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SHORT TITLE

EZEKIEL'S LOCALE

EZEKIEL'S LOCALE (PALESTINE OR BABYLON OR BOTH)
WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SAME ON HIS MESSAGE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by
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May 1965

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In addition to being breadwinner of the family during this
year of graduate studies, the writer's wife has willingly
given her time to the important but tedious job of typing.
Her untiring help and inspiration have been important fac-
tors in the completion of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

From ancient times down to the present century the prophet Ezekiel was regarded as a resident among the exiles in Babylon and as God's prophet to the זְבָדִים of 597 B.C. Early in the twentieth century, however, Ezekiel's locale in Babylon began to be seriously questioned by reputable scholars.¹ A critical look at his message, it is said, indicates that it was addressed to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. The Babylonian setting is attributed to a later Babylonian editor. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the basis for this theory and to determine whether the traditional point of view should be abandoned. Did Ezekiel prophesy in Babylon or in Jerusalem or in both places? The answer to this question of locale has several important implications for Ezekiel's message.

Several factors led me to adopt the question of Ezekiel's locale as the topic for my thesis. In reading

¹Carl Gordon Howie, The Date and Composition of Ezekiel, in the Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, c.1940), IV, 3.

about the book of Ezekiel I found many divergent opinions concerning the residence of this prophet. I also came to realize that this question of location is the crucial concern of literary criticism of Ezekiel.² In a Babylonian setting the relevance for the exiles of his Jerusalem addresses must be explained. If he was active in Palestine, however, the passages which state his Babylonian residence must be accounted for. Upon the solution of this problem hinges the understanding of the book in large measure inasmuch as the locale of the prophet directly affects the emphasis and relevance of his message.

The study of the book of Ezekiel is full of many problems. In limiting ourselves to a study of his locale, it is necessary to declare our position in other areas of Ezekielian research. On the basis of the book's autobiographical nature, and its consistent use of planned sequence, visions, characteristic phrases, and language peculiarities throughout the book, we are assuming its

²H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Visions of Ezekiel," Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 92.

essential unity.³ Chapters 2-24 present the evidence of Israel's sin and its punishment, while chapters 25-48 proclaim Israel's restoration. We regard the many attempts to assign large sections of the book to later writers as misleading. Our first task is to interpret the meaning of the book as it stands.

When one approaches the texts with this attitude of confidence, prepared to listen to what they have to say in their present form, one has of course a better chance of understanding and interpreting difficult passages than if one approaches them with distrust on principle. One's scholarly ideal is then not to find mistakes, contradictions and inconsistencies in a book, in order to get back to the "original text" on this basis, but by intuition to live oneself into the author's world of thought and into the texts in the form they now have. It is by no means impossible that an author of the Old Testament falls into inconsistencies and contradictions. The human brain is not a logical machine that works without mistakes. Here too the most essential task is to try to understand.⁴

In this paper we shall also not treat the difficulty of Ezekiel's dates. It is assumed that they are to be taken

³See H. H. Rowley, "The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study," Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., c.1963), p. 171, for a list of scholars who still adhere to the substantial unity of the book.

⁴G. A. Danell, Studies in the Name Israel in the Old Testament (Uppsala, Sweden: Appelbergs Boktryckeri-A.B., 1946), p. 14.

substantially as correct, the point of reference being the deportation from Jerusalem to Babylon in 597 B.C. Nor shall we deal with the problem of textual corruptions. For our purposes we shall base our discussion on the Massoretic text.

In our study of Ezekiel's locale we shall proceed in the following manner. First we shall look at the ten major arguments which are urged against the Babylonian and in favor of the Palestinian location for Ezekiel's prophetic ministry. Then we shall set forth the theories of five men who posit a combination of sites for Ezekiel's labors. Next we shall seek to refute the propositions urged in the two previous sections. After that we shall present archaeological and linguistic proofs favoring a Babylonian residence. Finally we shall call attention to the implications which Ezekiel's living among the exiles has on his message.

A brief capsule history of Ezekiel's times may be helpful. The Northern Kingdom had fallen to Assyria in 722 B.C. Sennacherib came to Jerusalem in 701 B.C. but was routed by the angel of the Lord (II Kings 18 and 19). Josiah's reform took place in 621 B.C. While Assyria fell before Babylon in 612 B.C., Egypt lost to Nebuchadnezzar at the Battle of

Carchemish in 605 B.C. The first Chaldaean conquest of Judah took place in 605 B.C. (II Kings 24:1). In 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin and the upper strata of Judaeen society into exile (II Kings 24:10-16). When Zedekiah later rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar returned and destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (II Kings 25:1-17). It was during these troublesome times that Ezekiel lived and prophesied.

While in the area of history it may be helpful to give a brief summary of the previous investigations made into the area of Ezekiel's locale. As recently as 1907 Redpath could write:

Scarcely any doubt has ever been cast even by the extreme critics upon the unity and authenticity of the book, though a few glosses and interpretative words or notes may have found their way into the text. It does not, . . . present such problems for discussion as many other books offer.⁵

Only fifty-two years later Anderson wrote:

Until the end of the nineteenth century, few critics questioned the integrity and authenticity of the book. But, since then, it has become one of the storm centres of criticism. The main questions under debate are:

⁵Henry A. Redpath, The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock (London: Methuen & Co., 1907), p. xiv.

(a) unity and composition; (b) the place or places in which the prophet exercised his ministry; (c) chronology.⁶

The history that lies between these two statements can be briefly sketched here. In 1908 Herrmann⁷ made a thorough and systematic analysis of Ezekiel and found some repetitive material therein. In 1924 Hölscher⁸ limited the original material to some 143 of the 1272 verses in chapters 1-39 on the assumption that Ezekiel was responsible only for the poetic passages. In 1930 Torrey⁹ did away with all of the book as the work of Ezekiel by calling it a pseudepigraph written sometime between 240 and 180 B.C. In 1932 Hertrich¹⁰ urged that Ezekiel was a prophet in Jerusalem

⁶George Anderson, A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., c.1959), p. 133.

⁷Johannes D. Herrmann, Ezechiel, in Kommentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Ernst Sellin (Leipzig: A. Deicherische Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1924), passim.

⁸Gustav Hölscher, Hesekiel: Der Dichter und Das Buch (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1924), passim.

⁹Charles C. Torrey, Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy, in the Yale Oriental Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1930), XVIII, passim.

¹⁰Volkmar Hertrich, Ezechielprobleme (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1933), passim.

between 598 and 587 B.C., the Babylonian setting being an editorial addition. Harford¹¹ in 1935 and Bertholet¹² in 1936 also supported the Jerusalem ministry of Ezekiel. This movement reached its peak in Irwin's work¹³ of 1943. He completely realigned the book of Ezekiel, attributing the kernel of 251 of the verses to the great prophet and assigning all the rest to a variety of editors. In 1950 Howie¹⁴ returned to a Babylonian setting for Ezekiel on archaeological and linguistic grounds. In 1951 Orlinsky¹⁵ restated the case for Ezekiel's authenticity. In 1952 Kuhl¹⁶ insisted that only a Jerusalem locale for Ezekiel's ministry

¹¹John Battersby Harford, Studies in the Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935).

¹²Alfred Bertholet, Hesekiel in the Handbuch zum Alten Testament Series, edited by Otto Eissfeldt (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1936), vol. XIII.

¹³William A. Irwin, The Problem of Ezekiel: an Inductive Study (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1943).

¹⁴Howie, passim.

¹⁵Harry M. Orlinsky, "Where Did Ezekiel Receive the Call to Prophecy," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, CXXII (April 1951), 34-36.

¹⁶Curt Kuhl, "Der Schauplatz der Wirksamkeit Hesekiels," Theologische Zeitschrift, VIII (November/Dezember 1952), 401-418.

makes sense out of his messages of doom. In the same year Mullo Weir¹⁷ and Fohrer¹⁸ returned to the traditional point of view, taking the book of Ezekiel on the whole at its face value. In 1956 Zimmerli¹⁹ began his theological, critical, literary, historical study in Ezekiel and supported the Babylonian site for the prophet.

In our own study we have reached the following conclusions: (1) The ten major arguments which have been advanced to establish a Palestinian residence for Ezekiel are based on a misinterpretation of the text; (2) The propositions of those who posit various combinations of locale for Ezekiel are subject to the same criticism; nor is there any definite reference in the book of Ezekiel to the physical departure of Ezekiel from one place to another; (3) There

¹⁷Cecil J. Mullo Weir, "Aspects of the Book of Ezekiel," Vetus Testamentum, II (1952), 97-112.

¹⁸Georg Fohrer, Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1952).

¹⁹D. W. Zimmerli, Ezechiel, in Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament, edited by Martin Noth, first thirty-nine chapters of Ezechiel only available in eleven fascicles (n.p.: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins Neukirchen Kreis Moers, c.1956-1962; n.p.: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins GMBH Neukirchen-Vluyn, c.1962-1963), vol. XIII.

are archaeological and linguistic proofs that uphold Ezekiel's claim of being the prophet of the Babylonian זְבִי־לַיְלָא ; (4) The cumulative weight of evidence for a Babylonian setting is overwhelming; (5) The implications of Ezekiel's Babylonian residence give his book the depth of experience needed to appreciate the message of God's transcendence, God's call to obedience, God's destruction of Israel's enemies, God's renewal of the repentant individual and nation, and God's new temple in the city of His abiding presence.

¹Volkmann Hornström, *Ezekielprobleme* (Gießen: Verlag von Alfred Topelmann, 1933).

²J. G. Marchess, *Ezekiel*, in *An American Commentary on the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society [The Judson Press], 1934).

³Charles C. Torrey, *Ezekiel, Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*, in the *Yale Oriental Series* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), xviii.

CHAPTER II

THE ARGUMENTS FOR A PALESTINIAN LOCALE

Since the early nineteen hundreds there have been scholars who have doubted the Babylonian locale attributed to Ezekiel in his book. This critical movement mushroomed forth in the nineteen-thirties in the works of such men as Hertrich,¹ Matthews,² and Torrey.³ These and other scholars hold many diversified theories on other problems of the book of Ezekiel. But they agree on this one point--Ezekiel is not the prophet of the Babylonian זְבַדְיָא . In this chapter we shall take a look at the reasons why these scholars reject Babylonia as the scene of Ezekiel's labors (see appendix). There are ten major arguments which are urged against the Babylonian and for the Palestinian locale. We shall first state them as forcefully as possible, leaving

¹Volkmar Hertrich, Ezechielprobleme (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1933).

²I. G. Matthews, Ezekiel, in An American Commentary on the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society [The Judson Press], c.1939).

³Charles C. Torrey, Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy, in the Yale Oriental Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1930), XVIII.

an evaluation of their validity to a later chapter (IV).

When one attempts to determine the locale of the book of Ezekiel, one of the first questions to be answered is:

"To whom does the author address his message? Whom does he designate as his hearers?"

Upon reading the book in its present form, our first impression may well be that Ezekiel addresses his message to the exiles in Babylon. But a closer look will reveal that Ezekiel's message is actually directed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. In support of this fact we find the following terms appearing a great number of times:

יִשְׂרָאֵל	בֵּית	eighty-two times
יִשְׂרָאֵל	מִדְּבָר	seventeen times
יִשְׂרָאֵל		fourteen times
יִשְׂרָאֵל	דָּר	sixteen times
יִשְׂרָאֵל	בְּכִי	eleven times
יִשְׂרָאֵל	לְדָר	seven times
יִשְׂרָאֵל	שִׁבְעִי	seven times
יִשְׂרָאֵל	יָמֵי	seven times ⁴

In addition, we meet such designations as "the people of the land" (9 times), "the rebellious house" (13 times), and "the children of thy people" (1 time).

The next question is: "To whom does 'Israel' refer?"

⁴G. A. Danell, Studies in the Name Israel in the Old Testament (Uppsala, Sweden: Appelbergs Boktryckeri-A.-B., 1946), pp. 237-238.

Which people are meant?" If the passages where these terms appear are examined closely, it appears that in the large majority of instances they denote the men living in Judah and Jerusalem. Indeed Matthews goes so far as to say that Ezekiel's "ministry was definitely to the citizens of Jerusalem and the house of Israel and Judah--terms almost synonymous in this book."⁵ His conclusion is based largely on Harford's work⁶ on the name Israel, which he and others quote or refer to frequently.

In his book, Harford finds eighty-three occurrences of the phrase, "the house of Israel."⁷ He points out that in 3:1-7 it has a hard forehead (v. 7) and is a rebellious house (v. 9), terms which describe the guilty inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. In 4:3 the mention of the siege of Jerusalem (v. 7) and of the staff of bread in Jerusalem (v. 16) points to Jerusalemites. In 4:4 and in 9:9 the Northern Kingdom is meant. In 5:4 Israel definitely points

⁵Matthews, p. xxi.

⁶John Battersby Harford, Studies in the Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), pp. 77-101.

⁷Ibid., pp. 93-101.

to Jerusalemites since they observe the burning of the hair in the midst of the city. In 6:11 it may well include both Judah and Israel as indicated by the reference to the wilderness on the way to Riblah. In 8:6 the Jerusalemites are the doers of abominations in the temple. In 8:10-12 Israel means the Judahites. In 11:5 it points to the Jerusalemites who are slain in this city. Because Israel must be the exiles in 11:15, this passage is regarded as coming from a later date. In 12:6 the prophet probably has in mind the Jerusalemites. In 12:21-25,26-28 Israel is only intelligible as Jerusalemites. In 13:5,9 it seems to point to the exiles. In 14:4-11 it refers to those people left behind in Judah. In 17:2 it points to the people of the land of Judah. In 18:6,15,25,29-31 the situation is that of Jerusalem in the last years before the capture of the city. In 20:13,27,30,31,39,40,44 the people spoken to were men of Jerusalem and Judah. In 22:18 the audience is in and around Jerusalem. In 24:21 the situation is Jerusalem. In 28:24,25 the house of Israel is in exile. In 29:6,16,21 the reference is to the Southern Kingdom and its relations with Egypt. In 33:7,10,11,20 it is the Judahites who are the people of the land. In 34:30 the allusion is to all those

in exile from Judah and Israel. In 35:15 it may be the whole people of both kingdoms or more likely just those of the Southern Kingdom. In 36:10,17,21,22,32,37 it can only be the exiles. In 37:11,16 it is all twelve tribes. In 39:12,22,23,25,29 it is the restored people as the remnant of the whole nation. In 40:4-48:35 it is the future people of Israel regarded as the ideal twelve tribes happily reunited. His study leads Harford to the conclusion that "the house of Israel" usually refers to the people in Palestine and only in a few clearly defined instances does it point to any other group such as the יִשְׂרָאֵל .

This observation is further substantiated when one looks carefully at the call of Ezekiel. Here some of the terms listed previously occur regularly.

It is beyond any question that "Ezekiel" conceived it to be his mission to rebuke and warn the people of Jerusalem and Judea; the introductory chapters, 2-7, which assign to him his task, permit no doubt as to this. His mission is to "the children of Israel" (2:3ff.), to "the house of Israel" (3:4ff., 17ff.), to Jerusalem (5:5ff.), to "the mountains of Israel" (6:2), to "the land of Israel" (7:2), not even the little interpolation, "to the captivity" (!) in 3:11 can obscure the fact.⁸

⁸Charles C. Torrey, "Certainly Pseudo-Ezekiel," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIII (1934), 312.

Ezekiel's call clearly was to be watchman "to the house of Israel" and this means without a doubt to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. It is that group which he is to warn against its evil ways. Why should Ezekiel warn the exiles against their evil ways, for they have already been punished? Furthermore Jeremiah regards the exiles as the good figs. Hence there is no need to warn them against evil ways. They have learned the hard way that God is not to be trifled with. But the people in Jerusalem have need of such a watchman, as is also evident from parallel accounts in Jeremiah.

Man braucht schliesslich nur die Berufungsvision des Jeremia und Ezechiel zu vergleichen, so ergibt sich, dass es dieselben Leute sind, gegen die beide Propheten berufen werden. Es ist dasselbe Haus der Widerspenstigkeit, gegen das Jeremia und Ezechiel zu kämpfen haben. Das heisst aber: Es ist das Volk in Jerusalem, das durch seine Sünde bis auf diesen Tag dem Verderben, dem Ende entgeht, dem die Propheten ihre Warnungsrufe entgegenzustellen haben--es könnte sein, dass es sich noch retten liesse. Das ist auch das Auditorium des Ezechiel, nicht aber eine jahvetreue treue Exilsgemeinde, die ihre Strafe bereits dahin hat.⁹

The terms "house of Israel," "rebellious house," "the children of Israel" and others like them therefore can refer only to the people of Southern Palestine, except in the few cases

⁹Herntrich, p. 47.

where the context dictates otherwise. According to some of the scholars who espouse the Palestinian locale for Ezekiel's ministry, there are only two instances where the term "house of Israel" could be construed as a clear reference to the Babylonian $\pi\text{רְיָל}$. They are 11:15 and 37:16. Since Ezekiel's call is to be a watchman to "the house of Israel" and since this term or similar designations appear in like manner and meaning throughout the book, therefore it is evident that Ezekiel addressed his message to the people of Palestine and not to the exiles of Babylonia.

That "Israel" usually refers to Jerusalem and Judah in Ezekiel is demonstrated furthermore by the simple fact that the discourses are actually addressed to Jerusalem or Judah. Ezekiel speaks "to the mountains of Israel," (6:2), "to Jerusalem" (16:2), "to the land of Israel" (7:2). What is more, the subject matter of these addresses apply to Jerusalem for they have to do with the destruction of the city. Who could possibly be affected by this fact except the Jerusalemites, the very people addressed in these speeches? Put in other words

The nub of the difficulty rests on the improbability of a prophet's speaking to an audience which was not immediately at hand. Ezekiel seems to be in Jerusalem among rebellious people, and yet he claims to be in

Babylon with the exiles. Usually a prophet carried out his calling in the midst of those for whom his oracles were meant.¹⁰

Especially in chapters 1-24 everything points to Ezekiel as a prophet with a direct ministry to his people in Palestine. His speeches are addressed to them. The earnestness and sincerity of his orations demonstrate his personal involvement. It is next to impossible to think of the author as being far off in some other place. Rather it seems evident that he is right on the scene of events. Hertrich points out that a prophet to be effective at all must be in the midst of his people. In analyzing passage after passage he insists that their message could have no meaning to a Babylonian exile, but would be significant to any Judahites living in Palestine just before the time of the fall of Jerusalem. Throughout chapters 1-24 Ezekiel's theme is doom, doom, doom for Jerusalem. To put it in Hertrich's own words,

In dem Augenblick, in dem erkannt wird, dass nicht nur das Thema ezechieler Prophetie das Ende Jerusalems ist, sondern dass auch die Zuhörer, die angeredet werden, nur die Jerusalemer sein können, drängt sich

¹⁰Carl Gordon Howie, The Date and Composition of Ezekiel, in the Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, c.1950). IV, 6.

die Erkenntnis auf, dass auch die leidenschaftlich blutvolle Prophetie, die wir in den Kap. 1-24 vor uns haben, in Jerusalem gesprochen ist. Der Mann, der hier redet, steht mitten in einem erbitterten Kampf, in einem Kampf für und gegen seine Volksgenossen. Seine Reden werden geboren aus der furchtbar drohenden Not, die ihn selbst, und die, zu denen er redet, unmittelbar bedrängt.¹¹

Since Ezekiel in chapters 1-24 evidently addresses the people of Jerusalem and Judah for the most part, it is concluded that he is not living in the Babylonian בְּבָבֶל and a Palestinian locale is suggested.

Not only would the message in chapters 1-24 be more meaningful to Palestinians in and around Jerusalem, but it is also urged that it would be irrelevant to a Babylonian audience.

Im Anschluss an diese Bestimmung des Aufenthaltsortes Ezechiels erhebt sich die entscheidende Frage, ob seine Verkündigung in Babylonien denkbar ist. Lässt sie sich unter den dortigen Verhältnissen vorstellen? Ist sie göttliche Antwort auf die Nöte und Sorgen der Deportierten und passt sie zu ihrer geistigen und religiösen Lage?¹²

Herntrich and others answer the question with a resounding, "no." The prophecies of Ezekiel in their present setting

¹¹Herntrich, p. 129.

