Babylonian *Poem of Erra*, where Erra and Marduk become angry at the people for their errant behavior. They force the people into exile for 70 years and destroy their city. However, after 11 years, Marduk’s angel abates and he allows the exiles to return to rebuild their city.
- 37) 11:6 – Probably the slain are the victims of the death penalty imposed by a corrupt court.
- 38) 11:13 – Pelatiah: “Jahweh rescues a remnant.” It’s not a question for it forces Ezekiel to answer his own earlier question.
- 39) 11:22-25 – God’s glory rests on the Mount of Olives (for 3½ years according to Rabbi Johanan), proclaiming 3X daily, “Return, wayward sons (Jeremiah 3:22).
- 40) 12:5 – Does he dig through the wall to escape detection?
- 41) 12:6 – Does he cover his face to conceal his identity or to portend that the exiles will never see their homeland again? Or, see next entry:
- 42) 12:12-15 – The prince of Jerusalem is Zedekiah, whose fate is recorded in 2 King 25:4-7,

where he is blinded and carried to a Babylon which he will never see, and his followers who deserted him are all slain.

- 43) 12:21-28 – This “proverb” was apparently circulating in Judah and Yahweh refutes it. In 12:27 it is circulating in Babylon and Yahweh refutes it also.
- 44) 13:1-23 –Should be read in the following order: 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10-16, 3, 4, 6, 9, 17, 22, 23, 18,19, 20, 21. (Otherwise it makes no sense.)
- 45) 13:14 – Like Samaria, in Micah 1:6, Jerusalem’s foundation will be laid bare.
- 46) 13:17 – Sorcery and witchcraft were common in the ancient middle east. Leviticus 20:6 explicitly proscribes it, although Saul consults a medium (the “witch” of Endor) in 1 Samuel 28.
- 47) 13:19 – Probably payment for their services
- 48) 13:20 – In most translations, “entrap lives” is “ensnare little birds.”
- 49) 14:1-11 – In 80:1 it was the elders of Judah, not the entire house of Israel. They have come to receive Yahweh’s answer to a specific inquiry, but what that question is we don’t know from the text. /// V 6 seems to signal that Yahweh desires reconciliation, a turn-about from 3:22-27 where Ezekiel is constrained from acting as an arbiter.
- 50) 14:8 – “cut them off” may mean to expel them from society but Greenberg argues that it’s death at God’s hands (not men’s hands such as stoning).
- 51)14:9 – In most translations, “beguiled” is “deceived.” There are numerous examples of God deceiving someone. E.g., 1 Kings 1:13-14, 1 Kings 22, Jeremiah 20:7.
- 52) 14:14-20 – By including Noah (a pre-Israelite man) and Job (an Edomite), Yahweh signals the universality of his judgment. /// Echoes the story of Abraham bartering with God about Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:29ff). Also resembles Jeremiah 15:1-3 where even if Moses and Samuel were present, Jerusalem” sinful inhabitants would perish to pestilence, famine, sword, or captivity.
- 53) 14:16 – Whereas Deuteronomy 29:16 sets out the principle of parents not suffering for the sins of their children, nor children for the sins of their parents, this verse asserts that children of righteous parents cannot expect preferential treatment.
- 54) 16:1-63 – Jerusalem as Yahweh’s wanton wife: the metaphor worked for the Israelites because marriage then was a legal contract between a superior (man) and an inferior (woman). The man had an obligation to protect the woman; the woman had an obligation to obey the man. The Israelite cities could be charged with adultery if they had “intercourse” with other nations and their deities. Ezekiel “pushes the vehicle of female sexual imagery to its limit...it is vulgar.” It is never included in the lectionary, although the phrase “like mother, like daughter,” persists.
- 55) 16:6 – The laws of Hammurabi included one that read, “If a man has adopted an infant while still in its amniotic fluid, that adopted child can never be reclaimed.”
- 56) 16:8 – As when Boaz spread his cloak over Ruth, signifying his intent to marry her (Ruth3:9)
- 57) 16:9 – Birth blood, menstrual blood, or blood of first coitus?
- 58) 16:20-22 – A reference to infant sacrifice, probably to Molech.
- 59) 16:27 – Probably referring to the siege by Sennacherib, where he forced Jerusalem to pay an enormous tribute, turned Judean territory over to three Philistine cities, and then was punished when God’s messenger killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.
- 60) 16:36 – “poured out your lust” is a euphemism for the lubricating fluid discharged by a sexually aroused woman.
- 61) 16:62-63 – The inability “to open your mouth” is due to Jerusalem’s humiliation and her

