

PART III THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AUTHORSHIP AND DATING

Until modern literary-historical scholarship began to question the origin and arrangement of the book, the book of Ezekiel had been thought to be no other than a literary unity written by one author, Ezekiel. The critical work began "very hesitatingly and late, but then finally came in sharply so as to attack the very foundations of the book" (Zimmerli, 1979:3).

Kraetzchmar (1900:3f) started to suggest that with an editor's glosses, the final book was combined out of two sources, namely a first person account and a third person account. Herrmann viewed the book as a compilation of isolated groups of passages (1924:xxxiv). He thought that the present arrangement came from some later redactor than Ezekiel himself. Hölscher extended the research with the consideration of the literary forms and styles. He assigned the poetic material to the prophet himself, other prose passages to a redactor in the fifth century B.C., suggesting the latter as a pseudepigraphon in favour of diaspora Judaism (1924:61f). Torrey developed it further, saying that the entire book is a pseudepigraphon (1930:23). He asserted that separated materials were collected by a pseudo-Ezekiel about 230 B.C.¹⁶

On the other hand, Smith (1931:98) argued the early date of the book as having originated from the northern kingdom. He thought that the first group of the book was composed in and among the people of the northern kingdom, and the second group was addressed to the northern exiles immediately after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. Smith was followed by Gaster (1925) who believed that Ezekiel was the prophet of the northern tribes. Some, like

¹⁶ One may consult Spiegel (1932) for answering Torrey's thesis.

Matthews (1939:xviii) and Hertrich (1933) have suggested two different backgrounds of the book, namely Jerusalem and Babylonia. They have thought that the original one with the Judaic background came from the prophet Ezekiel himself who had lived and worked in Judah and the secondary one with the Babylonian background was a later one imposed on the first. Scholars who advocate the dual locations for the activity of the prophet are: Spiegel, Auvray, Fischer, Pfeiffer, van den Born, Robinson, Kuhl, May, and Steinmann (cf. Eissfeldt, 1965:371f; Pfeiffer, 1948:531f; Taylor, 1969:19; Yates, 1972:314f).

On the other hand, Cooke, Schmidt, Finnegan, Howie, Orlinsky, Fohrer, Zimmerli, Eichrodt, Eissfeldt, Muilenburg, Engnell, Stalker, Rowley, Taylor, and others agree that the date and place of Ezekiel's ministry were in Babylonia between 593 and 570 B.C. But they have different views on the authenticity, although they mostly assign the major part of the book to Ezekiel himself. Most later scholars, like Engnell (1970:163ff), showed their interest in searching for the genuine sayings of the prophet and the secondary sources which one may assume were added by his disciples. There is no single agreement for arguing the case of secondary glosses.

Unlike other prophets (esp. Isaiah), it is not surprising that the book of Ezekiel has been found to have homogeneity by many scholars. Smend (1880:xxi) viewed its unity and well-ordered arrangement. Following Smend, the group of German scholars, such as Cornill (1886) and Bertholet (1936), asserted that the prophet Ezekiel compiled the book largely as we find it now (cf. Howie, 1950:2; Yates, 1972:304f).

At the present point in time, we may give our attention to the fruits of moderate scholarship. First, Zimmerli must be given credit for his contribution in this area. He found the peculiar forms of prophetic speech which, he believed, Ezekiel adopted from priestly traditions. And then Zimmerli developed an "afterlife" of texts to explain the growth of the text in the final form of

the book (cf. Childs, 1979:359). Childs directed his effort to seeing the continuity between the original function of the oracles and its subsequent canonical shaping. He saw Ezekiel's message to the historical addressee in the period before and after the fall of Jerusalem. But Childs had much more interest in the final canonical form of the book as a whole after passing through a long subsequent canonical process (1979:357-72). The importance of the function of the canonical form of the book has the theological implication of the ultimate purpose of God with his people. "The eschatological promise of salvation beyond the judgment is pictured throughout the book, and transcends completely the temporal framework" (1979:366). Clements also emphasised the unity of the final form of the book, saying that "more particularly we can see that a far greater homogeneity of theological outlook and institutional affinity exists in the work" (Clements, 1982:120). However, the unity of the book does not automatically mean, for Clements, that Ezekiel himself wrote the whole book. Clements wanted to use the term 'school' (1982:133). He suggested that the 'disciples' of the prophet in some sense elaborated and applied the original prophet's message to the situation of their own time (the latter half of the sixth century B.C.), when the cultic life of Jerusalem lay in ruins, and when a particular hope of its restoration had begun to take shape (1982:133). Those disciples are regarded, according to Clements, as loyalists of the priestly circle who compiled the Holiness Code.¹⁷ Like Childs, Clements also claimed the importance of the theological implication of the book as a whole, saying that "the Ezekiel prophetic tradition has been to establish the divine authenticity of the renewal of the Jerusalem temple cultic after the exile" (1982:134, fn 2).