¹²Georg Fohrer, Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1952), p. 216.

would have nothing to say to a people in exile in Babylonia. The destruction of Jerusalem, the evil rampant there, and the other activities in Palestine would be of no concern to the exile in Babylonia. Furthermore the destruction of Jerusalem is described in detail right down to Zedekiah's leaving via the back wall. Of what benefit would such information be to the זְרָכָה ?

One other point is made. If we except the foreign nation oracles, we have no other instance of a prophecy that is not intended for an immediate audience. Therefore, we can safely conclude that Ezekiel's prophecy also was designed to be heard by people in Palestine, and that he addresses them there and not in Babylon.

If the nature of Ezekiel's oracles indicates a Palestinian locale, his symbolic actions are said to make a Babylonian setting still more improbable. A quick look at these is regarded as sufficient to substantiate this opinion.

In 2:9-3:3 Ezekiel eats a scroll with words of lamentation and mourning and woe on it. In 4:1-3 the prophet is to take a brick and lay siege works against the city of Jerusalem drawn thereupon. In 4:4-8 he is to lie on his left side for 390 days and his right side for forty days as

a sign of the punishment of Israel and Judah. In 4:9-17 the prophet is required to eat a special meal cooked on cow's dung as a sign of the coming siege of Jerusalem. In chapter 5 Ezekiel shaves his head and divides the hair into three portions for those who will burn in the city, for those who will die by the sword in the city, and for those who will die by the sword in scattered parts. In chapter 12 he acts the part of an exile. With baggage in hand he digs through the wall to escape. He even eats his food with fear and trembling as an exile would, not knowing what the future brings. Except for the first instance, all these symbolic actions have to do with the destruction of Jerusalem. As with the spoken word, so the message of the acted word would be of much more relevance to a Palestinian audience than it would to an audience of exiles in Babylon. What is more, it stands to reason that any prophecy which is acted out must have an immediate audience to be effective at all. Such symbolic actions about Jerusalem if they were performed in Babylon would have an air of unreality about them to say the least. Once again the circumstances are said to compel us to posit a Palestinian setting for Ezekiel. For in such circumstances these symbolic actions of Ezekiel fall right

into place as an effective message from the prophet of the Lord to the people of Jerusalem-Judah who are on the brink of destruction.

Not only are the oracles and symbolic actions in the book of Ezekiel, as it stands today, said to require a Palestinian audience, but it is also noteworthy that there are no sections in the book which speak to the specific needs of the exiles in Babylonia. Nowhere does the prophet receive the command: "Son of men, say to the exiles at Telabib." Nowhere does the book describe the lot of the exiles or tell of their daily life in Babylon. From other contemporary accounts we know that

Fronddienst ist erwähnt: Klagel 1,1; 5,5; Jer. 5,19; 28,14; Jes. 47,2-6; 49,26; 51,23; Psalm 137,3. Bei Ezechiel finden wir davon nichts. Nicht selten kam es vor dass Kriegsgefangene als Sklaven verkauft wurden. Vgl. Jes. 47,2; Nam. 3,10; Joel 3,8 r. 11 u. 13; Deuter. 28,32. Bei Ezechiel ist nichts davon bezeugt. Einkerkerungen waren an der Tagesordnung; Jes. 42,22; 43,14; 45,2; 49,9; 50,10; 52,2; Psalm 142,8. Der zweite Jesaja und die Klagelieder reden eine deutliche Sprache von der furchtbaren Not der Exulanten. Bei Ezechiel, dem groszen Propheten des Exils, finden wir von alldem nichts. Er ist vielmehr gut babylonisch gesinnt und preist die Milde, mit der die Babylonier die Juden behandelt hätten.¹³

To Hertrich this lack of local coloring is the most cogent

¹³Hertrich, p. 45.

argument for a Palestinian locale. He insists that it just doesn't make sense to assume that a prophet of God would not speak to the needs and circumstances of his fellow exiles. There is no parallel for such a state of affairs anywhere in the Bible. Therefore it must be assumed that Ezekiel was not among the Babylonian exiles. Where the scene of his activity was, must be determined by other factors, such as those stated above which point to a Palestine locale. The picture is said to be becoming clearer and clearer. A prophetic career like the one recorded in chapters 1-24 of Ezekiel would make sense only in a Palestinian setting.

Further support is found for a Palestinian locale for Ezekiel in a number of other references to circumstances that make up the background of the book. The first of these to be mentioned is frequently the Pelatiah incident recorded in chapter 11. As a result of Ezekiel's prophesying (עֲזַרְיָהוּ) Pelatiah, one of the leading idolaters in Jerusalem, is reported to have died (מָת). Now if this prophesying took place in Babylon, how is the death of Pelatiah to be explained? Is it plausible to assume that a man falls over dead just because somebody is prophesying in a far off country? On the other hand, if a Palestinian

setting for Ezekiel is posited, it becomes less difficult to understand how an idolater could fall dead as the result of a face to face encounter with a prophet of God.

Another such reference is found in 12:10-11. Here Ezekiel is commanded to explain his symbolic mimicking of the exile to the house of Israel. He is to make clear to them that this is a sign for them of a captivity yet to come. The exile is still in the future (יְשׁוּבֵי יְרֻשָׁלַיִם). It is urged that obviously Ezekiel must still be in Jerusalem, for the exile hasn't taken place yet.

In 5:2 the prophet is commanded to take a third of the hair which he has cut from his head and burn it "in the midst of the city" (בְּתוֹךְ יְרֻשָׁלַיִם). The city here mentioned can hardly be the one drawn on the clay tablet, it is claimed. It is more natural to take this phrase as referring to the actual city of Jerusalem.

In 11:15 the phrase "your fellow exiles" (עִמְּךָ הַגָּלוּת) implies that Ezekiel is one of the exiles. But it is evident from the subsequent context that this group was exiled after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Consequently the inference is drawn that Ezekiel could not have been in Babylonia previous to this, but was in Jerusalem.

In 20:46 (21:2 in the Massoretic Text) the prophet is told to turn to the south and facing in this direction he is to prophesy against the forest land of the Negeb (נֶגֶב אֲרָצוֹת יַדְיָן וְאֲרָצוֹת יַדְיָן). Now the Negeb is south of Jerusalem and not south of Babylonia. This is regarded as a definite indication of the prophet's actual locale in Palestine.

In 33:24 the prophet speaks of "the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel" (בְּאֵלֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר בְּאֵלֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר בְּאֵלֵינוּ). From the context, the land of Israel here can only mean the land of the Israelites in Palestine. By the use of the demonstrative pronoun "these," the prophet is said to make it evident that he himself is in Palestine (and this after the fall of Jerusalem). For if he were anywhere else but inside of Palestine itself, he would have said "those" waste places instead of "these."

Taken individually, these references may not be significant, but taken collectively (together with others like them too numerous to mention here in detail), they appear to be impressive and to give the definite impression that the prophet is working in Palestine, rather than in Babylon.

Another indication of Ezekiel's locale is found in his detailed knowledge of the events in Jerusalem. Although

Howie himself accepts a Babylonian setting for Ezekiel, he recognizes the force of this argument for a Palestinian scene of activity.

The prophet's intimate, first-hand knowledge of conditions in and about Jerusalem makes it necessary to assume that, in spite of statements to the contrary, he was a part of the life of the city. He was aware of the internal political intrigues in the tug-of-war between pro-Egyptian and pro-Babylonian factions in the capital (17:13-18; 23:19-21); he also knew of economic conditions inside the walls and the distress brought on by the siege (7:12-13), and most important he was cognizant of the general mood of the people (12:21-28). Possession of such detailed information would be incredible had Ezekiel been in Babylon.¹⁴

This succinct statement of the situation can readily be elaborated. The riddle of the eagle in the first half of chapter 17 contains references to historical events that actually happened to Josiah (5-9), Jehoiakim (10-13), and Zedekiah (14-20) prior to the exile.¹⁵ Ezekiel was aware of the abominable practices taking place in the temple (8:5-17; 11:1-13). He at least knew and was perhaps even well acquainted with the chief men of the city (11:1,13; 8:11). He knew the rulers of Jerusalem well enough to be able to give an accurate evaluation of their activities on the

¹⁴Howie, p. 8.

¹⁵Harford, p. 59.

international scene (19:1-24). Even more surprising is his knowledge of the people's reaction in Jerusalem to a given situation. He keeps on referring to proverbs that have become a vogue among the people (12:22; 18:21; 21:7; 33:10; 37:11).

Ezekiel's memories of conditions before 597, when he was assumed to have been carried into exile, might supply some of this information, and he might possibly have heard news from travellers. But such suppositions hardly satisfy the particularity of these references.¹⁶

Only one explanation of this detailed knowledge of life in Jerusalem is thought possible, namely that Ezekiel lived and worked in Jerusalem.

According to the present form of the book, the speeches which Ezekiel addresses to Jerusalem are spoken in Babylon and the actions which portray the fall of Jerusalem are performed in Babylon. Modern minds immediately raise the question whether such a thing is possible.

Are such actions at a distance or speeches at a distance possible? Hölischer categorically denies this. . . . Hertrich does not reject metapsychical phenomena on principle, but dismisses at least instances of action at a distance [like the Pelatiah incident--11:1-13]. . . . Kittel on the other hand does not find it at all

¹⁶H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Visions of Ezekiel," Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 72.

difficult to explain certain curious phenomena in Ezekiel as metapsychical.¹⁷

To explain such a phenomenon some scholars attribute some type of abnormal powers to Ezekiel. They believe that he was clairvoyant or that he had second sight. Other scholars refer to Ezekiel's dumbness (3:24-27; 24:26f; 33:21) and immobility (4:4-8) and regard him as mentally deficient. In fact, Bittenwieser¹⁸ and Broome¹⁹ pinpoint his affliction as catatonic schizophrenia. Now this entire problem of abnormality vanishes for those scholars who posit a Palestinian locale for Ezekiel. For rather than being off in some far off place, Ezekiel is then in Jerusalem instead. His speeches are logical exhortations to his fellow citizens in their hour of need. His actions are explainable as little dramas that were used to impress the point of his message on all who would see them. Howie sums up this line of thought for us when he writes

¹⁷Danell, pp. 241-242.

¹⁸Moses Bittenwieser, "The Date and Character of Ezekiel's Prophecies," Hebrew Union College Annual, VII (1930), 1-18.

¹⁹E. C. Broome Jr., "Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXV (1946), 277-292.

Acceptance of a Palestinian locale would eliminate the necessity for assuming the gift of second sight on Ezekiel's part. . . . This amazing gift was a satisfactory solution to the residence question of by-gone days, but modern science has rendered it invalid. If, as opponents of the Babylonian locale believe, Ezekiel actually lived in Jerusalem, not in Babylon, and saw the sights he reported, then the difficulty which modern minds have in accepting clairvoyance is immediately solved.²⁰

Modern scholars also point out that they are not the first to have detected discrepancies in the present form of the book of Ezekiel. Early Jewish tradition already tried to solve the problem of Ezekiel's locale. According to Rabbinic tradition, all prophecy from Yahweh had to take place in Palestine to be authentic. The Mekilta, for example, states in connection with Exodus 12:1b "that prophecy is a prerogative of the Holy Land, and though it is true that Ezekiel and Jeremiah prophesied in other countries, their career was begun in the Holy Land."²¹ But since everything in Ezekiel couldn't be made to square with this point of view, Baba Bathra 15a seems to offer a solution by stating, "The men of the Great Synagogue wrote [עֲזַרְיָהוּ] Ezekiel, the

²⁰Howie, p. 8.

²¹William A. Irwin, The Problem of Ezekiel: an Inductive Study (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1943), p. 57.

Twelve Prophets, Daniel, and the Scroll of Esther."²² Only by ascribing synogogue authorship to Ezekiel, were they willing to allow its Babylonian setting. In addition we have a direct statement from Josephus, the great Jewish historian, which reads, "but not only did he [Jeremiah] predict to the people [the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile], but also the prophet Ezekiel who first wrote two books about these things and left them [for posterity]" (Antiquities X:5:1).²³ There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem. Here Josephus ties Ezekiel to Jeremiah and puts them both in Jerusalem for their labors of prophecy. Torrey²⁴ also uses an argument from Jewish tradition to make his point that there was something awry in the book of Ezekiel from the start. He says that on the grounds of canonical criteria: (1) Divine inspiration; (2) A date before Ezra's time; (3) Religious content consistent with tradition; (4) The evidence of the prophet's ability to

²²Shalom Spiegel, "Toward Certainty in Ezekiel," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIV (1935), 159.

²³Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., c.1949), p. 234.

²⁴Torrey, Pseudo-Ezekiel, pp. 12-14.

foretell--Ezekiel should have been accepted without question by the Jews as canonical if Ezekiel had been taken at face value. But it wasn't. Indeed it was rejected from the canon for a time. The point of all this is to demonstrate that the Jews themselves, in the generations following Ezekiel were unclear about what to do with the book of Ezekiel in view of the fact that it purports to have been written and/or prophesied in Babylon. This problem was solved by their giving the book a Palestinian authorship. In like manner we can also solve our problems.

So far we have listed nine factors which are urged as pointing to a Palestinian setting for Ezekiel's labors. But there are passages in the book of Ezekiel which directly state that our prophet was a prophet in Babylon. We find these in 1:1b; 1:3b; 3:11a; 3:15; 3:23; 10:15b; 10:20a; 10:22a; 11:24-25; and 33:21. Attention is called to the fact, however, that these passages are actually very few in number. It is said to be even more striking that these are found in only four of the forty-eight chapters in the book of Ezekiel. Therefore it is the suggestion and adopted hypothesis of modern scholars that these passages are not the work of Ezekiel himself but rather the later insertion of a

redactor (editor or commentator). After the exclusion of these brief references to a Babylonian setting the book takes on a completely Palestinian atmosphere. The problem of Ezekiel's locale therefore is bound up with the larger question of what is genuine in Ezekiel and what is redactional. Irwin writes concerning the confused state of affairs in modern research on the book of Ezekiel:

Now the reason for this [confused] situation is clear. The study of the book has evolved as yet no clear criteria of originality that may be applied with reasonable assurance to its detailed analysis. All our questions--certainly all in which we have just now observed the complete bewilderment of our commentators--depend directly and crucially on the identification of the genuine Ezekiel.²⁵

Although there is much difference of opinion as to what is genuine and what is not genuine in the book of Ezekiel, there seems to be a definite consensus of opinion among many scholars that the Babylonian setting given to Ezekiel's work in the book of Ezekiel itself is not genuine. By this manner

A solution to the problem was arrived at from an entirely different angle. Instead of a dual personality, literary criticism has arrived at dual authorship. . . .

With this hypothesis, that seems to be sustained by internal evidence, we lose a strange, psychopathic

²⁵ Irwin, p. 24.

case, but gain a prophet . . . and also a priestly scribe.²⁶

Once a redactor is posited, the references to a Babylonian setting are easily removed. A case in point is 33:21 which is eliminated as a clear case of redactional work. Nothing in the context necessitates this reference. Indeed, this reference is said to destroy the flow of thought between 33:17-20 where God's justice is stated and 33:23-29 where God's justice is demonstrated in deed. The same is held to be true of other of these Babylonian references. They don't fit naturally into the text, but rather interrupt the sequence of thought. If the Babylonian references are the work of a later writer, we arrive at Hertrich's view of the book's contents which presents

us with the picture of two different worlds: the world of the genuine Judaeen prophet and the world of the exilic redactor; the latter has constructed a framework around the genuine prophecy. . . . Signs of his work are to be discerned throughout the book; the genuine prophecy forms the central picture around which the redactor has constructed his framework;"²⁷

At any rate it is considered possible to separate the

²⁶Matthews, pp. xxii-xxiii.

²⁷W. O. E. Oesterley, and Theodore H. Robinson, An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), p. 325.

Babylonian references from the rest of the book and thus to give Ezekiel a Palestinian locale in conformity with the rest of the book's account of his work.

In this chapter we have called attention to the arguments that are advanced in favor of a Palestinian locale: Ezekiel's commission to the house of Israel, his direct speeches to Jerusalem, his oracles against Jerusalem, his symbolic actions, his silence in regards to Babylonian conditions, various references that indicate his real setting, his intimate knowledge of conditions in Jerusalem, the lack of necessity to attribute abnormal powers to him, Jewish tradition, and modern redactional theories. On the basis of these considerations, Harford states

To sum up: (1) The main body of the prophecies bear all the marks of delivery in person to the people in their own land, and (2) It is possible to separate from them the passages which attribute them to a prophet living in exile in Babylon, who may or may not be Ezekiel himself.²⁸

²⁸Harford, p. 60.

CHAPTER III

VARIOUS SUGGESTED COMBINATIONS OF LOCALE

In this chapter we shall examine various theories which assign a multiple setting to Ezekiel's prophecies. It is to be noted that they are based in part on the same reasons cited in chapter II for suggesting a Palestinian background. Since, however, they would posit more than one locale, they must solve the additional problem of establishing his departure from one place to the other. When did it take place and where is it alluded to in the book of Ezekiel?

In their introduction to the Old Testament Oesterley and Robinson¹ seek to solve several problems of Ezekiel by positing a dual ministry for the prophet--a ministry of doom in Jerusalem and a ministry of mercy in Babylon. According to Oesterley² there are problems both regarding the

¹W. O. E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934).

²Dane R. Gordon, "Two Problems in the Book of Ezekiel," The Evangelical Quarterly, XXVIII (July-September 1956), 149. "Oesterley; he was responsible for the section on Ezekiel in their Introduction. T. H. Robinson has always accepted Ezekiel's unity, authenticity, and Babylonian origin. ED [F. F. Bruce]."

historical situation and the person of the prophet that the scholar should solve. In the first place, he agrees with those scholars, who point out how unlikely it is that Ezekiel, living among the exiles in Babylon, should direct the addresses in chapters 1-24 to the people in Jerusalem and have nothing to say to the Babylonian $\pi\acute{\rho}\acute{\iota}\lambda$ at all. This is most strange, for a prophet of God always addresses his message to the people around him. A second difficulty for Oesterley arises out of the nature of the messages. He finds it extremely hard to see "how the writer of chapters i-xxiv, which record prophetic activity, can be the same as the meditative philosopher who expresses his thoughts in the later chapters."³ Both problems, as Oesterley sees it, turn upon the question of authorship. After reviewing the work done by scholars like Herrmann,⁴ Hölscher,⁵ Torrey,⁶ and

³Oesterley and Robinson, p. 319.

⁴Johannes D. Herrmann, Ezechiel, in Kommentar zum Alten Testament, edited by Ernst Sellin (Leipzig: A. Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1924).

⁵Gustav Hölscher, Hesekiel: Der Dichter und Das Buch (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1924).

⁶Charles C. Torrey, Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy, in the Yale Oriental Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1930), vol. XVIII.

Herntrich,⁷ Oesterley seems to favor the view that Ezekiel prophesied in Jerusalem before being exiled in Babylonia. These Jerusalem prophecies were reworked later by an exilic redactor who gave them their present Babylonian setting. In this way, Oesterley also seeks to eliminate the problem of Ezekiel's complex personality.