- inability to complain about her plight.
- 62) 17:1-10 – The eagle coming to “Lebanon” is ambiguous because in the geo-theology of ancient Israel, Jerusalem was called Lebanon, as in Jeremiah 22:23. The eagle is Nebuchednezzar (v. 1). The “land of trade” is Babylonia (v.4). The “seed of the land” is Jehoiakim (v 5). The “other great eagle” is Egypt’s pharaoh (v7). The answer to Ezekiel’s rhetorical question is “No” (V10).
- 63) 17:17 – This is reference to Jeremiah 37:5-11, where pharaoh Hophra brings his troops near Jerusalem, forced the Babylonian siege to withdraw temporarily, but soon resumed their siege and eventually captured Jerusalem, razed the city, and took another group of Israelites to Babylon (588-587 BCE).
- 64) 17:22-24 – The lofty mount is Zion. The imagery of a tall tree may be borrowed from the widespread ancient mythological “cosmic tree,” not associated with the tree of life in Eden, but with its crown reaching to heaven. Or, it may be borrowed from Isaiah 11:1-10: “But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse...”
- 65) 18:2 – See Jer 31:29 where he revises the concept of collective guilt.
- 66) 18:31 – “...an astonishing challenge – unique to the book of Ezekiel.”
- 67) 19:2 – The mother lioness might be Zedekiah, the last king of Israel – but see next note:
- 68) 19:4b – The lion caught with hooks and carried to Egypt has to be Jehoahaz who ruled for three months in 609 and was exiled to Egypt (2 Kings 23:31-34). So the lioness’s mother may be Hamutal, Jehoahaz’s mother (2 Kings 23:31).
- 69) 19:7-9 – “Strongholds” is better translated “widow,” but this is problematical because lions don’t ravage humans. NIV, NRSV, KJV, New American, all read “strongholds.” And the “he” is masculine, so this is a riddle exercised by interpreters for centuries. Darr favors Jehoiakim since he followed Jehoahaz on the throne and had a reputation for bloodiness.
- 70) 19:10-14 – One interpretation: the vine is the Davidic dynasty and the destroyer is Jawweh
- 71) 20:1-4 – The date is 8/14/591, celebrating Edna’s birthday 2,517 years before she was born!  
 /// No one knows why the elders came to “inquire” of Ezekiel. Several attempts to ferret it out, none very conclusive (see NIB, p. 1276).
- 72) 20:10-17 – Ezekiel says nothing about Moses or the hardships of living in the desert, just about God sparing the Israelites instant death because of their rebelling against God and worshipping idols.
- 73) 20:25-26 – Debated for centuries with no good solution found. Is this a second covenant that allows the Israelites to sin and worship idols **without** disobeying God? Darr doesn’t say! (The note in the new American Bible says that God allowed them to follow their own sinful ways that would lead to their own destruction. Also see note #51 above and note in NRSV.)
- 74) 20:27-31 – Ezekiel is still speaking to the elders sitting before him. He accuses his ancestors of worshipping “in all the high places and under every leafy tree,” a recollection of Deut 12:2-31. And the process has apparently continued “up to this day.”
- 75) 20:33-38 – God will make the Israelites “pass under the staff,” the shepherd counting his sheep, but this time God will cull from the people the rebellious ones and cause them to die in the desert when the rest return to Jerusalem.
- 76) 20:39 – Bitter irony, which recalls Amos 4:4 (“Go serve your idols” and “Come to Bethel and transgress, to Gilgal and multiply your transgressions”). And Jeremiah 44:25 (“Keep your vows and make your libations to the Queen of Heaven”).

## 77) REFLECTIONS ON 20:1-44 –

One of the bible's most troubling texts. "What are we to think of a God who gives deadly laws including infant sacrifice? How can we worship and trust such a deity?" asks Darr. For Ezekiel, everything "hangs on securing Yahweh's sovereignty and control over history." Darr asks, "whether the prophet's understanding of God is one that we also should embrace?"

78) None

79) 20:46 – The Negeb is actually desert land, so "forest" is better translated "scrubland." (JB: But was it then?)

80) 20:49 – Darr prefers "metaphors" to "parables" or "allegories" in this context.

81) 21:7 – "Every knee shall run with water," is a euphemism for loss of bladder control with urine running down to the knees.

82) 21:10b – A corrupt sentence, variously interpreted over the centuries, perhaps referring to Judah's refusal to obey God's commands.