Although scholars have directed their efforts toward the debate on the authenticity of the book, we still remain in confusion with little evidence (Ackroyd, 1962:15). Taylor rightly observed that "Attempts to isolate Ezekiel's own work from his editor's have been eschewed as being too uncertain

¹⁷ Clements recognised two important schools in that time of exile, namely the "deuteronomic" school and the "priestly" school: The former is responsible for the book of Jeremiah and the latter for the book of Ezekiel.

an occupation" (1969:20). For our purpose it is best not to get involved in such an endless critical examination. But we must adopt the strong point of the "canonical approach" which reminds us of the all-important fact of the final form of the canon as being God's Word and its theological implication for all the Scriptures. Thus we will basically leave out the debate of the authenticity of texts. We will work the selected texts with a viewing of the homogeneity of the whole book which was heard by ancient Jews in the period of the exile as the Words of God, and which still says much about God's will to us.

1.2 THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THEMES OF THE BOOK

Through the experience of the total collapse in 587 B.C. the prophet led the people from an extreme view of despair to the extreme idea of hope; and from discontinuity to the continuity of their history. The prophets in that age had made preparation for the catastrophe by means of the reawakening. The preparation had to come first with a recognition of the total corruption, the complete destruction, and the death of the body (the nation) (cf. 37:11).

Zimmerli states:

For those able to weather the storm, times of radical collapse can become times of new possibility and potential. Just such periods generated the phrase "the blessing of the nadir." The possibility of genuine new beginnings, beginnings that avoid the mistakes of earlier epochs, can only appear whenever all earlier ties have been severed. At the same time...even the most profound historical changes are rarely able to break the continuity of earlier history; under the rubble of destruction elements of the old begin to stir unexpectedly and to acquire new power (1982:111).

The book consists of messages of "doom" and "salvation". The message of "doom" which is mainly located in the first part of the book, is preparatory for salvation. The messages of salvation, mainly located from chapter 34 to the end, aim to give assurance of God's faithfulness toward his own people. Verse 33:21 may be taken as a turning point of the stream of the book. By receiving the message of Jerusalem's fall from a man who escaped from Jerusalem in chapter 33, Ezekiel could turn his concentration to a pastoral ministry for the people in exile (cf. Bewer, 1936:114f).

1.2.1 The judgment theme

In the earlier period of his mission, Ezekiel devoted himself to the announcement of God's judgment, because there was a dangerous situation through the activities of false prophets who exerted a pastorate over the people with a message of "peace" although there was no peace at all (13:1-16). The theme of "the Day of Yahweh" is employed to bring up the message of "doom" (7:19; 13:5; cf. 30:3; cf. Klein, 1979:76).

Ezekiel's message of "doom" is highlighted in the speech about the destruction of Jerusalem, the chosen city, although the Psalmist had said: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither!" (Ps 137:5; RSV). The destruction was depicted in such a way that six executioners were despatched through the city to kill both old and young, women and children (9:6). Several symbolic signs or actions are used as the messages of the destruction of the city: The prophet's own hair is used to have the symbolic meaning of how the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be burned, killed, and driven into exile (5:1-2). Packing his belongings symbolises the people's (esp. the royals) marching into exile (12:1-16). Eating his bread with quaking and dismay tells about the immediate stripping of the city (12:17- 20). Even the death of his wife was used as a symbol in the circumstances as the prophet was forbidden to mourn for her death in order to show the tearless reaction to the loss of the city. Finally, it ends with the departure of Yahweh's glory from the temple.