According to Oesterley there are two major viewpoints held by scholars. The one sees Ezekiel in Babylon as a writer only whose complex visions are nothing more than a literary device. In 8:1 we read of Ezekiel's transportation to Jerusalem by the Spirit's hand but nowhere is it spelled out how he returned to Babylon as is evident in chapter 14 that he did. While this would lead some to posit that Ezekiel was gifted with second sight so that we have here a clear cut case of clairvoyance, these men would maintain that this is Ezekiel placing himself in imagination in his homeland. The other viewpoint sees Ezekiel in Palestine as a prophet on the scene whose complex visions are the result of a later redactor. Although each of these views brings with it its own peculiar difficulties, in the end Oesterley

⁷Volkmar Herntrich, Ezechielprobleme (Giessen: Verlag von Alfred Töpelmann, 1933).

is convinced that the composite authorship theory of the book of Ezekiel leaves fewer questions unanswered. On this basis he draws the following conclusions:

Ezekiel began his ministry in Jerusalem soon after Jehoiakim's revolt against Nebuchadrezzar in 602 B.C. His denunciations against the people of Jerusalem and his prophecies of the fall of the city were soon after put into writing by the prophet himself. In 597 B.C. he was carried captive to Babylonia, and took with him his written prophecies. While in exile he added to his writings prophecies of restoration; these were addressed to his fellow exiles; but whether they were written before or after the fall of the city in 586 B.C. cannot be stated with certainty. At some later period during the Exile the prophet's writings came into the hands of one of his co-religionists who edited them in such a way as to make it appear that the whole material was written in Babylonia. Further minor additions were made still later by one or more redactors.⁸

In his book, Irwin⁹ finds that the problem in the book of Ezekiel revolves about three questions. These are: Is it written by Ezekiel in the sixth century B.C. or is it pseudonymous? Is it the work of one or several authors? Is it written in Palestine or in Babylonia? All three problems have only recently been raised by modern critical scholarship. For many centuries it was held that Ezekiel alone

⁸Oesterley and Robinson, pp. 328-329.

⁹William A. Irwin, The Problem of Ezekiel: an Inductive Study (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1943), passim.

wrote the book during the sixth century B.C. in Babylon.

Irwin's book is a painstaking, word for word analysis of the text of Ezekiel. He finds duplicate oracles (3:17-19 and 33:7-9; 4:16-18 and 12:18-19), conflate recensions (7:1-12) and additions by later commentators to meet their needs (36:7-12) and concludes that the book of Ezekiel has more than one author. Of these authors, one is the sixth century B.C. prophet, Ezekiel. Over 200 pages in Irwin's book are devoted to the attempt of isolating the genuine Ezekiel material from its later accretions. Such a textual study must precede, he feels, before one can deal with the problem whether Ezekiel was active in Palestine or Babylon.

Irwin starts his analysis of the book of Ezekiel with chapter 15, which contains the poem of the vine. Here inhabitants of Jerusalem are compared to a worthless charred branch. Irwin's conclusions regarding the problem of Ezekiel's locale on the basis of this chapter are stated rather tentatively:

It [the vine poem] is unquestionably concerned with conditions in Judah, but this does not preclude that the prophet, earnestly concerned with the character and welfare of his people as he was, should have uttered it in Babylonia. The older view which saw him warning and edifying his fellow-exiles with pictures of the badness and certain destruction of Jerusalem is intrinsically reasonable. If the issue entails no more than a

repudiation of this consideration; then we shall do well to bow to tradition. In the present case we may observe merely that Ezekiel's familiarity with and absorption in the thinking and affairs of the Jerusalem community carries some probability that he was among them at this time. But we must wait to see whether conclusive evidence will arise.¹⁰

After an analysis of chapters 4-5, Irwin proceeds to chapter 6. Regarding this prophecy to the mountains of Israel, he ventures a more pointed opinion. He insists that since this chapter is a denunciation of the pagan cults and immoral practices in Palestine, one gains the impression that the biblical author is familiar with current events in Palestine and must conclude:

Its place of utterance can be determined only on the grounds invoked already, though one comes to feel that the picture of Ezekiel thus threatening Palestinian practices while himself in the different conditions of far-off Babylonia is improbable.¹¹

In 6:12 Irwin finds the first definite clue to Ezekiel's whereabouts. Translating 77YJ as "besieged" rather than as "left," it is evident to him that this oracle is from the time of the final siege of Jerusalem. The "near" are the Jews of Judah who shall die by the sword of

¹⁰Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹Ibid., p. 55.

Nebuchadrezzar and the "far" are the Babylonian exiles.

Irwin therefore claims that this oracle renders conclusive proof that Ezekiel is in Palestine at the time the city was besieged. "Beyond a question Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry in Palestine."¹² Since Ezekiel is in Jerusalem at the time of the siege, it is an impossibility that he was one of the exiles in 597 B.C.

In 11:15 Irwin finds collaborating proof of his position. For in this passage Ezekiel is explicitly included in the group exiled after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. because he is subjected to the taunt of those left behind, "They have gone far from the Lord; to us this land is given for a possession." From this statement Irwin makes the further deduction that Ezekiel actually did go to Babylon but not as early as 597 B.C.¹³ Any doubt as to Ezekiel's early prophetic activity in Jerusalem is completely dispelled in Irwin's mind by one passionate oracle about the last days of Jerusalem in chapter 7, which

was written nowhere but in Jerusalem and certainly not more than a few days before Zedekiah made his ill-

¹²Ibid., p. 57.

¹³Ibid., p. 68.

starred attempt to save himself by abandoning the city to the fate he had brought upon it. Whatever uncertainty may attach to the locale of other oracles, this, along with the cogent evidence of 6:12, demonstrates beyond any question Ezekiel's presence in Jerusalem during the siege and right through to its tragic conclusion. Then, as we saw from 11:15, he was numbered with the second deportation.¹⁴

Irwin rids himself of the problem of those references in the book of Ezekiel which would place Ezekiel in Babylonia before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by attributing them to an editor. Indeed he gives the editor credit for much of the material in the book of Ezekiel. In 33:21-22 Irwin claims to catch the Babylonian editor "red-handed." Since he has shown to his satisfaction that Ezekiel must have been in Jerusalem during its fall, there is no need of a messenger to tell him about it, as these verses would have us believe.

After the fall of Jerusalem, Irwin insists, Ezekiel did go to Babylon. Whether he went voluntarily, as some would suppose because of his pro-Babylonian stance or whether by force, the book does not tell us. "But go he did in either case our evidence leads us to believe."¹⁵ Irwin finds his

¹⁴Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 329.

strongest evidence in the parable of the two sticks recorded in 37:15-28. This parable could not have been uttered during his stay in Jerusalem in the trying times of Zedekiah's reign, for his prophecies at that time were full of doom and threat only.

It can only be that this is a word from Ezekiel in his exile in Babylonia, probably the result of long years of thought and musing there. There, it would seem, he had come somehow in touch with survivors of the northern tribes, still preserving their Israelite identity, and their common exile and Israelite lineage prompted the conviction that, in the purposes of God, Israel would again be one people in the land of their fathers.¹⁶

Irwin's view of the scene of Ezekiel's labors can be summarized as follows. He started his prophetic ministry in Jerusalem. His message was only doom. After the fall of Jerusalem he joined the exiled community in Babylon as a member of the second deportation in 586 B.C. and he continued his prophetic ministry. Only now his message is one of hope and restoration. For Irwin, Ezekiel is the great prophet who spanned the gap between the homeland and the dispersion, between judgment and mercy, between Old Testament religion and Judaism.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 251.

A third exponent of a dual ministry for Ezekiel is Curt Kuhl, who has been working with the problems in Ezekiel for more years than most scholars. In 1932 he could already write

Aus nunmehr über zwanzigjähriger Beschäftigung mit den Hes.-Problemen ist mir je länger je mehr deutlich geworden, dass Hes. kaum Exilsprophet gewesen sein kann . . . und dass als Zeit seiner Wirksamkeit die Regierung Manasses manches für sich hat.¹⁷

Two articles, one written in 1952¹⁸ and the other in 1956,¹⁹ establish the fact that he is cognizant of the arguments for and against the various theories which attribute different locales to Ezekiel. Evidence of his acquaintance with this subject is also found in his Old Testament Introduction in 1953, translated into English in 1961.²⁰

This German scholar also finds that the threats against

¹⁷Curt Kuhl, Theologische Literaturzeitung, LVII (January 1932), column 29.

¹⁸Curt Kuhl, "Der Schauplatz der Wirksamkeit Hesekiels," Theologische Zeitschrift, VIII (November/Dezember 1952), 401-418.

¹⁹Curt Kuhl, "Zum Stand der Hesekiel-Forschung," Theologische Rundschau, XXIV (1956-1957), 1-53.

²⁰Curt Kuhl, The Old Testament: Its Origins and Composition, translated by C. T. M. Herriott (London: Oliver and Boyd, c.1961).

Jerusalem and Judah do not make sense if delivered in Babylonia. To seek a solution of this problem by asserting that Ezekiel was some sort of morbid, bizarre character subject to cataleptic seizures, makes even less sense to him. Josephus already sensed the difficulty and sought to alleviate it by assuming that Ezekiel wrote his prophecy in Babylon and then sent it to Jerusalem. But since the symbolic actions couldn't be written down, his suggestion does not help.

Kuhl believes that a sensible answer has been found by modern scholars who posit a double ministry for Ezekiel: first in Jerusalem and Judah and later among the יְרֵמְיָהוּ . He does not, however, claim that this solution is more than a plausible theory and therefore asks:

Aber sind wir weiter zur Annahme berechtigt, dass, wie Uria nach Aegypten, so Hes. von Jerusalem zur Gola geflohen ist? Wir haben kein einwandfreies glattes Ja auf diese Frage. Aber immerhin finden sich doch Anzeichen dafür, dass der Prophet das getan hat, und zwar auf ausdrücklichen Befehl Jahwes: "Auf! Gehe hin zur Gola." (3.11).²¹

Kuhl finds confirmation of the fact that Ezekiel actually went to the יְרֵמְיָהוּ when in verse 15 of this chapter he

²¹Kuhl, "Schauplatz," Theologische Zeitschrift, p. 413.

says: "and I came ($\aleph \aleph \aleph$) to the exiles at Telabib."

The manner in which the command is given and executed clearly indicates a physical trip and eliminates a visit only in spirit.

The date of this event seems to be indicated by "the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin" (1.2)--that is 593 B.C. When he arrived among the Golah he kept himself very quiet to begin with until he experienced another calling in a second vision (111.4ff.). This makes the otherwise obscure reference to his "bitterness in the heat of my spirit" (111.14b) understandable. Similarly it helps to elucidate the statements about shutting himself up (111.24) and the long period of silence (111.26), which was only brought to an end when the news of the fall of Jerusalem was delivered by the refugee (xxx111.22).²²

In Babylon Ezekiel embarked on a second career. It was characterized by the promise of future salvation which pervaded his message. This second phase of Ezekiel's ministry is recorded in the small "Golah Book" (chapters 1-3, 33-37). This "book" in its present form is the work of Ezekiel's followers and contains such passages as falsely ascribe a Babylonian setting for Ezekiel's preaching of doom. Actually he delivered all messages of this nature to the people in Jerusalem before going into exile.

Kuhl contends that such a proposed double ministry by

²²Kuhl, Origins, p. 197.

Ezekiel makes sense only if a different setting for each phase of his preaching is posited. Therefore he can say

Aus dieser Tatsache der Zweisträngigkeit heraus hat sich die Auffassung vom Wirkungsfeld des Propheten in neuerer Zeit verlagert, und zwar dahin, dass mit einem doppelten Wirken des Propheten zu rechnen sein wird: zuerst in der Heimat und dann später in der Gola.²³

Another scholar who agrees with Oesterley, Irwin, and Kuhl that Ezekiel was not active in Babylon alone, is Bertholet.²⁴ He lists four main objections to the view that Babylon was the sole site of Ezekiel's labors. The Pelatiah incident (11:13) is explainable only if Ezekiel prophesied in Jerusalem. In 5:2 it expressly states that Ezekiel is to burn his hair "mitten in der Stadt." The trials by fire in 20:31 no doubt were a form of idolatry going on in Jerusalem after the failure of Josiah's reform and therefore he concludes "dass die sich nicht auf dem Boden des Exils finden, wo Opfer für sie überhaupt unmöglich waren."²⁵ Finally, the temple plans in 40:48-41:15 give evidence that Ezekiel was familiar with the ruins of the Solomonic temple. On the

²³Kuhl, "Schauplatz," Theologische Zeitschrift, p. 403.

²⁴Alfred Bertholet, Hesekiel, in the Handbuch zum Alten Testament Series, edited by Otto Eissfeldt (Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1936), XIII, passim.

²⁵Ibid., p. xv.

basis of these considerations Bertholet finds that Ezekiel did prophesy in Jerusalem for a time and that in this setting his message takes on a new meaning:

Nun fällt ein völlig neues Licht auf den Charakter dieser Beziehungen [Ezekiel's call to be watchman of Israel] wenn sich sein Wirken zunächst inmitten der jerusalemischen Bevölkerung abspielt: er wird, für diese Zeit wenigstens, wiederum zum Propheten im Voll-sinn des Wortes, und seine Verkündigung bekommt ihren richtigen „Sitz im Leben“. Damit erhält sie zweifellos etwas ungleich Unmittelbareres und Lebensvolleres und Überzeugenderes.²⁶

According to Bertholet, Ezekiel was also active in Babylon. His departure thither he finds alluded to in chapter 12. Here Ezekiel is to prepare an exiles's baggage, dig through the wall in the evening and depart to another place as an exile. All of this is described as symbolic action on the part of Ezekiel, but Bertholet sees in it the actual occasion of Ezekiel's transfer from Palestine to Babylon. The fact that it is presented as symbolic action doesn't strike Bertholet as strange. For, according to him, we often find an actual event made into a symbol. It is as though Ezekiel said, "See what has happened to me; see also its meaning for you." The phrase in 12:3 "you shall go like an exile from

²⁶Ibid., p. xvii.

your place to another place in their sight" is most important to Bertholet. On the basis of this phrase he builds his unique theory of three residences for Ezekiel. As Bertholet would understand it, this phrase tells us that Ezekiel went to "another place" in Palestine after leaving Jerusalem and before going to Babylon. This other place is some unnamed town in Judaea. Ezekiel's living in another Judaeian town then explains the statement that the news of the fall of Jerusalem was brought to him by a fugitive (33:21), on that day (24:26), an impossibility if Ezekiel were in Babylon already. According to Bertholet the symbolic action in 12:17-20 probably took place while Ezekiel was in this "other place." Then shortly after the fall Ezekiel went on to Babylon where he received a second visionary call to prophesy (1:4-2:2) in the thirteenth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, 585 B.C., (1:1). But Bertholet's theory that Ezekiel was God's prophet in two locations in Palestine as well as in Babylon at a later date has found no followers.

Smith²⁷ also finds the main problem in Ezekiel, which

²⁷James Smith, The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: A New Interpretation (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), passim.

he calls the "Ezekiel-Enigma," in the scene of the prophet's activity. He agrees with the view that one is hard put to explain why or how the main theme of the first thirty-seven chapters of this book deal with the fate of the Palestinian inhabitants if they were spoken in Babylon. He points out that not only do most of the oracles hint at a Palestinian rather than a Babylonian background, but also that there is nothing in the book which demonstrates that Ezekiel was one of the captives in 597 B.C. There is for example no mention of priests in connection with this 597 B.C. deportation, whereas in the exile of 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25:18) priests are explicitly included. Internal evidence convinces him of a Palestinian setting for Ezekiel during Manasseh's reign. The type of idolatrous situation described in his book as well as the failure of Jeremiah and Kings to mention Ezekiel form the basis for this contention of an earlier date for Ezekiel's Palestinian labors. The few passages which would suggest otherwise are regarded as the work of an editor. Thus Smith has a chapter on non-Babylonian oracles and one on oracles of doubtful locale, but none on Babylonian oracles.

A closer look at the oracles regarded by Smith as

Palestinian, lead him to the conclusion that most of them can even be restricted to the Northern Kingdom. He suggests that "the phrase 'House of Israel' refers to the Northern Kingdom and has no reference to Judah."²⁸ Other factors that he advances in favor of the Northern Kingdom as the scene of Ezekiel's activity are the idolatries enumerated in chapter 6, the oracles against the false prophets in chapter 13, the simile of the vine in chapter 11, the tracing of Jerusalem's origin to the Amorites in chapter 16, the attributing of the worst sin to Judah in chapter 23, the problems of the return in chapter 34, and the alien words and phrases throughout the book. The evidence appears to become cumulative to Smith and "to provide an unanswerable argument in favor of the theory that Ezekiel was a North Israelite, and that the appeal of his book was directed to the North Israelite community."²⁹

Smith says that the composite character of the book of Ezekiel as it now stands can be accounted for in three ways. It could be the work of a non-Palestinian and a

²⁸Ibid., p. 56.

²⁹Ibid., p. 71.

Palestinian artificially combined by a redactor whose purpose was to make the whole book look like the work of a prophet associated with the Diaspora. Or it could be the work of Ezekiel who was endowed with the gift of second sight. Or it could all be the work of Ezekiel, but written at different times and in two locales--in Palestine and among an exiled community. Smith favors the third suggestion. Yet he makes no attempt to explain how or when Ezekiel left Palestine and came to be in exile. For Smith it is enough to say that he wrote from both of these locations.

By the path traced above, Smith comes to this conclusive summary:

that Ezekiel was a North Israelite speaking to the North Israelites from some place in North Israel and to North Israelite exiles, that he was a determined opponent of the Jerusalem priesthood in their cult during the reign of Manasseh, and that his aim was to put heart into his countrymen, depressed by adversity and the apparent loss of Yahweh's support. The oracles all bear the stamp of one mind, and the redactor, though unwilling to tamper with the oracles themselves, wished to give the impression that the book was the work of a Judaeen, that the prophecies were delivered in Babylonia, and sought to achieve his purpose by giving a bias to the glosses by which he linked the various oracles together. It is noteworthy that if the first three verses of ch. 1, vv. 3, 4 of viii., and v. 24 of xi. be rejected, all the oracles except three could have been delivered in Palestine, and a large

number of them could, in the writer's opinion, have been delivered nowhere else.³⁰

These theories which posit more than one country as the setting for Ezekiel's prophetic ministry have many of the same difficulties as those which posit only a Palestinian background for him. Therefore we shall evaluate both of them in the following chapter.

³⁰Ibid., p. x.

CHAPTER IV

REFUTATION OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR A PALESTINIAN LOCALE

In this chapter we shall take a close look at the objections brought against the Babylonian and favoring the Palestinian background for Ezekiel's book. In doing so we shall follow the order of thought presented in chapter II. The reasons advanced for each proposition will be examined and their validity evaluated. We shall add whatever material seems necessary to understand any point which goes beyond the base given to it in chapter II. In the end we shall draw the conclusions which our study will allow.

From those scholars who accept a Palestinian setting for Ezekiel, one gains the impression that the term "Israel" in the book of Ezekiel refers predominantly to the Jerusalemites and Judahites. A consistent usage of this name by Ezekiel cannot be established. His use of the term "Israel" is much broader than first meets the eye. Thus in 20:5 we have "Israel" in the sense of the historical Israel as it existed before the divided kingdom. The reunited Israel of the future is the meaning of the "house of Israel" in 20:40. "The whole house of Israel" in 11:15 is an

exclusive reference to the exiles. "The people of Israel" in 4:13 can only be the Judahites and Jerusalemites, for they are the people who haven't been dispersed yet. By the distinction made between "the house of Israel" and "the house of Judah" in 9:9 the obvious meaning for the former is the Northern Kingdom. The above examples of the varied usage of this term in the book of Ezekiel could be multiplied many times. There is no simple, one-meaning usage of "Israel" by Ezekiel.

What is more, all the phrases used with "Israel" ("house of Israel," "children of Israel," "land of Israel," and others) in this book do not follow the pure logic of our Western minds. We would most likely make "the children of Israel" refer to one group, "the house of Israel" to another group, and "Israel" to yet another group. Or at the very least we would distinguish between the various terms by using the one in one type of setting and the other for another kind of emphasis. But this is not the case in Ezekiel. These various phrases are used almost indiscriminately by him. It is impossible to show any consistency in his choice of the various formulations in their wide usage throughout the book. This makes it extremely hard to identify the

group meant by a given term. That the usage of these terms is fluid, is one of the conclusions Danell reaches in his detailed study of the name "Israel." He states

Often a stricter and more consistent use of language is demanded of a biblical author than is usually required of a writer in our own times. One result of this investigation [into the name Israel] is the recognition that it is wrong to press too hardly the modes of expression in the Old Testament texts. Owing to the absence of strictness, the limits between the various senses are often fluid, and it is easy to glide directly over from one to another. For instance, that "Israel" means "northern Israel" in the beginning of a section, is no guarantee that it will not appear later in the same section in a different sense.¹

Chapter 4 is a good example of Ezekiel's mobile usage of these terms. In v. 3 "the house of Israel" may well be the יִשְׂרָאֵל , for whom the prophet is picturing the siege of Jerusalem, or it could mean the whole people of Israel as well. In vv. 4-5 the term "Israel" is an obvious synonym for the Northern Kingdom as it is opposed to the "house of Judah" in v. 6. However, in v. 13 "Israel" clearly refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah.