83) 21:13 – Another corrupt sentence, possibly referring to the consequences of Judah's rebellion.

84) 21:20 – Nebuchadnezzar uses three divinations to determine whether to attack Rabbah or Jerusalem – arrows, teraphim (household gods), and the liver (hepatoscopy).

85) 21:23a – "their eyes" must have been the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

86) 21:28-32 – Disagreement among scholars as to the victim of God's wrath, but the consensus is that "Ammon" is a substitute for Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. God is now turning his wrath from the Israelites to their conquerors (precedent for this in Isaiah 31:8-9).

87) 22:16 – NIV : "when you have been defiled by the nations..."

88) 22:23-31 – So like Zehaniah 3:3-4 that most scholars think that Ezekiel adopted the oracle as the basis for his own. /// Most critics believe that this oracle was written *after* the fall of Jerusalem.

89) **Chapter 23** – "This chapter is the end product of a lengthy and complex process inspired by Jeremiah's story of Faithless Israel and her sister False Judah" with much later editing and redaction. Zimmerlik, e.g. discerns Ezekiel's hand in only 17 of the 49 verses.

90) 23:2-3 – "One mother": The Israelites in Egypt? With no mention of a father? (In Chapter 16, Jerusalem' father was an Ammonite, her mother a Hittite.) /// Not adultery, but premarital sex was as serious a sin.

91) 23:4 – Oholah means "her own tent," implying that the sanctuaries in the northern kingdom were illicit. Oholibah means "my tent is in her," implying that God is in the legitimate temple in Jerusalem.

92) 23:5-10 – Oholah is now married (to God) so she is now practicing adultery (with the Assyrian who used her, then killed her.)

93) 23:36-49 – "The Hebrew text is incoherent, odd, disconcerting." Perhaps a considerable remove from Ezekiel, perhaps in its earliest and unpolished form and before the prophet or some other editor got his hands on it. /// The scene is unreal: Samaria was destroyed over a hundred years earlier, both women (cities) set in Egypt.

94) 23:42 – "Rabble" are the Sabeans – from Petra in what is now southern Jordan – in the KJV and elsewhere.

95) 24:1-14 – The pot (Jerusalem) is contaminated by inner filth and by the blood shed in her. God is the cook who piles wood around the pot and throws in the choicest of meats and then burns them down to ashes. It will not be clean again until God has poured out his

wrath on it.

- 96) 24:17 – lit: “Do not cover your upper lip,” a practice required of lepers (Lev 13:45), a sign of disgrace in Micah 3:7. /// It was customary to let the hair hang loose so it could be covered with dirt and/or ashes, and to go barefoot.
- 97) **Chapters 28-32** -- Oracles against four of Israel’s neighbors, enemies in frequent territorial disputes: Ammon to the east, Moab to the southeast, Edom to the south, and Philistia to the southwest. The Ammonites and Moabites were descended from Abraham’s nephew Lot (by his daughters – Gen 19:30-38). The Edomites were descended from Esau and were temporarily subdued by Saul and David, but gloated over Jerusalem’s destruction and looted it and refused to harbor its refugees (Psalm 137:7, Lamentations 4:21, Obadiah 10:14). /// Darr’s comment on these oracles, as well as those against Egypt later on: “Moderns must wrestle with the ancient Near Eastern notion that deities deal with hostile nations by exterminating them. That perspective threatens not only to turn God into ‘big warrior’ on **our** side...but also to sanction so-called ‘holy war’ and their atrocities...(this) does not carry a concomitant obligation to embrace their views.”
- 98) 25:4 – The “people of the east” were nomads of the Syro-Arabian desert, known for their wisdom but also for their incursions into settled territory. This oracle is spoken to the exiles without reference to what actually happened in Ammon, just to show Yahweh’s power.
- 99) 25:12-14 – Darr: How can a defeated and desolate Israel be the instruments of God’s wrath against Edom? Perhaps later after recovering from the current catastrophe?
- 100) 26:1-5 – The “11th” year would have been 587 BC, when Jerusalem’s fate was sealed and Tyre’s siege was a sure thing. Ezekiel glorifies the Chaldean armies as if he were a Babylonian patriot -- which he apparently was. No utterances against Babylon: not so strange: Jews in Babylon were well-treated, allowed to practice their religion, entered economic life and grew well-to-do. Many stayed in Babylon when Cyrus let them go, like American Jews today who do not all return to Israel. Ezekiel was wrong in his prophecies in Chapters 26-28. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for 13 years, until 573 and failed to sack Tyre. See Ezek 29:17-19, when Ezekiel was 52 years old.
- 101) 26:6 – These were the mainland cities upon which the Tyrians depended for food, building material, and just about everything needed to survive on a rocky island.
- 102) 27:12-25 – Javan: Ionia. Tubal, Meschech: central and southeast Asia Minor. Bethogarmah: eastern Asia Minor. Rhodians: island of Rhodes. Rabah: capital of Ammon. Helbon: north of Damascus. Sahar: wilderness northwest of Damascus. Dedan, Sheba (grandsons of Abraham by Keturah): villages near Tema, Arabia. Kedar (son of Ishmael): in northern Arabia. Canneh: perhaps in Assyria. Eden: perhaps in Assyria, perhaps Aden in southern Arabia. Chilmad: perhaps the whole of Media. Ships of Tarshish – not from Tarshish alone, but designating large, seaworthy vessels such as found in Tarshish.
- 103) 28:10 – Phoenicians, like Jews, practiced circumcision, so to die as the uncircumcised was to die in disgrace.
- 104) 28:13 – “covering” – text is obscure. The NIV reads, every precious stone adorned you...” The Israelites listening to Ezekiel might have thought of the breast plate worn by the high priest, which had 12 precious stones in rows of four, one for each of the 12 tribes.
- 105) 28:14 – This verse is totally corrupt. The meaning of “cherub,” “holy mountain,” and “stones of fire” is obscure. Darr takes almost two pages in the NIB to give various