This varying content of the name Israel is very instructive. It shows that the fate of Jerusalem is of the greatest interest to the whole of Israel,

¹G. A. Danell, Studies in the Name Israel in the Old Testament (Uppsala, Sweden: Appelberg's Bodtryckeri-A.-B., 1946), p. 10.

especially the exile community, and that this community also has a strong sense of affinity with the Northern kingdom that had fallen a long while back.²

It was Harford's detailed study of the term "Israel" which led him and many subsequent scholars to conclude that this term is to be identified with the Palestinians left behind after the first deportation in 597 B.C. Since then studies by Danell and Fohrer³ have clashed with this conclusion. In listing the uses of "Israel" in Ezekiel, Fohrer finds forty-two plus instances where it represents the united people of Israel, two instances where the Northern Kingdom is pointed to, thirty-six instances where it refers to the exiles, and two instances where the meaning cannot be determined.⁴ Needless to say, Fohrer and Harford do not agree in their interpretation at every point. The fact is that many of the occurrences of the "Israel" terms are indefinite as to who is meant. The context in many cases is a help only after one has already concluded from which spot Ezekiel is speaking. Thus Harford, who posits a Palestinian

²Ibid., p. 244.

³Georg Fohrer, Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1952).

⁴Ibid., pp. 210-212.

locale for Ezekiel, finds many more references to the Palestinians among the "Israel" terms, whereas Fohrer, positing a Babylonian setting for Ezekiel, discovers many more allusions to the exiles among them.

We see the same factors operating in Ezekiel's call. He is called to a stubborn people, "the people of Israel" (2:3) and "to the house of Israel" (3:4). Who is meant? The exiles or those left behind in Palestine? From these texts one can't tell with certainty. A stubborn people could seem to be descriptive of the Jerusalemites, Jeremiah's "bad figs" (Jeremiah 24:8), yet this need not be so. However, not all the passages are so ambiguous. In 3:11 Ezekiel spells it out for us that he means his message for the אֲרָמִיָּה . Torrey⁵ thinks this passage can be ignored. But by so doing he misses the entire thrust of Ezekiel's call which is to the אֲרָמִיָּה , a people not of foreign speech, but his fellow exiles. The other phrases used by Torrey tell us that Ezekiel addressed some of his oracles to the inhabitants of Palestine, but they do not negate Ezekiel's call to the אֲרָמִיָּה . Ezekiel's call was to be watchman to the "house of Israel" and this means to the exiles. From Jeremiah's

⁵Supra, p. 14.

point of view the exiles may have been the "good figs." Nevertheless from Ezekiel's on the spot observation they were anything but good figs. Thus

The prophecies in 2-24, though they are chiefly concerned with those at home, are addressed to the golah. Their rebelliousness must have consisted primarily of stubborn persistence in the behalf of the indestructability of Jerusalem, and the purpose of the prophet's speeches and actions must have been mainly to crush these false hopes. This composite view of the exiles is really more realistic than out and out optimism about them would have been.⁶

It is a foregone conclusion on the part of some scholars that the Babylonian exiles would have no need of a prophet. But the Book of Ezekiel tells us otherwise. They did need a prophet. And God sent them one (3:11). The people in exile were so little inclined to obey the word of this prophet of God that at times Ezekiel finds himself calling his contemporaries the house of rebellion (3:9,26, 27; 12:2,3,9; 17:12 and so forth).

Consequently

Professor Torrey has done well in laying stress on the word "Israel" as designating the audience which the prophet has in view, but to interpret "Israel" as referring only (or chiefly) to Judah and Jerusalem is to

⁶Danell, pp. 243-244.

miss the true (and larger) meaning of this great name.⁷

"Israel" can refer to the Northern Kingdom, to the Southern Kingdom, to the exiles, or to all of Israel together. By force of circumstances Ezekiel's message is delivered directly to the יִשְׂרָאֵל . This does not rule out the possibility, however, that his message also reached Jerusalem. Ultimately his message was intended for all the people of Israel wherever they might live. Surely this is what Ezekiel would tell us by making his usage of the term "Israel" so broad and varied. Ezekiel's message is to "Israel," that is, to the exiles directly, to the Jerusalemites indirectly, and to all of Israel ultimately.

There is no denying that Ezekiel addresses a large part of his message in the first twenty-four chapters to the Jerusalemites and Judahites. But to draw the conclusion from this that he was living in Jerusalem and Judah is false logic. Since other passages in the Book expressly state that Ezekiel is in Babylon at the time, another explanation of these direct addresses to Jerusalem must be looked for.

⁷W. Emery Barnes, "The Scene of Ezekiel's Ministry and His Audience," The Journal of Theological Studies, XXXV (April 1934), 164.

As one scholar puts it

That many of his oracles are addressed to the people of Jerusalem is no evidence that they were delivered in Jerusalem. There is no reason to suppose that Amos, or that all the foreign oracles included in the other prophetic books were delivered to other ears than Israelites. There is thus no compelling reason why Ezekiel could not have spoken before the exiles his prophecies that were in form addressed to the people of Jerusalem.⁸

Ezekiel would not be the first prophet to utter prophecies about one group to another group. His fellow prophets, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, all follow the same procedure in speaking against foreign nations. Almost an exact parallel is found by Fohrer in Deutero-Isaiah, who speaks to Jerusalem although in his opinion he is in Babylonia.⁹ In other Old Testament books we also have oracles against various kings. Yet these oracles were not always addressed to the king face to face (see Amos 7). From all this Howie is able to draw the conclusion

One wonders how often any prophet stood in the presence of those for whom his words were intended. At

⁸H. H. Rowley, "The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study," Men of God: Studies in Old Testament History and Prophecy (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, c.1963), p. 194.

⁹Fohrer, p. 203.

best he stood before a fraction of his intended audience.¹⁰

On the other hand, Ezekiel in prophesying to the exile community at Tel-abib may have a much wider audience in mind. His message could easily have been

Conveyed by the familiar trade route of the Great Power northward and eastward, reaching to scattered Hebrew communities of Mesopotamia and Syria, Judah, Jerusalem, and Egypt.¹¹

That there was contact between the exiles and the homeland we know from Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jeremiah 29).

Yet

Wir erfahren jedoch nichts von einer solchen Übermittlung der Worte des Propheten [to Jerusalem]. . . . War er zu den Deportierten gesandt, sollte er ihnen die Eingebungen und Erkenntnisse verkünden, die ihm zugeflossen waren, so war eine Übermittlung dieser Worte an die Jüdaer und Jerusalemer selbst unwichtig und unnötig. War seine Verkündigung für die Deportierten bestimmt, um sie von ihrem falschen Vertrauen auf Jerusalem und seinen Tempel auf den rechten Weg zu leiten, so spielte es keine Rolle, ob die Jerusalemer seine Worte zu Ohren bekamen.¹²

¹⁰Carl Gordon Howie, The Date and Composition of Ezekiel, in the Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, c.1950), IV, 15.

¹¹Barnes, p. 164.

¹²Fohrer, p. 247.

A close analysis of Ezekiel's language in these sections addressed directly to the Jerusalemites likewise indicates his dwelling in Babylonia.

Ezekiel uses sometimes the Second and sometimes the Third Personal Pronoun; in neither case does this imply that he is addressing them from their own soil. What is more significant is that sometimes he begins in the Second Person and then lapses involuntarily into the more natural Third Person (e.g., with Jerusalem: v 12ff., vii 11ff., xxii 25ff., xxiii 42ff., with foreign nations: xxvi 4ff., xxviii 22ff., xxix 9ff., xxxi 10ff., xxxii 12ff.). . . . Equally significant is Ezekiel's habit, while speaking of the Judaeans in the Third Person, to interject a remark to the exiles in the Second Person (e.g., vi 13, xii 20, xiv 22, 23, xv 7, xviii 21).¹³

Herntrich's insistence that a prophet to be effective at all must be in the midst of his people is well taken. Ezekiel is in the midst of his people, his fellow exiles in Babylonia. It is true that

His words might reach only the ears that were listening [the exiles], but his attention was fixed upon the nation at large. Mere distance [some 700 miles] of desert does not count in the range of a prophet's message. Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah could address nations far away from Jerusalem; why not Ezekiel, in the opposite direction? Tyre and Egypt came within his purview, why

¹³Cecil J. Mullo Weir, "Aspects of the Book of Ezekiel," Vetus Testamentum, II (1952), 100.

not the land of Judah? It is not for us to set limits to a prophet's vision.¹⁴

What is more, Ezekiel was commanded by Yahweh to prophesy in Babylon. His was not to question why, but to go and do. And in so doing the prophet could consider his mission completed. For the Hebrew the spoken word was spoken power which could effect its very message. Such power would strike the exiles first, and then all those after them who would hear Ezekiel's message.

Herntrich's further insistence that the message of chapters 1-24 would be significant only to the Judahites living in Palestine is likewise based on the false premise that the exiles had nothing to learn from the approaching fall of Jerusalem. Just the opposite is true. The exiles still had very much to learn about their relationship with God.

As Jeremiah 24 shows us, when Jehoiachin and his companions were led away captive, those left in Jerusalem put it down to the peculiar sinfulness of the exiles. These probably looked on it in the same light. The message of Jeremiah that the exile was an act of grace on the part of God, and that the real sinners had been left in Jerusalem for dire punishment, was one that was

¹⁴G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), I, xxiv.

hard to accept both in Jerusalem and in Babylonia. Until the exiles grasped that God had really brought them the beginnings of a renewed people, Ezekiel could not begin his task of preparing them for the future. So during the last dark years of Jerusalem, before Nebuchadnessar executed God's punishment to the full on the city, Ezekiel had to explain to the exiles the inner meaning of the agony that was going on in their fatherland. His message was not for those that were left in the city, because, as Jeremiah had to say, there was no hope left for them. But such was the effect of Ezekiel's work, that when temple and city went to the ground, and the end of Judah seemed to have come for all time, some at least of the exiles were willing to listen to Ezekiel and learn of him as he prepared a new generation for the return that God had promised when the 20 years had run their course.¹⁵

It may be objected that Ezekiel's experience during his visions dictate his residence in Jerusalem. Just the opposite is true. Ezekiel's visit in 8:1-11:25 was purely in the spirit. There is no real suggestion that his body was carried there. Such visionary voyages are a common feature of apocalyptic writings. Consequently some scholars see apocalyptic beginnings in Ezekiel.

Though the book of Ezekiel cannot be said to show any of the eschatological notions of later apocalyptic literature, and for this reason cannot be classed as such, the method or artifices employed in it, conspicuous among which is the strange mingling of fact and

¹⁵H. L. Ellison, Ezekiel: The Man and His Message (London: The Paternoster Press, c.1956), pp. 20-21.

fiction, is typically the same as characterize the apocalyptic writings.¹⁶

The direct addresses to Jerusalem therefore do not demand a Jerusalem setting for Ezekiel. On the contrary, taken as a literary device or as an apocalyptic form or as a direct meaningful message, they apply to the $\pi\lambda\prime\gamma\lambda$ audience.

When some scholars make the point that the message in Ezekiel would actually be irrelevant to a Babylonian audience, one wonders what message would have been meaningful for the $\pi\lambda\prime\gamma\lambda$. What was the situation Ezekiel was facing at the time prior to the fall of Jerusalem? What were the real needs of the exiles at this time?

The most various rumours and opinions were reported from the capital, none of which could be matter of unconcern to a prophet. These were contemptuous opinions with regard to the poor exiles formed by the proud inhabitants of the capital, which contained in her last days so large a number of foolish people, and these opinions must have wounded deeply, xi,15; xxxiii,24; again, they were despairing voices of those who began to lose faith in all prophetic truths and awaited in gloomy indifference the calamities of the future, xii, 22-28; xviii,2; or, again, they were the infatuated hopes of those who looked for a speedy overthrow of the Chaldean rule and a near and grand deliverance of Jerusalem, hopes against which Yeremya [Jeremiah] had had so much to contend, xii,2-20, and the exiles were not

¹⁶Moses Bottenwieser, "The Date and Character of Ezekiel's Prophecies," Hebrew Union College Annual, VII (1930), 7.

only exposed to the influence of all these various moods and passions, as they were conveyed to them from the distance, and not only formed generally too favourable a conception of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, ch. viii-xi, xiv,22,23, but many of them had not been sufficiently humbled by the severity of their lot to permanently let go their old injurious habits and live to Yahve [Jahweh] alone, xiv,3sq.; xx,30sq.; xxxiii,30-33.¹⁷

In addition to those who still considered the homeland to be the center of their religious universe, Ezekiel also faced in Babylon those who would add Yahweh to the Babylonian pantheon, as well as those who would abdicate entirely to the gods of Babylon.

What type of message would be most appropriate to this kind of people? The very message that is preached by Ezekiel in his first thirty-two chapters--one of doom and destruction to all who refuse to obey Yahweh.

The exiles in Babylon, as well as the people at home, remained a "rebellious house." The departed considered the visitation of God an injustice. Ezekiel 18:2: . . . they also shared with the folks at home the false notion that the temple was inviolate. . . . Ezekiel shatters this false hope because of the abominations which he sees in full bloom in Jerusalem, (chas. 8-11) and because of the idolatry which was practiced at Babylonia in spite of the punishment that had already come upon them (chas. 14,20). "They shall

¹⁷Georg Heinrich August Von Ewald, "Hezeqiel," Commentary on the Prophets of the Old Testament, translated from the German by J. Frederick Smith (London: Williams and Norgate, 1880), IV, 4.

yet know that I am the Lord, your God."--God cannot but let punishment follow upon sin as effect follows the cause.¹⁸

There was plenty of material in the current conditions at Jerusalem to fit Ezekiel's concern for the future welfare of the יְרֻשָׁלַיִם . Not only did the exiles consider themselves to be a part of Israel, for there is only one Israel, but they also had their own stake in the Jerusalem affairs, for as long as the city stood there was a chance of a quick return. What could be more relevant to the Babylonian exiles than the state of affairs in Jerusalem!

It was quite natural then that Ezekiel in Babylon should devote the bulk of his prophetic attention to denouncing and threatening Jerusalem, for it lay at the heart of the exiles' fears and dreams. At the same time it is not true, as some scholars say, that Ezekiel's message at first was one solely of doom. Ezekiel did speak comfort to the exiles (14:22; 16; 17:22; 20:33-44; 21:32). Not to do so would have been to contradict previous prophecy.

So the message in Ezekiel can be shown to be very relevant to the יְרֻשָׁלַיִם . Mullo Weir even goes so far as to turn

¹⁸Walter R. Roehrs, "The Inaugural Vision of Ezekiel," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIX (October 1948), 725.

this question of relevance against those who espouse a Palestinian setting. He states

Had Ezekiel been living in Jerusalem or Judah, he would have urged their inhabitants to repent; instead, he contents himself with hurling denunciations against them from a distance, for the benefit of the exiles.¹⁹

The exiles were to learn to trust solely in God, not in His temple, nor in his holy city, but in God himself. The importance of this task of Ezekiel to the Babylonian exiles is highlighted by Gordon when he writes,

In II Kings 24:14, we read that Nebuchednezzar took away first all the leaders of the people. If this is so then they and their descendants would be expected to take a lead when they returned. It was, . . . as important, if not more important at the time, for his fellow-captives to grasp Ezekiel's teaching as for the Jews still in Jerusalem. The fact that the prophet greatly influenced later Judaism may be due in part to his presence in Babylon.²⁰

Neither Ezekiel's message nor the direct form of his oracles demand a Babylonian scene. But what about Ezekiel's symbolic actions? It is true that they would be of no use unless seen. Yet the fact that most of his symbolic actions are graphic portrayals of Jerusalem events is no reason to

¹⁹Weir, pp. 99-100.

²⁰Dane R. Gordon, "Two Problems in the Book of Ezekiel," The Evangelical Quarterly, XXVIII (July-September 1956), 149-150.

conclude that Ezekiel was in Palestine. It has already been demonstrated that Ezekiel's message concerning Jerusalem is of great importance to the $\pi\acute{\rho}\nu\lambda$. By these symbolic actions he would indelibly imprint on their minds the reality of his message. Since they had already experienced siege, loss, and deportation, Ezekiel reminds his fellow exiles of their import. His lying on his side (4:4-8), his fearful and hasty meal (12:17-20), his scattered hairs (5:1-4), his trip with baggage (12:1-16), are to recall vivid memories and forcefully present the message of Jerusalem's doom with all its repercussions for the $\pi\acute{\rho}\nu\lambda$.

Mullo Weir²¹ points out that if these symbolic actions had been acted out in Jerusalem, as some scholars would have us believe, Ezekiel would have been in twice as much trouble with the political authorities as Jeremiah ever was. Yet nothing like this is known to be the case. It is therefore much more probable that these actions were acted out in Babylonia. The same author suggests some other possibilities for Ezekiel's symbolic actions.

Some of these, if they are not a mere literary artifice, may have been suggested to the prophet's mind to

²¹Weir, p. 103.

strengthen his own conviction of Jerusalem's doom and, if so, they would need no onlookers at all; the same would hold good if he intended their function to be by a sort of sympathetic connexion [sic], to assist in bringing about Jerusalem's destruction. In any case, a prophet did not need many onlookers.²²

That some of these symbolic actions are to be taken figuratively may well be true also. To lie on one's side for a total of 430 days is nigh unto impossible. Also

As the first symbolic action in the book--the eating of the roll iii.1-3--must be interpreted figuratively, it would seem not unfair to apply this principle to all such actions.²³

Thus it can be shown that the symbolic actions of Ezekiel are relevant to the Babylonian scene. Since they can be explained in various ways in that setting, they do support the information given elsewhere that Ezekiel is in Babylon.

At first sight the point made by some scholars that there is no message in the book of Ezekiel for the specific needs of the exiles seems to be overwhelming. There is no reference to compulsory labor, slave trade, or imprisonment

²²Ibid.

²³John Edgar McFadyen, Introduction to the Old Testament (Reprint of New and Revised Edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1934), pp. 195-196.

as found in parallel accounts from Isaiah, Lamentations, and Psalms.²⁴ But were these the real problem of the exiles? There wasn't much they could do about their subservient state, but accept it. All their hope lay in the future. Yet there was no hope until they put their trust in Yahweh. This is the situation to which the prophet of God must speak.

Never had a prophet been more necessary. The people left behind in the land were thoroughly depraved, xxxiii.25ff., the exiles were not much better, xiv.3ff. --they are a rebellious house, ii.6; and even worse than they are the exiles who came with the second deportation in 586, xiv.22. Idolatry of many kinds had been practiced (viii); and now that the penalty was being paid in exile, the people were helpless, xxxvii.11.²⁵

Not only was the past gloomy, but the temptations in Babylon were overwhelming.

Many Israelites could draw no other conclusion than that the Babylonian victory was proof that the gods of Babylon were mightier than Yahweh. Such would be gravely tempted to lapse from their ancestral faith altogether. Others, unwilling to go so far, whined that God was not fair, for he had allowed the children to be punished for sins committed by the fathers (Ezek. 18:2; Jer. 31:29; Lam. 5:7). Still others--those who had taken the prophetic preaching seriously--could only conclude that the doom announced by the prophets had indeed

²⁴Supra, p. 21.

²⁵McFadyen, p. 194.

fallen, that the covenant bond had been broken, and destiny as the people of God ended: "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off" (Ezek. 37:11).²⁶

What does a prophet of God say to such a situation?

Does he pity the people in their physical distresses?

Hardly! As God's prophet it is his task to bring God back into the lives of the exiles. It must be made evident to them that God has brought all of this about. It is He that gave the victory to the Babylonians. Again and again, like a pneumatic hammer, Ezekiel, as God's representative, pounds the idea that everything is done so that "they will know that I am the Lord God" (a phrase which occurs some eighty-seven times throughout the book of Ezekiel).

Ezekiel's deep concern is for Israel's future, because he remembers where she has been and how she came to be under divine judgment. Prophesying now at the peak of Israel's crisis, he looks back to her tragic past and forward to her hopeful future. Overcoming their false hopes toward Jerusalem, Ezekiel could go on to his mighty visions of things to come--a reunited Israel and an eternally restored

²⁶John Bright, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1953), p. 130.

temple. When his message of doom is verified by the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C., Ezekiel brings his exiles to visions of new glory. Doom turns into dreams. He didn't stop with the doom.

Ezechiel hat schliesslich mehrere seiner Worte unmittelbar an die Deportierten gerichtet. In ihnen geht er auf Fragen, Einwände und Nöte ein, die bei ihnen entstand sind, oder setzt sich mit gewissen Ansichten auseinander. Dadurch wird Ezechiels Tätigkeit, die bisher für die dem Untergang Jerusalems vorangehenden Jahre wesentlich negativ erschien, plötzlich unerhört lebendig und eindringlich.²⁷

What message could have been more relevant to a people in exile in a foreign land! Any other could only be less effective.

Suppose the only voices of religion in that hour had been those of professional prophet promising speedy deliverance and of priest proclaiming the inviolability of Zion! It might have been something like total disillusionment! That religion went down with the state in smoke and ashes in the calamity of 587.²⁸

It is the אֲשֶׁר־בְּיָדָאֵל who needed the message of Ezekiel. They needed to learn that God's power extends beyond Jerusalem. Only then could they, as exiled ones, put their trust in God after the fall and believe that there was a future for God's

²⁷Fohrer, p. 225.

²⁸Bright, p. 122.

people. The fall of Jerusalem was only the new beginning.

In chapter II are listed a number of other circumstances which are taken as indications of the Palestinian background for the book of Ezekiel. First is the Pelatiah incident recorded in 11:1-13. Pelatiah is reported to have died as a result of Ezekiel's prophesying in Jerusalem. It is then assumed that this would be more apt to happen, or at least easier to explain as happening, if Ezekiel were face to face with Pelatiah. This argument is best refuted by Weir who says:

The argument about Pelatiah is also invalid, because it is related to have occurred in a vision where, moreover, it is accompanied by miraculous happenings concerning avenging angels and a divine chariot which are manifestly not the record of an eye-witness in Jerusalem. There is certainly no evidence that Pelatiah did die in these very remarkable circumstances nor does the Bible state that Pelatiah fell dead as the result of Ezekiel's denunciations. His death is ascribed to his idolatrous defiance of Yahweh and it is nowhere suggested that Ezekiel either foresaw or foretold it. It is to be assumed that his sudden demise in the temple, if it actually occurred, was already well known to Ezekiel's audience, otherwise the prophet would have been wasting his time in mentioning it. Ezekiel is here merely giving, in the form of a vision, real or imaginary, a religious explanation of the incident furnished by his own mind under religious inspiration.²⁹

When Ezekiel is commanded to point out an impending

²⁹Weir, p. 104.

exile to the house of Israel in 12:10-11, it is contended by some that this implies a Jerusalem background for Ezekiel. Such is not the case, however. The fall of Jerusalem is in the future at this point for the exiles as well as for the Jerusalemites.

The inference that the phrase in 5:2, "in the midst of the city," must refer to the actual city of Jerusalem lacks proof. The hair is to be burned in the midst of the city. There is no reason why the burning of the prophet's hair should be preferably done in the city of Jerusalem and not on the brick used in chapter 4. The context dictates that the latter interpretation is what really happened.

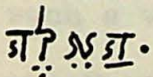
The one third he is to burn in the city, i.e. not in the actual Jerusalem, but in the city, sketched on the brick, which he is symbolically besieging (iv.3). To the city also is to be referred the suffix in יְהִי לְךָ עִיר, ver. 2, as is placed beyond doubt by ver. 12.³⁰

It is the context that also forces one to dispute the conclusion that Ezekiel is a member of the second deportation in 586 B.C. according to 11:15ff. These words are clearly set in a vision here. God is talking to Ezekiel and

³⁰Carl Friedrich Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel, in the fourth series in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated from the German by James Martin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), I, 83.

identifies him as one of the exiles. He goes on to say, "Though I removed [not will remove] them far off among the nations and though I scattered [not will scatter] them for a while. . . ." (verse 16). The tense of these verbs plus the location of this vision prior to the fall of Jerusalem indicates that the first deportation is meant. Ezekiel has been in Babylon ever since 597 B.C.

It is the conviction of some that 20:46 (21:2 in the Massoretic text) contains solid proof of Ezekiel's location in Palestine, since the Negeb is placed south of Jerusalem therein. It is ridiculous to contend that Ezekiel has to be on the scene physically to make such a statement. He would not easily forget about the familiar scenes of his boyhood days.

It is asserted that the use of "these" instead of "those" waste places in the land of Israel in 33:24 is proof of Ezekiel's living in Palestine. The Hebrew word used here is . This is a Hebrew demonstrative pronoun, which can be translated either "those" or "these."³¹ Consequently the

³¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, editors, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, based on William Gesenius' lexicon as translated by Edward Robinson (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 41.

above assertion is invalidated. It is interesting to note that the Septuagint omits the pronoun here.

Since the circumstances which some scholars have brought forth as demonstrating a Palestinian scene for Ezekiel's work have been shown to be inconclusive, we shall now proceed to mention only a few of the many "incidental" indications in the book of Ezekiel that point to Ezekiel's location in Babylon. To begin with

A common formula to indicate Ezekiel's mission is: "set thy face toward So-and-So and say unto them: or "and prophesy against (or 'concerning,' or 'to') them." This formula: "set thy face toward" is used indiscriminately of Palestine and of various foreign countries and suggest that the prophet is at a great distance from (not among) those he is addressing. The phrase is used of "the mountains of Israel" (vi 2 and xxvi 1), "the daughters of thy people" (a reference to sorceresses, xiii 17), "the South (a designation of Judah, xxi 2), Jerusalem (xxi 7), the Ammonites (xxv 2), Sidon (xxviii 21), and "Gog (the land of Magog)" (xxxviii 2).³²

In chapter 1:4 the glorious vision of God comes from the North. If Ezekiel were a Judaen watchman, one would expect such a vision to come from the South. But the arrival from the North would point to a watchman in Babylon. Barnes spells this out for us:

³²Weir, p. 101.

In the language of the Old Testament the seat of JEHOVAH is either in Zion (Ps. 1 2) or in some place to the South or South-east--Sinai or Seir (Deut. xxxiii 2; Judg. v 4,5), Horeb (I Kings xix 8), Teman (Hab. iii 3). So to a watcher in Judaea JEHOVAH would come from the South or South-east. But to Ezekiel in Chaldaea the vision would come, whether from Sier or from Zion, as travellers and as armies came, via the upper reaches of the Euphrates, that is, from the North.³³

The second time this vision of glory appears Ezekiel is in the plain (3:22). The Hebrew word סְטֵרֹת denotes a wide open plain such as abound in Babylonia. This is in contrast to בְּרִיחַ (wady) and בְּנֵי הַיַּם or $\text{בְּנֵי הַבְּרָדִים}$ (mountain valley) so prevalent in Palestine. This usage for סְטֵרֹת as a Babylonian plain is further attested to by its occurrence in Genesis 11:2 where it refers to "a plain in the land of Shinar" as the location of the tower of Babel. It is this same term סְטֵרֹת which is used by Ezekiel to describe the scene of the vision of the valley of dry bones. Nearly everyone accepts the fact that this vision took place in Babylon.

In 8:3 and 11:24 it is necessary for the spirit to transport Ezekiel to and back from Jerusalem. Presumably this would be unnecessary if Ezekiel lived in or near Jerusalem. And in 12:18f. the prophet is speaking about the

³³Barnes, p. 167.

inhabitants of Jerusalem and not to them.

When Ezekiel prophesies against the false prophets it is explicitly stated that their punishment shall include the impossibility of their return to the land of Israel (13:9). This could be possible only if they are located outside of Israel at the time of Ezekiel's rebuke.

Although possible elsewhere, the divination mentioned in 21:21f. (21:26f. in the Massoretic Text)

was a common practice in Babylon. . . . It is referred to nowhere else in the Old Testament, but is natural in the mouth of Ezekiel, who might have seen the ceremony performed, as we now have it figured on Assyrian and Babylonian monuments.³⁴

Another proof for the Babylonian setting of the prophet is found in 24:21 where one reads, "Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Behold I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the desire of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword." This is a clear reference to the exiles, whose relatives had been left behind in Judah. All the above allusions point to a

³⁴C. H. Toy, "The Babylonian Element in Ezekiel," Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, I (June 1881), 62.

Babylonian site for Ezekiel. Subtle references such as these appear throughout the book and put Ezekiel in Babylon.

His detailed knowledge of events in Jerusalem together with the peoples' reaction to them has been cited as militating against the Babylonian setting for Ezekiel. This is no problem to those who accept Ezekiel's own statement of the fact that the Spirit transported him to Jerusalem (8:3). Through this experience Ezekiel was made aware of the idolatrous situation in the temple. Moreover his awareness of the economic and political forces in Jerusalem is in general enough terms to have been the remembrance of what conditions were like before his exile in 597 B.C.

It is by no means certain that Ezekiel's prophecies do describe very accurately what was happening in Jerusalem; indeed, some scholars have considered his descriptions so inaccurate that they have felt obliged to date his prophecies in the reign of Manasseh.³⁵

When one compares Ezekiel's so-called detailed account with Jeremiah's chronicles of current events in Jerusalem (Jer. 36-42), the general nature of Ezekiel's information becomes most evident. It is easily explained by the fact that Ezekiel and his audience had been through a siege before.

³⁵Weir, p. 102.

It is not so incredible, therefore, that our prophet described, albeit in a general way, the confusion and consternation which was the lot of the besieged citizenry (7:12-13) as well as the extremes to which hunger can drive men (5:10). One must admit the definite probability that the popular proverbs recorded in 12:21-28 had their origin during the first siege prior to the captivity of 598 B.C. and regained usage during the second siege of 587 B.C.³⁶

Ezekiel's only detailed knowledge about Jerusalem has to do with the temple. A boy, raised from little on in the temple (1:3), would have no difficulty remembering these scenes.

It is also possible that the prophet received his information about Jerusalem in another way besides his trip there by the Spirit. Communication did exist between Tel-abib and Jerusalem.

The two cities were distant, but they were connected by a trade route which led, indirectly, to the sea, and to the Persian Gulf. It is not unlikely that there was a steady flow of commerce between the two cities. Even the circumstances of war would not wholly stop this as Jerusalem was shut up only in times of pressing emergency, and it is not the nature of men to trade. . . . The Semites, moreover, are great storytellers and in desert lands this was (and probably still is) the method of relaying information. A prophecy or parable acted or spoken in Babylon could soon be transmitted with force and accuracy to Jerusalem. Similarly the news about Jerusalem and the words of Jeremiah would be carried to Babylon. Ezekiel would not be uninformed.³⁷

³⁶Howie, p. 17.

³⁷Gordon, p. 149.

That such is the case is known from Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jeremiah 29) which reveals rather detailed knowledge of conditions among the exiles. There is no reason to assume that this process couldn't work both ways. Indeed, Jeremiah 29:25 speaks of just such an occurrence when Shemaiah of Nehelam sent letters to Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's relationship with the spirit of God is the cause of much debate between scholars. Some say that it is best to get rid of anything abnormal in Ezekiel's behavior by positing a Jerusalem locale for the prophet. But can this be done to a prophet of God without detracting from his message? Does not their very potency rest on the fact that as prophets they are not normal human beings! Ezekiel tries to make this clear by his constant references to God's power in his life. His trips back and forth between Tel-abib and Jerusalem are by the Spirit (3:14; 8:3; 11:24). Robinson³⁸ lists the fifty-two times that H^{h} is used in the book of Ezekiel. He repeatedly talks about the hand of Yahweh being upon him (1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1). In other words,

³⁸H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Visions of Ezekiel," Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), pp. 90-91.

Ezekiel stands in a very close relationship to the Spirit of God.

Nor is this claim unique with him. This is what we should expect, if we take seriously the experience of other prophets of God.

When Isaiah says that Yahweh spoke to him "with a pressure of the hand" [Isaiah 8:11], and Jeremiah that "because of thy hand I have sat alone" [Jeremiah 15:17], when Ezekiel makes several references to "the hand of Yahweh" being upon him [Ezekiel 1:3; 3:14], we recall the ecstatic state in which Elijah was enabled to run from Carmel to Jezreel with "the hand (or ecstatic power) of Yahweh" upon him [I Kings 18:46]. . . . It is in Ezekiel particularly that there are to be found clear indications of a trance state into which a prophet fell, at least occasionally, when he received a word from Yahweh [Ezekiel 8:1, 3]. . . . Isaiah 6 is an outstanding example of the persistence of ecstatic vision and audition. . . . Amos has his visions or dreams, of which he says: "the Lord Yahweh showed me" [Amos 7:1, 4, 7]. The comprehensive title of the book of Isaiah, which consists chiefly of poetic oracles, with some narrative is nevertheless "the vision of Isaiah," and the books of Obadiah and Nahum have similar headings.³⁹

Consequently it is not strange at all to find frequent visions in Ezekiel's book. (1:1-28; 3:1-3; 8:1-11:25; 12:27; 37:1-14; 40-48). This phenomenon makes it possible to declare that

³⁹R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (Eleventh Printing 1961; New York: The Macmillan Company, c.1944), pp. 54-55.

The entire prophetic ministry of Ezekiel was spent in exile and he never had the opportunity to return to Jerusalem in the flesh. However, he came often to the Holy City in spirit and frequently issued warnings of dire disaster against the bloody city!⁴⁰

This gift of clairvoyance and second sight is from God Himself. As a result it would be rather subjective to deny clairvoyance a priori (especially in this day and age when such occurrences are being checked scientifically).

The prophet, in fact, was endowed with what we should call second sight, he could see things at a distance and in the future; as, for example, the day on which the siege of Jerusalem began, the death of his wife, the moment when his dumbness should cease, 24:2,16,27. In each case the exercise of this faculty is assigned to the divine inspiration.⁴¹

Note that Ezekiel takes no credit for his clairvoyance, but admits in his book that it is from God. Ezekiel "was one of the young men, to use the language of Joel, who under the influence of the Spirit of God saw visions."⁴²

Some scholars would call Ezekiel psychopathic because of his actions and visions. Others consider it more plausible that Ezekiel as the prophet of God, is supersensitive to

⁴⁰Howie, p. 5.

⁴¹Cooke, pp. 123-124.

⁴²Henry A. Redpath, The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, in Westminster Commentaries, edited by Walter Lock (London: Methuen & Co., 1907) XXIII, p. xiii.

the message of God for his people. This view eliminates the excesses to which Broome⁴³ and Battenweiser⁴⁴ have gone in seeking to establish Ezekiel's abnormality. To psychoanalyze a prophet of God so many years removed from us and to ascribe all sorts of mental and sexual repressions to him is ridiculous as well as impossible. Rather,

If with regard to Ezekiel, we allow for the direct activity of God it is possible to say that He was working through the prophet in a manner conformable with the mind as we know it.⁴⁵

Ezekiel is the prophet of God to His exiles in Babylon. As such he is bound to act and be different from the man in the street. Rather than call such a difference abnormality, it can be recognized as the experience of a hyperspiritual prophet of God. Therefore, it is unnecessary to posit a Jerusalem setting. Rather a Babylonian scene is indicated and the prophet's clairvoyance can be recognized for what it is--a gift of God.

Although Jewish tradition is strictly a secondary

⁴³Edwin C. Broome Jr., "Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXV (1946), 277-292.

⁴⁴Battenweiser, pp. 1-18.

⁴⁵Gordon, pp. 150-151.

source to consult for our problem, there too nothing disproves the contention for Ezekiel's Babylonian background. The Mekilta statement that "prophecy is a prerogative of the Holy Land" explains why there was hesitancy on the part of Jews to accept Ezekiel into the canon. Then when his book was accepted, it was necessary for the Jews to explain that his career began in the Holy Land. Ezekiel was born and raised in Palestine. No doubt the Jews extended this period to include the beginning of his career, in order to get the book of Ezekiel past the canonical regulations that prophecy was a Holy Land prerogative.

In the Baba Bathra 15a statement the verb "wrote" is most likely to be taken in the sense of "collect," "edit," "publish," or "revise." Thus

the entire passage attempts at an authentication of prophetic inspiration, even in the case of books composed abroad or after the destruction of the sanctuary. Jeremiah, living in the Holy Land, could himself supervise and fix the final text-form of his book and thus warrant the authenticity of its inspiration. Not so Ezekiel, the prophet of the Babylonian Golah. He spoke through the Holy Spirit, but that the quality of inspiration inheres to his written text as well, is due to the work of the men of the Great Synagogue. The famous passage in Baba Bathra would thus seem to prove rather than disprove the exilic origin of the prophecy of Ezekiel. For the fact of fiction of the rewriting of his book by the men of the Great Synagogue was

needed only if Ezekiel's exile and ministry in Babylonia was known to, and believed, by the rabbis.⁴⁶

As for Josephus' remark concerning Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem's fall and the exile to follow, it says nothing about Ezekiel being in Jerusalem. The only point he is trying to make is that both men accurately predicted these events. Since their predictions came true, they were to be considered true prophets of God-- Jeremiah to the Jerusalemites and Ezekiel to the $\pi\tau\eta\lambda$.

The panacea offered by the scholars who favor a Palestinian setting is that of the redactor.

One or more redactors are the vehicles by which all difficulties are at last disposed of by those who insist on shifting the scene from Babylon to Palestine. . . . Of course everyone admits that there were later editings of the book, but one wonders how valid it is to assume two authors in order "to simplify" the complex personality of the prophet. By positing enough redactors the locale of any literary work could be easily shifted. Actually to assume so many is subjectivism at its worst. . . . By using such a method history could be made more orderly, less complicated and completely inaccurate.⁴⁷

The argument is proffered that the passages which put Ezekiel in Babylon during the first part of his ministry,

⁴⁶Shalom Spiegel, "Toward Certainty in Ezekiel," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIV (1935), 163.

⁴⁷Howie, p. 19.

occur only in four chapters (1, 3, 10, 11). Furthermore these passages are said to disrupt the contexts in which they are found. Therefore an editor is the answer to the problem. Such logic falls down in two places. On the one hand whether these Babylonian passages appear in one or all forty-eight of the chapters, the fact is that they are there and must be accounted for. On the other hand no editor, as skillful as the one posited by some Ezekiel scholars, would be so clumsy as to intrude his work into unsuitable contexts. The truth about these Babylonian passages is that

the variety and the naturalness of these references tell strongly for their genuineness. "Tel-abib" and "the river Chebar" are not the place-names an interpolator would use who was anxious to assert that the prophecy was spoken in Babylon. They are not well enough known. These two names--Tel-abib and the river Chebar--are in fact found in Old Testament in Ezekiel only.⁴⁸

Perhaps it is hard for the modern mind to accept some of the things in Ezekiel. One doesn't operate as often with visions and denunciations of doom today. But is any part of our problem settled by positing an editor? "It is just as hard to believe in the highly imaginative redactor as to

⁴⁸Barnes, p. 166.

accept the statements in the text."⁴⁹ In fact it is easier to treat these phenomena as coming from a prophet of God than from a later redactor.