- explanations, none of which are satisfactory. She thinks they have something to do with the supposed divinity of the king of Tyre.
- 106) 28:16 – The creature’s sin leads to his expulsion from paradise. In Genesis 3:24 God placed guardian cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life. However it is God, not the cherubim, who banishes Adam and Eve from the garden.
- 107) 28:21 – Sidon was an important Phoenician seaport, exceeding Tyre until destroyed by Artaxerxes III Ochus in 351 BCE. In Hebrew scriptures, Sidon was Canaan’s firstborn (Gen 10:15). Now modern-day Saida (means “help” in Swahili, but in Hebrew?)
- 108) 29:1-21 – Comprises 7 oracles against Egypt. Ezekiel was irked because Egypt had been able to stand up against Nebuchadnezzar and thus thwart God’s punishment. The pharaoh was Hophra
- 109) 29:4-5 – The fish may be the Egyptian people but more likely represent the nations that clung to Egyptian promises of military assistance. V. 10 – Migdol – far northeast corner of Egypt, in the Nile delta. Syene – present day Aswan, near Ethiopian border. V. 14 – Pathros is Upper Egypt.
- 110) 32:19 – A sarcastic reference to Egypt’s boast of being the loveliest of nations, which Ezekiel does not allow to go unchallenged.
- 111) 32:21 – Since the Egyptians practiced circumcision, the prophet’s threats are best interpreted as metaphors for dishonorable death. /// The identity of the “mighty warriors” cannot be determined in this verse, but their function is to greet newcomers to Sheol.
- 112) 32:22-27 – Ezekiel condemns all these countries to Sheol because of their extreme cruelty in war. Elam lay in modern Iran, was Shem’s firstborn, its history obscure. Meshach and Tubal were in Asia Minor, north of Tyre. /// The “mighty warriors of old” are probably the semi-legendary Nephilim (Ge 6:1-4)(for several possible reasons for giving them special honor in Sheol, see NIB, p. 1444) /// Sheol was not “hell,” not a place of eternal punishment, supervised by Satan. The notion of a devil had not yet emerged in Hebrew thought. Everyone went there, to different levels of comfort or discomfort, but no torture.
- 113) 32:31 – Neither this, nor any of the Egyptian prophecies happened, although Cyrus did invade Egypt 50 years later.
- 114) 33:12-20 – Preaching antinomianism 600 years before Paul!
- 115) 33:23-29 – Ezekiel is speaking to the exiles in Babylonia, but he’s talking about the remaining rural inhabitants of Judah, who are already beginning to ask about renewing the land. But Yahweh is denouncing them for worshiping idols and other sins against Him. Ezekiel argues against the Judean claim to the land because of Abraham, and recalls their violation of the covenant between God and Abraham.
- 116) 35:5-9 – They gave aid to the Babylonians in 587 when Jerusalem was sacked and the people exiled to Babylon.
- 117) 36:1-15 – Filled with prophetic formulae and messenger formula in 2,7,13. Ezekiel commanded to prophesy four times. Israel’s mountains summoned two times to hear the word of the Lord. Ancient readers would have thought that repetition was a virtue, not a vice. 118) 36:1 – The mountains are metaphorically the exiles.
- 119) 36:2-3 – The “Aha” is an expression of malicious glee earlier placed in the mouths of the Ammonites (25:3) and Tyre (26:2) after the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 120) 36:12-14 – The word “bereave” is “rob” in the New American, and could be in the passive

voice – be robbed or be bereaved – making the Israelites the victims rather than the perpetrators. On the other hand, v 14 seems to be clear that they are the cause of the death of their children.