Again what could be his possible purpose in transferring Ezekiel's locale from Palestine to Babylon? Surely, "A falsifying editor, had such existed, would have been much more likely to transfer visions and prophecies from Babylon to Yahweh's own land."⁵⁰ Indeed it is this very point which attests Ezekiel's residence in Babylon.

Ezekiel is the first person to become a prophet outside of God's holy territory. His call is thus utterly unique, and quite out of line with precedent and tradition. One could readily understand how a prophet who received his initial call in Babylonia would deny this fact, and claim instead to have received divine authority initially in Judah, on holy soil. It is however inconceivable that a prophet who received his call in Jerusalem, in Judah, would suppress this fact, and claim instead a foreign land as the birthplace of his prophetic career. So far as I am aware, no one who has rejected the biblical statement has attempted to answer the question, What could Ezekiel (or a redactor) have hoped to gain by shifting the locale of the initial call from Judah (if so it was) to Babylonia?⁵¹

⁴⁹Danell, p. 241.

⁵⁰Weir, p. 99.

⁵¹Harry M. Orlinsky, "Where Did Ezekiel Receive the Call to Prophecy," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research, CXXII (April 1951), 35.

Any theory that posits an editor as the panacea for all of the difficulties in Ezekiel only removes those complications from Ezekiel and puts them on the shoulders of the editor. This doesn't solve them any.

The disputed passages stand in today's text, and we accept them as an authentic part of that text.

It is not good enough to say that but for the numerous references in these chapters [1-24] to Babylon and the exiles the prophecies might have been delivered in Palestine. One might just as well argue that but for the frequent references to Judah and the events in the reign of Zedekiah many of the prophecies might have been written in Northern Israel or in the reign of Manasseh.

These chapters claim, both implicitly and explicitly, a Babylonian origin, and it never occurred to anyone until recent times to contest that claim.⁵²

Among the composite theories set forth by various scholars there is a lack of agreement as to when Ezekiel left Palestine. Yet they must get him from Palestine to Babylon. While Kuhl finds his departure indicated in 3:15, right after the inaugural vision, Irwin discovers Ezekiel's trip to Babylon through the jeers of the crowd in 11:15. Bertholet, however, locates Ezekiel's withdrawing from Jerusalem in chapter 12. The difficulty in uncovering such

⁵²Weir, p. 97.

a voyage for Ezekiel stems from one fact. There is no clear reference in the book of Ezekiel that says he took a trip to Babylon after prophesying in Jerusalem. The factual account in 3:15 took place before Ezekiel did any prophesying at all. The taunt in 11:15 was spoken well before the fall of Jerusalem cited in 33:21. And chapter 12 records Ezekiel's symbolic act rather than his real departure into exile. Perhaps Oesterley and Smith didn't treat this thorny problem of Ezekiel's departure for a good reason. There is no such thing to be found in the book of Ezekiel. Is it unreasonable to think that the omission of his trip to Babylon may just be the result of the actual fact that Ezekiel never did prophesy in Palestine at all and that tradition is right after all?

In this chapter it is seen that not a single contention of those who favor a Palestinian site for Ezekiel stands up under examination. Ezekiel's commission to the house of Israel includes all of Israel, but first of all the יִשְׂרָאֵל , the Israel of the future. His direct speeches to Jerusalem are a style of speech on the part of Ezekiel used for the benefit of his wrongly optimistic hearers. His oracles and symbolic actions against Jerusalem are his way of directing

the exiles from hopes for Jerusalem to trust in God. In so doing, Ezekiel does speak to the real needs of the Babylonians. By omitting to stress their physical difficulties, he pounds the message of God's glory home to His people in exile. His knowledge of Jerusalem conditions is general and what could be expected of the prophet of God gifted with clairvoyance. As such he is a supersensitive man of God, who could be called abnormal in the right sense of the word. A look at modern day redactional theories shows them as confounding rather than solving the problems of Ezekiel. Meanwhile the proponents of various composite theories have yet to find an indisputable reference in the book of Ezekiel concerning how he ever got from Jerusalem to Tel-abib. This examination of the opposing theories demonstrates that there is nothing to stand in the way of a Babylonian locale for Ezekiel. Evidently the prophet's words, "And I came to the exiles" (3:15), are to be taken at face value.

CHAPTER V

ADDITIONAL POSITIVE ARGUMENTS FOR A BABYLONIAN LOCALE

In the previous chapter, the reasons advanced in favor of a Palestinian setting for Ezekiel's ministry were examined and found inconclusive. But in addition to the factors which were adduced to disprove these theories, there are also other considerations which demonstrate in a positive way that Ezekiel did prophesy in Babylon.

There is, first of all, archaeological support for Ezekiel's location in Babylon. In 4:1 Ezekiel is commanded to take a שָׁבָט אֲבָנִים , a sun dried brick, and draw a map of Jerusalem upon it. From archaeological finds it is evident that the use of bricks for this purpose was the exception in Judah, whereas in Babylon it was a common practice.¹ In a Babylonian setting it would be the natural thing for Ezekiel to use this kind of writing material.

Twice (in 8:8 and 12:5) Ezekiel is commanded to dig through (בְּחַרְבֵּי) the wall. Archaeologists who have

¹Carl Gordon Howie, The Date and Composition of Ezekiel, in the Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, c.1950), 18.

uncovered walls in Babylon and Palestine say that such digging would have caused the Palestinian stone walls of the pre-exilic period to collapse, whereas the Babylonian mud (adobe) walls of that period would have withstood Ezekiel's digging through them.² Furthermore, Babylonian walls made of mud could be destroyed by a rain storm (13:10-15), while this could hardly be said of the solid stone walls so popular in Palestine.

Citing the above archaeological proofs as coinciding with the accounts of Ezekiel's symbolic actions in chapters 4 and 12, one scholar has drawn the conclusion that

These two objects [the dried brick and mud walls] are factual indications, not conclusions drawn from doubtful premises, that the prophet did his "play acting" in Babylon. A redactor who could make such subtle alterations in order to give the book a Babylonian dress is hardly admissible.³

In addition archaeologists have found several of Nebuchadnezzar's ration lists in Babylon. One of the recipients listed repeatedly in these is "Yawkin, king of Judah." "It would be difficult to find more clear-cut evidence of the . . . authenticity of Joiachin's exile in

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Babylon."⁴ These same ruins near the famous Ishtar Gate have yielded references to numerous other men of Judah. From these discoveries the Babylonian exile is upheld as a historical fact, and Ezekiel's residence among the Jews in Babylon is made plausible.

Some scholars, like Hertrich and his followers, contend that Ezekiel portrays the material situation of the exiles too favorably.⁵ But according to Albright, archaeology supports the picture Ezekiel paints of life in Babylonia. Skilled craftsmen were in great demand and there was always more room for farmers. Thus it is entirely possible within the Babylonian situation that "the prophet lived in a house; he possessed an iron pan and a balance; he could eat wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt."⁶

Gaster also supports the genuineness of Ezekiel's writings from his study of the Ras Shamra texts. He draws

⁴W. F. Albright, "The Bible After Twenty Years of Archeology," Religion in Life, XXI (Autumn 1952), 545.

⁵Supra, p. 21.

⁶W. F. Albright, "King Joiachin in Exile," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (December 1942), 55.

a parallel between the four steps of idolatry described in chapter 8 and a pagan Ugaritic rite.

The pagan rites witnessed by Ezekiel during the season of qs are identical with those described in a Ras Shamra liturgy designed for a festival at precisely the same time of year. In other words, what the prophet was denouncing was nothing other than the traditional celebration of the Canaanite Feast of Ingathering.⁷

This is another example where archaeological discoveries have touched upon facts or incidents listed in the book of Ezekiel and have substantiated the account given by Ezekiel. Thus when he writes that his prophetic ministry was carried out in Babylon he may be taken at his word--just what one would expect of a prophet of God.

In addition to this, archaeology has identified the site of the River Chebar (3:15) in Babylonia.

The river Kebar (1:3; 3:15,23; 10:15,20,22; 43:3) can be identified with some probability. On two contract tablets found at Nippur, one dated the 22nd, and one the 41st year of Antaxerxes I., i.e. 443 and 424 B.C., occurs the Babylonian equivalent of Ezekiel's phrase, nâru kabari = the great river, the grand canal. . . . The Summerians called it the Euphrates of Nippur (Purât Nippur); the Babylonians and Jews, the great

⁷Theodor H. Gaster, "Ezekiel and the Mysteries," Journal of Biblical Literature, LX (1941), 297.

river (nâru kabari nēhar kēbâr); its modern name among the Arabs is the river Nile (Shatt en-Nîl).⁸

This river leaves the Euphrates above Babylon, runs in a southeasterly direction until it bisects the city of Nippur, and rejoins the Euphrates at a point below Ur. This information confirms the geographical framework that tradition claims for the prophet.

The same holds true for Tel-abib, Ezekiel's designation for the place where he dwelt in Babylon.

Tel Abib "house of green ears" is merely a Hebrew-sounding form of the Babylonia til-abubi "hill of the storm-flood," a common name in Babylonia at all periods, and given to the sand-hills on the plain which are thrown up by the action of wind and water. . . . Within a radius of 5-10 miles E. and N. of Nippur many such mounds exist, and have disclosed traces of Jewish settlements.⁹

On one of these tells it would be possible for a colony to live.

Since the city Tel-abib and the River Chebar have been found at logical locations in Babylon by archaeologists, the information given by Ezekiel that he lived among the exiles at Tel-abib by the River Chebar may be accepted as reliable.

⁸G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), I, 4-5.

⁹Ibid., p. 42.

A look into the relationship between Ezekiel and Jeremiah can also be helpful in determining Ezekiel's locale. It is a matter of history that the two prophets were contemporaries. Likewise it is a matter of fact that neither mentions the other in his recorded prophecies. The latter fact by itself is not overly strange inasmuch as there are other such instances in the Bible (compare Isaiah and Micah or Hosea and Amos). However, if they had been in the same city during their prophetic careers, as some scholars posit, one could expect them to mention each other, or at least to recognize one another's work in their writings. But such is not the case. While such an argumentum e silentio by itself is not a cogent proof, yet, coinciding as it does with other evidence, it can be regarded as support for Ezekiel's Babylonian residence.

On the positive side it should be noted that there is a remarkable affinity between some aspects of the messages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Both prophets present the fall of Jerusalem as God's will and speak of Babylon's part in it all as the agent of God. Both men are familiar with the current proverb, "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jeremiah 31:29,

Ezekiel 18:2). Their teaching concerning contemporary prophecy, the value of the individual, and the indestructibility of Yahweh's covenant are similar.¹⁰ Jeremiah calls those left behind in Jerusalem "bad figs," while Ezekiel expresses the same judgment on them by comparing them to a worthless charred vine. Both prophets treat the great drought as a mark of divine judgment (Jeremiah 14:1-6, Ezekiel 22:23f.). In their calls both men are commissioned to serve God by watching and speaking, but neither is made responsible for the people's reactions. Noticing this similarity between the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel Irwin concludes that

The younger prophet shows marks of dependence upon his great contemporary; at times one would believe he took the suggestion for his oracles from him. We know nothing of the nature of their collaboration--unfortunately, the personal narrative in Jeremiah's book never mentions his fellow-prophet among his friends and supporters; but the relation between their teaching is such that Ezekiel may often have attended and heard the public delivery of Jeremiah's utterances.¹¹

To note the similarity between Jeremiah and Ezekiel is

¹⁰Ibid., p. xxxi.

¹¹William A. Irwin, The Problem of Ezekiel: and Inductive Study (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1943), p. 324.

to open the door to many questions. Is this similarity a result of the common knowledge of the times? Did Ezekiel possibly hear Jeremiah speak his prophecies? Did Ezekiel pick up some of his ideas from Jeremiah's hearers instead? Could Ezekiel have read any part of Jeremiah's prophecies in writing?

Miller¹² has done an exhaustive study on these questions. First he studies the affinities between Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

In statistischer Hinsicht kann der folgende Tatbestand festgestellt werden: Insgesamt würden ungefähr 40 gemeinsame sprachliche Erscheinungen in beiden Schriften angeführt. Von diesen dürften wenigstens 15 auf irgendeine positive Verbindung der Stellen hindeuten.

- Jer. 36:3 usw.--Hes. 13:22 usw;
- Jer. 1:18--Hes. 3:8f.;
- Jer. 3:6ff.--Hes. 16:44ff.; 23:1ff.;
- Jer. 7:17--Hes. 8:6;
- Jer. 8:1ff.--Hes. 37:1ff.;
- Jer. 14:14--Hes. 13:17;
- Jer. 15:1--Hes. 14:14;
- Jer. 16:1ff.--Hes. 24:15ff.;
- Jer. 18:7ff.--Hes. 18:1ff.;
- Jer. 24:1ff.--Hes. 11:14-21;
- Jer. 29:5--Hes. 28:26;
- Jer. 31:29--Hes. 18:1ff.;
- Jer. 31:31--Hes. 11:17ff.; 36:24ff.;

¹²John Wolf Miller, Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels Sprachlich und Theologisch Untersucht: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Prosareden Jeremias (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum & Comp. N.V. - G. A. Hak & Dr. H. J. Prakkle, c.1955).

. . . Weiter haben wir auf einige gemeinsame stilistische Merkmale der beiden Schriften aufmerksam gemacht.¹³

According to Miller the common form of the above texts can be accounted for by general knowledge of the times. Yet the similarity in scheme of speech, in stylistic expression, and in the inclination to similar repetitious reviews cannot be explained by a widespread pool of knowledge, but indicate an interdependence.

Miller finds his next clue in Jeremiah 36:1-8. Before the first exile Jeremiah is commanded to write God's message on a scroll and Baruch is to read this scroll at the temple in public. If the contents of this scroll can be determined, one would know what Ezekiel could have heard or read for himself before his exile to Babylon. It is Miller's suggestion that Jeremiah's "Prosareden" are probably the substance of the Baruch scroll. In this way Ezekiel's dependence on Jeremiah can be explained as a result of his having heard or read the Baruch scroll in its pre-exilic form. Thus

¹³Ibid., pp. 100-101.

Die Ähnlichkeiten in ihrer Botschaft sind weder zufällig, noch allein bedingt durch die gemeinsamen Verhältnisse ihre Zeit. Sie stammen vielmehr aus der gottgegebenen Überzeugung Hesekiels, dass die Arbeit seines jerusalemischen Vorgängers (und seiner Vorgänger überhaupt) in der Gola fortgesetzt werden müssen (I, B). Wenn Hesekiel oftmahls in der Gola dasselbe sagte, was Jeremia in Jerusalem verkündigte, tat er das nicht als gedankenloser Nachahmer Jeremias, sondern als beauftragter Mitarbeiter der von Gott her verstand, wovon Jeremia sprach und wodurch sein Sprecher begründet war.¹⁴

What does all this have to do with Ezekiel's locale?

It suggests that Ezekiel had access to some of Jeremiah's oracles before he was forced to leave Jerusalem. The information obtainable to him from these prophecies matches the ideas expressed within the very sections that show dependence on Jeremiah. Fohrer notes

Noch auffallender ist die Beobachtung, dass Ezechiels literarische Abhängigkeit von Jeremia sich auf dessen Worte aus den Jahren vor 598 beschränkt (vgl. S. 137ff.). Daraus lässt sich schlieszen, dass er nur die vor 598 niedergeschriebenen Worte Jeremias, vielleicht nach der 605 entstandenen Buchrolle (Jer. 36), gekannt haben dürfte. Die späteren Worte sind ihm nicht mehr zu Ohren gekommen; daher wird er nach 598 nicht mehr in Jeremias Nähe gelebt haben.¹⁵

Having left Jerusalem behind, Ezekiel began his prophetic career in Babylon, continuing there the work of the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 184.

¹⁵Georg Fohrer, Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1952), p. 241.

earlier prophets in the Holy Land. This conclusion is further supported by the dissimilarities between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah makes more mention of political life as would be natural of one on the Jerusalem scene, whereas Ezekiel has fewer references of this nature which would be proper of one not in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah uses "Judah" 169 times and "Israel" about one hundred times, while Ezekiel uses "Judah" thirteen times and "Israel" 183 times.¹⁶ The name "Judah" has less significance to Ezekiel than Jeremiah, a fact easily explained if Ezekiel is living in Babylon.

There is also a difference in the way Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak against the practice of child sacrifice

Jeremiah fiercely denounces Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom confronting Jerusalem (2 Kings xxiii 10) where these sacrifices were perpetrated: Jer. vii 30-32; xix 11-14. Ezekiel is equally indignant against the practice, but there is no local touch in his denunciations; unlike Jeremiah he had not before his eyes the high place of Molech facing the temple of JEHOVAH. Surely the sphere of Ezekiel's ministry was not "Judah and Jerusalem."¹⁷

¹⁶Howie, p. 24.

¹⁷W. Emery Barnes, "The Scene of Ezekiel's Ministry and His Audience," The Journal of Theological Studies, XXV (April 1934), 168.

Where Jeremiah and Ezekiel differ in their treatment of certain materials, it is the result of the interplay of several factors.

Die Unterschiede in ihrer Botschaft stammen z.T. aus Verschiedenheiten ihrer Persönlichkeit und Erfahrung (I, A), weitaus zum grössten Teil aber aus Verschiedenheiten in ihren Wirkungskreis und ihrer Zeit (I, C).¹⁸

As both the similarities and the dissimilarities between Jeremiah and Ezekiel demonstrate, they do not prophesy in the same place. Jeremiah is known to be God's prophet in Jerusalem. Ezekiel is to be accepted as the prophet of God among the יְרֵמְיָהוּ .

Linguistic studies support this same contention. The influence of Aramaic and Babylonian loan words on the language of Ezekiel is unmistakable. In chapters 1-37 alone Smith¹⁹ finds 130 instances of words which he classifies under the heading--Akkadian words, words of doubtful meaning or origin, and words of peculiar formation found only in Ezekiel in the Old Testament. In addition to those he finds sixteen Aramaisms in Ezekiel's text.

¹⁸Miller, p. 84.

¹⁹James Smith, The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: A New Interpretation, printed for the London Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), pp. 101-116.

Driver mentions the following Babylonian terms:

"algamišu, uqnû, šru, aššatu, dāyiqu, kilīlu, massartu,
metiqu, nuhšu, summertu, sippatu, qû, qullu, taknîtu."²⁰

He also notes Ezekiel's cognizance of the Babylonian custom that judges "stand" in court.

According to Fohrer

Einige andere ausschliesslich oder hauptsächlich von Ezechiel verwandte Wörter sind Babylonismen:

אָגאַפּוּ	- agappu (12,14. 17,21. 38,6. 39,4)
עִלָּאָמּוּ	- ellamu (vor allem 40,16-30)
גַּלָּבּוּ	- gallabu (5,1)
עֶשְׂמָרֹוּ	- ešmarû (1,27. 8,2)
קַשָּׁאָמּוּ	- kašāmu (44,20)
קַשׁוּ	- kasû (13,18.20)
שָׁמַלְלוּ	- šamallû (8,5)
שִׁיגָרֹוּ	- šigaru (19,9)
עֲזֻבְבֻּ	- uzubbû (27,33). ²¹

Furthermore, the Aramaic-Babylonian influence evident in individual words chosen by Ezekiel, affects his grammar and syntax as well. Torrey points this up in detail.

The following grammatical features, illustrating the transition from Hebrew speech to Aramaic, are worthy of especial notice. . . . The very characteristic substitution of dentals for sibilants, in the root-consonants . . . (cf. 46:22 אִיגְרָא corresponds to 42:5 אִיגְרָא)
. . . the insertion of nun or resh, as a mere phonetic expansion, or resolution of the doubling of a

²⁰G. R. Driver, "Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems," Biblica, XXV (1954), 312.