- 121) 36:22-32 – God is concerned here only with his reputation among the nations. He does not require repentance, obedience, or worship. Echoes Numbers 14:15-16 where Moses intervenes to prevent Yahweh from annihilating the Hebrews, and Joshua 7:8-9 when God proposes to kill the 3,000 Hebrews who ran from their enemies at Ai. No turn of heart required by the Israelites – God will do the transplant to ensure unending obedience. /// This passage denies any joy in their returning from exile, such as Jeremiah predicted in Jer 33:10-11.
- 122) 37:9 – The verb “to breathe” (nph) is the same used in Gen 2:7 to describe how God breathed life into the human body he had created from the soil.
- 123) – **Chapter 38** begins the apocalyptic warnings. Ezekiel foretells the invasion and defeat of Israel by the hordes of a mysterious ruler from the North. But it is not known if Ezekiel himself wrote it. The events were to come in the far distant future – variously named as the Ethiopians, Goths, Muslim invaders of Europe, Mongols, Stalin, Hitler, etc.
- 124) 38:2 – Magog was the second son of Japheth (third son of Noah) and here may mean the "land of Gog." Gog may have been Gyges, founder of the Lydian monarchy, a century before Ezekiel. Gyges fell in battle against the nomad Cimmerians who terrorized the fertile crescent for decades. Perhaps Gyges was confused with his foe and Gog came to mean nomadic invaders in general. Eventually, by the time Revelation was written, Gog and Magog were further distorted into two enemies (Rev 20::8). Meshech and Tubal were also sons of Japheth. Rosh is not identified. (Gog and Magog were also the giants born to the daughter of Roman emperor Diocletian 900 years after Ezekiel.)
- 125) 38:6 – Beth-Togormah (house of Togormah) – one of Gomer’s sons (Gen 10:3). So four of Gog’s allies lie to the north of Israel. But Persia, Cush (Ethiopia) and Put (Libya) lie east and south.
- 126) 39:11 – The location of this valley is debated by scholars, not knowing if the sea was the Mediterranean, Dead Sea, or Sea of “Galilee.
- 127) 39:15-16 – The city of Hamonah may be Jerusalem and the inhabitants left behind when the city was destroyed 85 years earlier and now needs purification by the returning exiles.
- 128) – **Chapters 40-48** provide difficulty for Talmudic scholars because new laws are promulgated and practices described for which there is no scriptural precedent: Ezek 43:8 -- the palace of David which had heretofore joined the Temple, was now to be in another part of the city. 44:9 -- restricts non-Jews from the Temple. (A stone with Greek inscription warning Gentiles away from the Temple was discovered in 1870). 44:15 -- reserves priesthood to sons of Zadok (44:10-31), replaces Gentile workers with Levitical labor, "demoting" Levites to menial jobs in the Temple. (Zadok was the first high priest of Solomon's Temple {1 Kings 2:2-35}). Ezekiel himself was of that family. Also, there were new festivals described, and priests were allowed to serve as judges. Some suggestions were never acted upon.
- 129) 40:1- 43:12 – After the defeat of Gog and Magog, Ezekiel prophesies that an ideal Israel will be established. He describes in detail how the new temple should be built and the nature of its ritual. This served almost as a constitution for the re-established Jewish community under the Persians, so that Ezekiel is sometimes called the "father of Judaism." Ezekiel probably did not survive to go back to Jerusalem (he would have been

- 90) but Ezra carried his spirit back and the temple was organized in Ezekiel's image. ///  
According to Jewish tradition, this vision was in 572 on the Day of Atonement.
- 130) 43:4 – The turning point where Yahweh stops *showing* Ezekiel and begins *telling* him what to do.
- 131) 44:20 – Shaving the head was associated with death and mourning. Long unkempt hair was associated with leprosy (Lev 13:45).
- 132) 47:1-12 – Images drawn from other myths, probably Zion as the cosmic mountains (Isaiah 8:6-8) and the garden of Eden (Gen 2:8-14).