²¹Fohrer, p. 240.

consonant, in nominal or verbal forms. . . . This is especially common in Biblical Aramaic. The employment of Aramaic pronominal forms . . . a noticeable adoption of certain noun formations characteristic of the Aramaic language; . . . also the occasional use of its inflectional endings . . . the characteristic Aramaic loss of final aleph in verb roots is illustrated with many examples. . . . The constant confusion between the prepositions 'el and 'al comes from the time when the former, not used in Aramaic, was disappearing from the popular speech.²²

Men like Torrey and May regard these Aramaic-Babylonian influences as indicators of a very late date. According to these men, Ezekiel's choice of words and his type of syntax are said to come from the time when Hebrew was degenerating as a language in its own right. Therefore they conclude that the book of Ezekiel is a post-exilic work and not written in Babylon. But this

argument from the undoubted Aramaic colouring of the book of Ezekiel is also precarious. On the one hand we have books of the second century B.C. which are written in much purer Hebrew, and on the other hand it is quite credible that residence in Babylonia in his later years gave the Aramaic colouring. It is noteworthy that while Torrey claims that these Aramaicisms pervade the whole Book, this is not the case. They congregate closely in certain chapters such as the 13th."²³

²²Charles C. Torrey, Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy, in the Yale Oriental Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, c.1930), XVIII, 87-88.

²³John Battersby Harford, Studies in the Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 50

Rather than proving the late date of Ezekiel's book, the Aramaic-Babylonian coloring proves the influence of his Babylonian surroundings in shaping the form of his prophecies. Since Aramaic is known to have been popular in Babylonia as early as 700 B.C.,²⁴ such loan words seem natural in the book of the Babylonian Ezekiel. The presence of these foreign words helps prove his presence in that foreign country. Babylonian loan words certainly are most readily explicable as derived from a Babylonian environment.

There are also links with Babylonian literature. The description of Tyre's borders as being $\square^{\prime} \eta^{\prime} \square^{\prime} \square^{\prime} \square^{\prime}$ (27:4) reminds one of the Asarhadden inscription which describes Sidon as "ša ina kabal tamdim, oder: ša kirib tamdim."²⁵ Likewise, according to Fohrer,²⁶ the title $\square \square \square \square \square \square$, which God ascribes to Ezekiel is reminiscent of Ea's title for Amelu in the Gilgamesch Epic (ix 38).

After an examination of the Aramaic-Babylonian vocabulary, morphology, and syntax so evident in the text of

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Fohrer, p. 239.

²⁶Ibid.

Ezekiel, it is correctly concluded that

The language not only substantiates the traditional date of the book, it also lends support to the Babylonian residence of the prophet. A tendency toward Aramaizing would not have been nearly so great had the prophet been a resident of Jerusalem all of the time, as illustrated by the almost total absence of Aramaisms in Hebrew books of early post-Exilic Palestinian origin. The language points to a 6th century B.C. date in a Babylonian locale."²⁷

For centuries scholars accepted the book of Ezekiel at face value. According to his own words, Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, the priest. During the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity (II Kings 24:15) the word of the Lord came to him while he dwelt by the River Chebar in the land of Babylon (1:3). There, through a glorious vision of God sitting on His wheeled throne, Ezekiel is commissioned by God to speak to the exiles whether they would listen or not (3:11). Although it took him seven days to overcome the initial awesomeness of his call, he went immediately to the community of exiles at Tel-abib (3:15). From this point onward we have Ezekiel's account of his prophetic ministry among the גְּלִיּוֹת for nearly twenty-five years.

He makes out not only that the first part of his book . . . was the immediate product of his efforts to open

²⁷Howie, p. 68.

the eyes of the exiles to what the final destiny of the nation was to be, but also that several of the prophecies of chaps. 1-24, specifically chaps. 8-11 and chaps. 14 and 20 were delivered either before the entire body of the exiles or before their elders, likewise that the symbolic actions related in chaps. 12 and 24 were performed and explained by him in public.²⁸

From his book the additional information can be gleaned that Ezekiel settled down to live with the exiles during his service to them. Not only did he have a house (8:1), but he was also married (24:18).

Through this account of his labors in Babylon, Ezekiel came to be known and accepted as the great Babylonian prophet. There was no doubt that he was a member of the first deportation and remained in Babylon from then on.²⁹ This point of view held sway unattacked until our modern era of literary criticism.

Among Jews and Christians Ezekiel was from earliest times accepted as the work of a true prophet who lived among the Babylonian golah of 598 B.C. Never once from the time of canonization until the eighteenth century

²⁸Moses Bottenwieser, "The Date and Character of Ezekiel's Prophecies," Hebrew Union College Annual, VII, (1930), 1.

²⁹Carl Friedrich Keil, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel, in the fourth series in Clark's Foreign Theological Library, translated from the German by James Martin, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), I, 1.

A.D. was this traditional position seriously challenged by a reputable scholar.³⁰

It is agreed that scholarly research cannot establish its conclusions on the basis of tradition alone. But since the objections against a Babylonian background for Ezekiel have been answered, the view handed down by tradition can be accepted in support of the other proofs for Ezekiel's Babylonian residence. The unanimous witness of scholars from the first century right down until present times can only add weight to the conclusion that Ezekiel did labor and work among the exiles of Babylon in carrying out his prophetic ministry. Even as staunch an advocate of a dual site for Ezekiel's locale as Irwin, forthrightly admits concerning this traditional point of view that

It is a view of the prophet Ezekiel and of his book that has much to commend it. How else could it have held the loyal support of students of the Bible through more than twenty centuries? And to this day there are not lacking scholars of repute who consider this to be the most satisfying, the most credible, account of the matter.³¹

The weight of evidence for a Babylonian locale is overwhelming. Archaeological findings, a comparison between

³⁰Howie, p. 1.

³¹Irwin, p. 3.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel as contemporaries, and comparative linguistics all agree with the facts as they are accepted by tradition. Babylon is the locale for Ezekiel's labors. He is the prophet of the $\pi\zeta\eta\lambda$.

CHAPTER VI

BABYLONIAN IMPLICATIONS FOR EZEKIEL'S MESSAGE

If Babylonia is Ezekiel's locale, it is important to see how this background affects or determines his message. It is the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate how the meaning of Ezekiel's message takes on greater relevance and significance when the Babylonian rather than the Palestinian scene is projected as the backdrop for his prophetic proclamations.

Ezekiel gives us a sublime vision of the majesty of God. The book begins with and never quite forgets the appearance of God in His glory and holiness. In fire-flashing brightness four creatures with four wheels at their sides approached Ezekiel in Babylon (1:3). Above these creatures was a shining firmament upon which he saw the likeness of a throne. And seated upon the throne was a likeness as it were of human form. Such was the appearance of the glory of the Lord, who called Ezekiel to be His prophet. The same vision reappears at various times throughout the book of Ezekiel (3:12-14; 3:22; 8:2-4; 9:3; 10:1-22; 11:22; 43:2-5), imparting to his entire message the awesomeness of a

transcendently majestic and powerful God. "His will will be done: the sinner cannot escape; the faithful can trust in Him."¹

There are features in this inaugural vision (1:4-28) that recall previous revelations of God. The cherubim, the throne, the storm, and the rainbow appear in earlier writings of God. Yet there are other features which are not characteristic of preceding prophecy. Chief among these are the four creatures.

The living creatures of the Vision were the reflexion of certain common objects of sight in Babylonia and Assyria; they did not belong to Judaea. The colossi, man-headed, lion-headed, bull-headed, eagle-headed (Ezek. 1 10) stood in stone in the gateways of the palaces and temples of the Euphrates valley. "And their feet were straight feet," Ezekiel writes, as though his eyes were fixed on one of these monsters (i 7).²

No other prophet of God has expounded a vision of God in such detail. Consequently the meaning of some features such as the moving wheels with their rims full of eyes is difficult to establish.

¹Walter R. Roehrs, "The Inaugural Vision of Ezekiel," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIX (October 1948), 727.

²W. Emery Barnes, "The Scene of Ezekiel's Ministry and His Audience," The Journal of Theological Studies, XXXV (April 1934), 167.

The peculiar nature of the vision with its emphasis on the universal glory of God meets the specific needs of an exiled people. Since it could appear to them that God had lost control, they could easily have turned to the Babylonian gods. Therefore God comes to them in Babylon on a mobile throne in order that the אֱלֹהִים may be convinced of His presence in their midst, apart from the temple. The fact that the vision is repeated would indicate how urgently the exiles needed to be reminded of God's control of their destiny even in a foreign country.

But the glory and unlimited power of God is brought home to the exiles not only in this vision. The book is permeated with references to His transcendence. He addresses Ezekiel by the human term "Son of Man" (בֶּן־אָדָם), while Ezekiel often assigns the double divine title, Lord God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) to God. Often the Oracles are introduced with the phrase, "thus says the Lord God" ($\text{כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים}$) and concluded with the expression, "they shall know that I am the Lord" ($\text{וְיָדְעוּ כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֲנִי}$). Such statements give the distinct impression that one with authority speaks, the transcendent God himself.

McFadyen says

In Ezekiel the older prophetic conception of God has undergone a change. It has become more transcendental, with the result that the love of God is overshadowed by His holiness.³

Even the restoration is declared to achieve the vindication of God's holy name among the nations (36:22). Similarly, Ezekiel sees God acting in sovereign power when He leaves the temple of Jerusalem behind in all its filth (11:22f.) and returns again to the purified sanctuary (43:2-5).

This repeated and sustained stress on the transcendent God answers specific and relevant questions of the exiles. They were to know that He is still in charge of things. He sent them into exile. He will gather them together and bring them to their own land once again. Marduk's victory over God's people is only a temporary one. Indeed, the Babylonians are in the service of God and are His instruments to punish His rebellious people. The Babylonian animals are bearers of God's throne. God is still supreme over everything and knows what He is doing. Therefore the exiles were to trust in Him.

Ezekiel also consistently develops his message of doom

³John Edgar McFadyen, Introduction to the Old Testament (Reprint of New and Revised Edition; London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1934), p. 203.

as the result of the righteous judgment of God. God has every reason to bring this destruction about. The house of Israel is not willing to listen to the prophet of God (3:7) and in its choice of action stands condemned (3:27). Because they reject God's ordinances, do not walk in His statutes (5:6; 11:12) and defile God's sanctuary, God's eye will not spare (5:11). By their injustice, pride, and violence in relation to their brethren they also incur God's wrath (7:10,11). The worst of the nations is to descend upon Jerusalem because it is full of violence and bloody crimes (7:23f.). God is judging them according to their evil ways (7:27).

The stress on the people's sins as vindicating God's drastic action against Palestine continues into chapters 8-11. The abominations in Jerusalem, such as the image of jealousy, are driving Yahweh far from His sanctuary (8:6). Seventy elders are seen worshiping idols (8:11), while women are weeping for Tammuz (8:14) and twenty-five others are worshiping the sun (8:16). Such actions on the part of the people provoke God to anger (8:18) and to send His agents to defile the house of the Lord with the slain (9:7).

The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of blood, and the city

full of injustice; for they say, "The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see." As for me [God], my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will requite their deeds upon their heads.⁴

These references may seem to call for a Palestinian background. For there is no doubt that it is in Jerusalem where these sins are committed (chapters 8-11). Yet Ezekiel identifies Israel and Judah as the culprits (9:9). In 11:25 he expressly states "And I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had showed me." Thus this section becomes a prophetic proclamation also to the יְרֵמֶלֶךְ , warning them of the disastrous results of sin still in store for God's people. Jerusalem will fall as a result of its sinfulness and their Jerusalemite brethren will join Ezekiel's hearers in exile.

The thought that God is the just God and does nothing without a reason is found also in succeeding chapters. Because this rebellious people will not see nor hear the word of God (12:2), they shall go into captivity (12:11). Their land shall be laid waste because of the violence therein (12:19). Since the false prophets mislead God's people "They shall not be in the council of my people, nor be

⁴Ezek. 9:9,10.

enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel" (13:9). The relevance of this message for Ezekiel's hearers is indicated in 14:22,23. Here those in Jerusalem who escape the wrath of God, shall serve the purpose of demonstrating to the exiles why God wiped out Jerusalem. Through their continual wickedness the exiles "shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, says the Lord God" (14:23). The accounts of the faithless wife (chapter 14) and the harlotrous sisters, Oholah and Oholibah (chapter 23) highlight the idolotrous situation which prevailed in Jerusalem. Worse than Sodom and Samaria, Judah was to be destroyed by God's just hand.

But the just God had a purpose in this judgment. He deals harshly with the idolatrous Jerusalemites in order "that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols" (14:5). He punishes them to regain them as His people (14:10,11). God's judgment is face to face so as to "purge out the rebels . . . and those who transgress against me" (20:37). He will consume the filthiness out of Israel (22:15), that the dross may be made pure again (22:18). Lewdness is to be

wiped out so that "all women may take warning and not commit lewdness" (23:48). God would cleanse Israel of its sin (24:13). The exiles in Babylon could take from these portrayals the great solace that God is just and will be with them as long as they are willing to keep their half of the covenant relationship. "Hence we can sum up the message of Ezekiel: God is faithful. He executes His threats and He keeps His promises. Soli deo gloria!"⁵

In addition to presenting Judah's doom as the righteous judgment of God, Ezekiel proclaims the destruction of Jerusalem as the vindication rather than the contradiction of Israel's historic faith. Although Jerusalem must be destroyed as a result of its sin,

Ezekiel's mission was to teach the Jews of the captivity Jehovah's plan for the restoration of his people. Their hopes were set upon a speedy return from the exile and upon the rehabilitation of Jerusalem and Judea. It was Ezekiel's business to shatter these hopes, and to convince his associates that Jehovah had left his city and given it over to the conqueror as a punishment for its sins. . . . A complete breaking with the past was the indispensable condition of restoration to divine favor."⁶

⁵Roehrs, p. 726.

⁶Walter R. Betteridge, "Ezekiel, the Prophet of the Exile," The Biblical World, V (April 1895), 251.

Consequently Ezekiel preaches the fall of Jerusalem without ceasing. The scroll of words which he eats is written with "words of lamentation and mourning and woe" (2:10). It is these words which Ezekiel is to proclaim to the exiles (3:10,11). With dramatic emphasis he portrays the siege of Jerusalem (chapter 4) and the destruction of its inhabitants (chapter 5). They "shall be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and a horror" to the nations round about them (5:15). "The end has come upon the four corners of the land" (7:2). Neither their gold nor silver shall be able to stop the destruction (7:19). Rather disasters will be multiplied. The priests are lawless, the elders are without counsel, the king mourns, and the people's hands are palsied by terror" (7:26f.). They shall go into captivity (12:11). And that without delay (12:28). Ezekiel is so convinced of this that he offers his hearers a lamentation over the lost princes of Israel (chapter 19).

His hearers, however, think Ezekiel is inventing stories when he speaks of the destruction of Palestine (20:49). God's reply to it all is total destruction (21:4). The sword comes in all of its destructiveness (21:8-32). Jerusalem is a pot of flesh on the fire (24:1-14). In this

way Ezekiel prepares his hearer for the devastating news, "the city has fallen" (33:21).

Ezekiel's message of destruction was not accepted by the exiles although they had already experienced God's chastening. History proved Ezekiel correct. The city did fall. Ezekiel's preaching of doom shattered any false hopes which the exiles had about an early return to Jerusalem.

The people reacted to Ezekiel's preaching as well as to the actual fall of Jerusalem by accusing God of being unjust.

It was in response to this situation [of despair among the exiles] that Ezekiel evolved his great doctrine of individualism. It marks a notable advance in his own thinking, for earlier he had given full assent to the traditional belief in national solidarity--for the evils of Jerusalem God would draw his sword and slaughter both righteous and wicked (21:6-9). . . . As to how much deep thought and long pondering he gave to the gloom of his fellow exiles we can only speculate; but, however it came about, he grasped the great truth that all alike are God's people--whether father or son, only the person who commits sin shall die for it.⁷

Ezekiel makes clear that only the righteous man shall surely live (18:9). Any son of a righteous father who sins shall

⁷William A. Irwin, The Problem of Ezekiel: an Inductive Study (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, c.1943), pp. 331-332.

surely die (18:13). In contrast any righteous son of a wicked father shall surely live (18:17), but the father shall die for his own iniquity (18:18). The wicked man who repents shall surely live (18:21,27; 33:16,19), while the righteous man who rejects righteousness and commits iniquity shall die (18:24,26; 33:13,18). The prophet rejects the charge that the ways of God are not just and insists that the ways of Israel are inconsistent. They have only themselves to blame for God's visitation upon them.

Again this message should have impressed the exiles, who had already experienced the heavy hand of God. Both chapter 18 and the first part of chapter 33 appear before the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem in 33:21. The Jerusalemites at this time, however, were looking forward to another rout of the enemy as at Sennacherib's time and not complaining about God's unjust ways.

The individual responsibility of man before God becomes evident in other parts of Ezekiel as well. In his call as watchman of Israel (3:17-21; 33:1-9) he is held responsible only to present the warning. It is every man's own responsibility to accept it. "He that will hear let him hear; and he that will refuse to hear; let him refuse" (3:27). The

same thought is reflected in chapter 14 where it is stated that Noah, Daniel, and Job would save but themselves by their righteousness (vv. 14,20). For the אֲשֶׁר־בְּיָדָם who already were separated from God's people in Jerusalem, this message filled a need; it pointed each man to himself for the source of blame and to His God for a just remedy.

In considering the relevance of Ezekiel's message in a Babylonian setting, it is necessary to mention also the evils which he denounces. We find that the sin most often scored by him is the sin of apostacy. There is nothing worse than to replace the true God with an idol. To him the people's idols are abominations (5:9). Present even in the temple (5:11), they provoke God to anger. In His divine jealousy He will destroy their high places and slay the idolators before their very idols (6:3-5). These are the stumbling block which have caused Israel to forget the true God (7:20; 14:45). Chapter 8 pictures the depths to which God's people had sunk, even worshiping Tammuz (8:14) and the sun (8:16).

Ezekiel calls Israel's apostacy, harlotry. Israel is playing the part of the faithless wife (16:32). Flaunting her wares before Egypt, Assyria, and Chaldea (16:26-29),

she is worse than a harlot. For a harlot at least takes her hire, but Israel gives herself away freely. Therefore she will be judged "as women who break wedlock" (16:35) and be stoned to death (16:40; 23:47). Israel has had a continuous history of whoredom, going after other gods (chapter 20). Oholah (Samaria) courted the Assyrians, but Oholibah (Jerusalem) plays the harlot with Chaldea and Egypt in addition to Assyria. Thus her sin is the greater. She shall drink her sister's cup and be ravaged by her very own lovers (23:24). Nothing offends God more than such rank idol worship. Therefore he will put an end to it all (23:48).

Although such a message was needed by the Jerusalemites they certainly would have resisted the thought that their sin was worse than Samaria's errors. But the warning against false gods was most appropriate in Babylonia. Since the temptations there to fall into idolatry must have been great, Ezekiel warns his fellow exiles against the dangers of this sin at great length. Because of their transgression of God's commandment, he bids them to repent of their past ways and to follow His statutes.

Stern herald of approaching judgment that he was, Ezekiel was a preacher of the doctrine of repentance also. Through the gloom of his denunciation an occasional ray of light breaks forth. A few of the hairs

are to be preserved from destruction, a few residents of Jerusalem are spared, the exiles are to be restored to the land of Israel, even the faithless wife shall be forgiven, and anyone who will turn from the error of his ways shall live.⁸

When Ezekiel in a vision sees God's messengers slaying the wicked in Jerusalem, those who groan about the idolatrous situation there are marked on the forehead and spared (9:4). A few escape the sword "that they may confess all their abominations among the nations where they go and may know that I [God] am the Lord" (12:16). This is the repentance called for by Ezekiel. "Repent and turn away from your idols" (14:6).

Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God: so turn and live.⁹

Israel should be ashamed of its past (16:53,61; 20:43; 43:11). Then only can it turn back and follow the statutes of the Lord. Indeed, this is the prerequisite before the new temple vision can be seen. "If they are ashamed of all that they have done, portray the temple . . . and make

⁸Betteridge, pp. 254-255.

⁹Ezek. 18:31,32--see also 33:11.

known to them all its ordinances" (43:11).

Certainly this call for repentance is applicable to all of Israel, those in Palestine as well as those in Babylon. Yet the meaning of such a call would be more meaningful to the אֲשֶׁר . Having experienced the wrath of God, they would be more likely to seize God as their only way out. Led by Ezekiel, the prophet of God, the exiles come to the realization that "a nation survives only by doing the will of God. . . . Our duty is to repent, and to repent now."¹⁰

The natural result of such repentance is restoration. For Ezekiel repentant Israel's renewal will begin with the destruction of her previous enemies. It is in chapters 25-32 where Ezekiel delivers his major message of doom against the foreign nations round about Palestine.

This group separates the chapters which denounce the sins of Israel (1-24) from those which promise restoration and describe the community of the future (33-39; 40-48); the arrangement, therefore, seems intended to suggest that, as a prelude to the ideal state, enemies must be put out of action, and Israel made secure in its own land (34:28f.). Seven nations come within the

¹⁰Norman H. Snaith, "The Prophets of the Exile," Religion in Life, XIX (Winter 1949-1950), 89.

circle of denunciations, the number possibly signifying completeness.¹¹

These seven countries are Ammon (21:28-32; 25:1-7), Moab (25:8-11), Edom (25:12-14; 35:1-15), Philistia (25:15-17), Tyre (26:1-28:20), Sidon (28:21-24), and Egypt (29:1-32:32). All these nations shall suffer reproach and defeat even as they had led to Israel's shame and downfall (36:6,7). Then Israel shall return to her own land and live unmolested by foreign elements (28:25,26).

These denunciations of foreign nations do not require a specific locale. But from the various accusations brought against them (25:3,6,8 and others), it is obvious that this section is spoken after the fall of Jerusalem. Consequently Ezekiel would already be in exile, and would be addressing these nations post eventum. This opinion may be further substantiated by the unique fact that

No other prophet devotes so much attention to Tyre as Ezekiel, and the reason is to be found in the absorbing interest of the moment. Tyre was about to undergo a siege by Nebuchadrezzar: would the proud city share the fate of Jerusalem? On patriotic and religious grounds the Jewish exiles felt themselves to be involved in the issue. Ezekiel has doubt that it will

¹¹G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), II, 281.

end in Tyre's overthrow and extinction (26); he anticipates its ruin in a magnificent dirge (27); and threatens its king with retribution (28).¹²

Once Israel's foes are vanquished her restoration will be able to come to completion. Throughout his book Ezekiel's message of doom is interspersed with his message of hope until in the end there is no more room for despair, only for hopeful expectation. The destroyed state of Israel will be restored, while the rebellious people of Israel will be renewed.

Ezekiel never doubts the continued existence of Israel. A few of his hairs are tucked into his robe for safekeeping, symbolizing the remnant that will not perish (5:3). Some will escape the final destruction wrought by God's wrath (6:8; 7:16; 12:16). Those who bemoan the idolatrous activity of Jerusalem will be spared by a marked forehead (9:4-6). Indeed, God is a sanctuary to those in exile (11:16) and will gather His people to the land of Israel (11:17; 20:41; 36:24). After His fury is spent, God will be calm (16:42). He will restore the fortunes of Israel (16:53; 39:25f.) and establish an eternal covenant with His people (16:60ff.).

¹²Ibid., p. 287.

Planting His own twig, all will dwell safely under its branches (17:22-24). God Himself will be king (20:33). He will also function as their Shepherd, seeking, rescuing, and bringing His sheep home with Him (34:11-13). The completeness of this restoration is graphically portrayed in the valley of the dry bones account (37:1-14). These very dry bones shall arise, take on flesh, and breathing the wind of God return as a body to their homeland. This means all of Israel. Both Judah and Israel will return and live under one king, as symbolized by the double stick parable (37:15-23). In the return of His people God will vindicate His holy name (39:28). Thenceforth He will dwell with Israel "and the name of the city shall be, the Lord is there" (48:35).

At the same time the rebellious house of Israel will be renewed. Their wanton hearts shall be broken (6:9), and they shall moan over their previous iniquity (7:16). Then God, giving them a new spirit, will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh (11:19; 36:26). Walking in His statutes and obeying His ordinances, they will be God's people, and He will be their God (11:20). As the sheep of God's pasture (34:31), they will be filled

with a new spirit (36:27). Then the everlasting covenant of peace will be theirs (37:26). Their shame will be forgotten (39:26), and they will feast on the waters of God (47:1-12).

This declaration of renewal, both national and personal, has meaning when addressed to the exiles of 597 B.C. as well as of 586 B.C. Once the fall of Jerusalem became a reality, this message of Ezekiel became the people's only hope. Restoration and renewal was the only way out. Thus God sent His prophet to point the way. And He put Him in Babylon where the exiles were.

The final ten chapters of Ezekiel project his message of hope into the ideal future. In so doing they function as a direct continuation of his proclamation of restoration in chapters 34,36,37.

In the conception of an ideal temple the prophecies of restoration, chapters 34,36,37, reach their fitting climax. The vision described in 40-42; 43:1-12; 44:1-8; 47:1-12 corresponds with the visions in chapters 1-3, 8-11; the desecration of the former temple, which led Jahveh to abandon it (8-11), is balanced by Jahveh's solemn return to hallow it afresh (43:1-12; 44:1-8).¹³

¹³G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, in The International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), I, xxv,xxvi.

In this final section of Ezekiel the prophet who was priest throws ritual into a prominence which it never had in prophecy with such force that it was retained thereafter (see Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).¹⁴

It all begins with a detailed list of various temple measurements, including such details as the gates (40:6), type of windows (40:16), the jambs of the vestibule (40:48). The measurements of the nave (41:1) and of the altar (40:21) follow. The dimensions of various chambers are listed in chapter 42. The ordinances of God governing sacrifices and the feasts and the priesthood are treated in chapters 43-46. The extent and diversion of the restored land is set forth in chapters 47 and 48. As Cooke puts it,

Ezekiel has portrayed his ideal of the coming age. . . . Now he takes up the task of carrying it into effect. He is the most practical of reformers, and not only a prophet, but a priest, deeply concerned with the organization of religion in the community of the future. We can imagine him poring over architectural plans and regulations for worship, when he fell into an ecstasy, and seemed to be transported from Babylonia to the land of Israel, and set down upon a mountain. There, in the spirit, he sees a building like a walled city; it turns out to be the temple; and in chapters 40-42 he describes its ground plan, which is based partly on the lines of Solomon's temple,

¹⁴McFadyen, p. 198.

partly on the model of the walled and fortified sanctuaries in Babylonia.¹⁵

The prophet of God pictures the restored community for His people. This group is to be refounded on its worship of God. Thus Ezekiel emphasizes the connection between the prophets and the law. He

is by nature a priest and his peculiar merit is that he enclosed the soul of prophecy in the body of a Community which centered not round a king, but round a Temple and its worship. Chapters xl to xlviii are the most important in his book and have been called, not incorrectly, the key of the Old Testament.¹⁶

The same prophet of God who pictures God so majestically transcendent is able to put God right into the midst of His new idealic community.

Henceforth, the name of the city will be--and this is the closing word of the book--"Yahweh is there!" That is the characteristic sacramentalism of Ezekiel, which stands as the fitting accompaniment of his supernaturalism. The holy God will find a worthy mediation of His glory and His presence through holy worship.¹⁷

The cycle is complete. The exiled ones will return

¹⁵G. A. Cooke, II, 425.

¹⁶John Battersby Harford, Studies in the Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p. 8.

¹⁷H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Visions of Ezekiel," Two Hebrew Prophets: Studies in Hosea and Ezekiel (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), p. 124.

home. The transcendent God will dwell in their midst. How this message must have tugged at the heart strings of all those deported from Jerusalem and living in a strange land. As their prophet, Ezekiel points the אלהים to their God who will bring all this to pass. In their true worship of Him His continuous presence is assured.

Preaching doom prior to the fall of Jerusalem and proclaiming hope after its destruction

It was Ezekiel who taught the people during their stay in Babylon, gathering them together on the banks of the Nippur in meetings which probably set the pattern for the synagogue later on; and since the synagogue set the pattern for the instruction part of our own Mass, we owe a special debt to Ezekiel for several reasons. He knew it was necessary to teach the people regularly in order to strengthen their faith. Ezekiel rebuked and threatened, instructed and consoled, predicted and explained and kept alive in these Hebrews the consciousness of their election as God's people in spite of the forlorn state of their affairs. "Humanly speaking, had it not been for Ezekiel, the Hebrew religion might have died."¹⁸

But thanks to the efforts of this great man of God, His people stood firm in their covenant relationship. Because he gave them a master plan for their restored land and drew up the ideal temple for his hearers with all its possibilities

¹⁸M. Newland, "The Exile and the Prophets of the Exile," in a series entitled "The Family and the Bible," Torch, XLVII (October 1963), 16.

for priestly service, Ezekiel is considered by many to be the father of Judaism, the direct progenitor of Christianity.

If we judge Ezekiel, as we ought, by his place in history, and not by standards of higher revelation, we can see how necessary was his particular form of faith for an Israel not yet ready to inherit the higher hopes of Deutero-Isaiah. That is the reason why he has been called the father of Judaism, with its virtues and its vices; that is why he has exerted so much influence on the subsequent generations of Israel. Idealism is the salt of religion, but there must be something to salt, and it was this that Ezekiel's realism so strikingly recognized and worked out.¹⁹

Not lost in the realms of ethereal speculation, Ezekiel gives his fellow exiles something concrete to look forward to--a restored temple and homeland.

To place Ezekiel in Palestine is to strip him of his uniqueness and effectiveness. He is God's prophet to the אֱלֹהִים . Bringing God's people through the depths of their despair, he points them to God's everlasting covenant of peace. Like the bow in the sky (1:28), so will God's presence be with His people in their own land in the city called יְרוּשָׁלַיִם (48:35).

¹⁹Robinson, p. 125.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

There are ten major arguments which are urged against the Babylonian and for the Palestinian locale. They are:

- (1) Ezekiel is called to speak and does center his message about "the house of Israel," which consistently means the people of Jerusalem;
- (2) In chapters 1-24 especially Ezekiel's discourses are actually addressed to Jerusalem or Judah, and their contents of impending doom and destruction would have meaning only to the Jerusalemites;
- (3) The constant stress on the coming annihilation of Jerusalem in Ezekiel's oracles would be irrelevant to a Babylonian audience;
- (4) Since Ezekiel's symbolic actions are live, dramatic portrayals of Jerusalem's fall and would be of little significance to the אֲשֶׁר־בָּבֶל , they are most likely viewed in person by a Palestinian audience;
- (5) Ezekiel does not speak to the physical needs and circumstances of the אֲשֶׁר־בָּבֶל ;
- (6) Certain circumstances related in the book of Ezekiel--such as Pelatiah's death (11:13), the burning of the prophet's hairs "in the midst of the city" (5:2), his reference to "these waste places" (33:24)--give the impression that the

prophet is working in Palestine; (7) Ezekiel's detailed knowledge of conditions in Jerusalem and the people's reaction to it all indicate that he lived and worked in Jerusalem; (8) Acceptance of a Palestinian locale eliminates any necessity to posit clairvoyance or psychopathic disorders on the part of Ezekiel; (9) Early Jewish tradition solved their problem concerning the authorship of the book of Ezekiel by placing it in Palestine; (10) Since the passages in Ezekiel which directly state that he was a prophet in Babylon disrupt the flow of thought in their contexts, they are to be attributed to a Babylonian editor. These are the arguments that are said to necessitate or support a Palestinian locale for Ezekiel's prophetic ministry.

There are also scholars who contend that Ezekiel prophesied in more than one place. Adapting various combinations of the above arguments to their theories, these men put Ezekiel in Palestine for the first part of his ministry and elsewhere for the remainder of his career. In so doing they find it necessary to get Ezekiel from the one place to the other. Thus the following solutions are given: (1) Oesterly places Ezekiel's ministry of doom in Jerusalem, while his prophecies of restoration come from Babylon--his

departure from one place to the other is taken for granted; (2) Irwin puts Ezekiel in Palestine with a subsequent ministry in Babylon and finds his trip between the two countries alluded to in 11:15; (3) Kuhl establishes a Palestinian scene for Ezekiel's labors at first with a Babylonian site for his later work--his change of location being given in 3:15; (4) Bertholet suggests three residences for Ezekiel, one each in Jerusalem, in "another place" in Palestine, and in Babylon--with chapter 12 giving the clue to his moving about; (5) Smith solves the "Ezekiel-Enigma" by making Ezekiel a prophet among the Northern Israelites to begin with and then later among the diaspora in Assyria--with no specific reference to any travels by Ezekiel.

All the above opinions can be refuted by the following considerations: (1) Ezekiel is called to speak and does center his message about "the house of Israel," but there is no consistent usage of this term; it can refer to the people of the Northern Kingdom, the inhabitants of the Southern Kingdom, the exiles, or to the whole people of united Israel; (2) Although many of Ezekiel's doom oracles are addressed to Jerusalem or Judah, this is a literary device or a direct meaningful message to the ~~7747~~₇ or a matter of

apocalyptic form; (3) It was very appropriate for Ezekiel to devote the bulk of his early prophetic attention in Babylon to denouncing and threatening Jerusalem, for it lay at the heart of the exiles' fears and dreams; (4) Ezekiel's symbolic actions as live, dramatic portrayals of Jerusalem's fall are meant to imprint indelibly on the minds of his fellow exiles the reality of his spoken message; (5) The prophet Ezekiel does speak to the spiritual needs and circumstances of the אֶרְצָא ; (6) Pelatiah's death (11:13), the burning of the prophet's hair "in the midst of the city" (5:2), and his reference to "these waste places" (33:24), can all be accounted for, whereas other circumstances related in the book of Ezekiel--such as the glorious vision of God (3:22) taking place in the plain (אֶרְצוֹת), Ezekiel's transportation by spirit (8:3; 11:24), the punishment of the false prophets (13:9),--indicate a Babylonian setting for Ezekiel's ministry; (7) Ezekiel's knowledge of events in Jerusalem is not as detailed as Jeremiah's; what he does know, can be accounted for by his trips there in the spirit and/or by the communication known to exist between Tel-abib and Jerusalem; (8) Whether clairvoyant or not, Ezekiel is in very close relationship with the spirit of God resulting in

his being sensitive to the message of God for His exiled people; (9) Early Jewish tradition concerns itself with Ezekiel only in the matter of passing canonical regulations and doesn't affect our study; (10) To posit a Babylonian editor doesn't solve anything, but only presents the additional problem of why a falsifying editor would transfer Ezekiel's prophecies from Yahweh's own land to Babylon; (11) While the multi-site contentions of Oesterly, Irwin, Kuhl, Bertholet, and Smith rest on the departure of Ezekiel from one place to another, the fact is that there is no reference to such movements in the book of Ezekiel simply because he never did prophesy in any other place but Babylon. Since all the arguments to the contrary can be met, there is nothing to stand in the way of a Babylonian locale for Ezekiel.

But, there are also considerations which demonstrate in a positive way that Ezekiel did prophesy in Babylon. Archaeology supports the authenticity of Ezekiel's message at such points as when he writes of drawing on a אֲבָרְתָּן (4:1), digging through a wall (8:8; 12:15), or being among the exiles (3:15). Moreover the River Chebar and the city of Tel-abib have been located at logical sites in Babylonia.

A study of the similarities and dissimilarities between the message of Jeremiah and Ezekiel also substantiates Ezekiel's claim to a Babylonian residence. Ezekiel's dependence on Jeremiah can be accounted for by the fact that Ezekiel had access to a part of Jeremiah's written oracles before he was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. The difference in their accounts is the result of their widely separated temperaments and locales.

Linguistic studies of the text also favor a Babylonian background for Ezekiel. There are Aramaic and Babylonian loan words scattered throughout the text as well as evidence of foreign grammar and syntax. The presence of this Aramaic-Babylonian coloring of the text proves the influence of Ezekiel's Babylonian surroundings in shaping the forms of his prophecies.

For centuries scholars accepted the book of Ezekiel as the product of the great prophet among the $\pi\lambda\epsilon\lambda$. There was no doubt that he was a member of the first deportation and remained in Babylon from then on. Tradition alone is no proof. But taken in conjunction with the other evidence of Ezekiel's locale, this unanimous witness of scholars through the centuries can only add weight to his residence

amid the Palestinian departees who lived as exiles in Babylon.

In the final analysis it must be admitted that the weight of evidence for a Babylonian setting is overwhelming. Babylon is the locale for Ezekiel's prophetic ministry. He is the prophet of the $\pi\text{ז}^{\text{ל}}\text{ז}^{\text{ל}}$.

From this conclusion several implications can be drawn concerning Ezekiel's message to the exiles. His sublime vision of the majesty of Yahweh coming to Babylon is to meet the need of the exiles who were despairing of Yahweh's presence in their midst. Ezekiel's emphasis on the transcendence of Yahweh serves the purpose of convincing the exiles that Yahweh not Marduk, is still in charge of things and can be trusted. In consistently presenting the fall of Jerusalem as the righteous judgment of God, Ezekiel is warning the $\pi\text{ז}^{\text{ל}}\text{ז}^{\text{ל}}$ of the disastrous results of sin. God will punish the sinner.

However that is not the end of Ezekiel's message. He goes on to present the fall of Jerusalem as the vindication rather than the contradiction of Israel's faith. Jerusalem has sinned. Jerusalem must fall. There is no hope for her. By shattering all false hope in Jerusalem, Ezekiel kept the exiles from complete despair when it actually did fall into

the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian troops.

His stress on the responsibility of the individual is Ezekiel's response to the people's cry of God's unfairness. Therein he points each man to himself for the source of blame and to his God for a just remedy. To the $\pi\eta\gamma\lambda$ this would be most helpful in reconciling their exiled state with the justice of God.

The sin most often exposed by Ezekiel is the sin of idolatry. In so doing he is preaching to one of the great needs of the exiles. In their unhappy lot it was a sore temptation to leave Yahweh's fold and seek the help of a more "successful" God. By his stress on the sin of idolatry, Ezekiel would reveal this temptation as the great sin it is against God.

By his call to repentance Ezekiel enacts the role of watchman. The $\pi\eta\gamma\lambda$ were to grasp the only way out of their dilemma: to turn from sin and trust God.

The oracles against the foreign nations are Ezekiel's transition from doom to dream, from destruction to restoration. The transcendent God shall conquer them and Israel shall return to her own land.

This restoration of the nation will be accompanied

by a renewal of the individual. Stony hearts will be replaced with hearts of flesh. Here is the reason for the destruction and exile. God wants His apostatized people restored.

As the prophet in exile Ezekiel does not forget the priestly training of his youth. His visions of the future glory of Israel's temple includes a vast amount of cultic detail. He ties up the renewed presence of God with the exiles' true worship of God. In so doing he becomes, in the eyes of some, the father of Judaism. Such is the great prophet of the exile, Ezekiel, by name.

APPENDIX

SCHOLARS WHO FAVOR PALESTINE ALONE

Charles Cutler Torrey 1930
James Smith 1931
Volkmar Herntrich 1933
John Battersby Harford 1935
I. G. Matthews 1939
Nils Messel 1955

SCHOLARS WHO PREFER PALESTINE AND BABYLON

William Oesterley 1934
Alfred Bertholet 1936
O. R. Fisher 1941
William A. Irwin 1943
A. Van den Born 1947
P. Auvray 1948
Curt Kuhl 1952
Herbert G. May 1956

SCHOLARS WHO CHOOSE BABYLON ALONE

Henry A. Redpath 1907
Ernst Sellin 1923
Gustav Hölscher 1924
John Edgar McFadyen 1934
George A. Cooke 1937
Theodor H. Gaster 1941
William F. Albright 1942
G. A. Danell 1946
H. Wheeler Robinson 1948
Jack Finegan 1950
Carl Gordon Howie 1950
Harry M. Orlinsky 1951
Georg Fohrer 1952
Cecil J. Mullo Weir 1952
Otto Eissfeldt 1956
Henry L. Ellison 1956
D. W. Zimmerli 1956

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