The messages have the purpose of teaching the people. The purpose of the messages is to make them realise their sins, such as abominations, detestable things, idols, and harlotries. By bringing up the sins, Ezekiel contrasts the justification of Yahweh's action with that of the people (cf. 20:31) (von Rad, 1965 II: 225). It was a price for the people's rebellion against God who had adopted and loved them. Ackroyd describes:

For Ezekiel judgment is to be understood in terms of the absolute rightness of an action which has fallen upon the whole people. He is

concerned to demonstrate how the disaster fits into the plan and purpose of God, and to show how the condition of the people is such that any alternative is unthinkable (1968:105).

Hence the focus in the first part lies upon the radical nature of sin, and recognition of the absoluteness of the divine judgement (Ackroyd, 1968:105).

1.2.2 The shift to the "salvation" theme

In the presentation of "doom" and "restoration", Ezekiel is consistent with the idea of "covenant" (cf. Mayo, 1973:23ff): Ezekiel sees only one cause for all of Israel's misfortunes, "because she has been unfaithful to her covenant with Yahweh" (2:3-4; 5:5ff; 8:6; 11:12; 16:1ff; 20:4ff); and the "restoration" means "forming a new covenant" with her by Yahweh (37:26).

The disaster was due to the failure to keep the old covenant. Yahweh's faithfulness to his covenant and his *hesed*, was not, however, forgotten by the prophet. It would mean that the aim of the punishment was not an annihilating judgment to dissolve the covenant, "but rather the maintenance of that relationship by removal of disturbing elements" (Eichrodt, 1961 I:458). Hence, the punishment would be used to achieve his purpose for Israel in history that through a total destruction a new nation could be born again (also see Eichrodt, 1961 II:367, 375-76).

Looking at the old covenant, there was no hope for the survival of the nation. Even if such righteous men as Noah, Daniel, and Job could be found, they would not secure the nation against the coming of the destruction (14:12ff). The prophet, however, finds a true hope in looking at the divine side. Yahweh will not abandon his work for Israel which had started with the covenant with Abraham. He will do good to the people for the sake of his name. Honouring his name is the only basis of dealing with Israel (20:4-26).

The renewed life of the Israelites strongly relates, according to Ezekiel, to the temple. The temple is the dwelling place of Yahweh. The existence of the temple means God's presence among the people (37:26b-27). In the passages of "doom", the departure of Yahweh from the temple was of a fatal significance for Ezekiel and for the people. Now the description of his glorious return to the new temple is placed at the climactic scene of the restoration in Ezekiel (43:1ff). Yahweh will make an everlasting covenant with the people and He will dwell in the midst of the people for ever (43:7).

1.2.3 The motivation of salvation: "For Yahweh's name's sake"

The messages of salvation are pastoral, always directed at the exiles (Mayo, 1973:24, 30 fn 7). The hortatory characteristic is often compared with that of Deuteronomy (von Rad, 1965 II:230ff; Ackroyd, 1968:108). The hortatory sermons appeal to the responsibility of individuals so that they may be saved through the disaster (cf. 9:1ff; ch 18). Human responsibility is illustrated in a new exodus experience of 20:32-34 and the messages of watchmen (ch 33) and shepherd (ch 34). Yahweh will lead them into the desert to refine them (20:35). He will judge the people and select the pure ones through a test (v 38).

However, the responsibility of individuals must not be emphasised too much in Ezekiel's restoration messages. The most prominent idea for Ezekiel is that God will save them, not on the basis of their deeds, but for his name's sake. The purpose of the salvation is always emphasised in passages of promise as being the vindication of his holy name in the sight of the nations, so that they will know that He is the Lord (20:41; 34:30; 36:22f; 37:38; 39:37). The divine initiative is also found in most passages of promise in Ezekiel and is best made explicit in chapter 37. The new act of Yahweh will cause a miraculous change of the nature of the nation. Yahweh's Spirit will be deeply involved in the new creation of the nation. The new age will be characterised as the age of Yahweh's Spirit (11:19; 36:26) (Eichrodt, 1961 II: 58-59).

2 EZEKIEL 11:14-21

2.1 TEXT AND DATE

This unit belongs to the "temple vision" of chapters 8-11. Some regard the present text as originally independent, having not followed on 11:1-13 (Eichrodt, 1970:142f; Martens, 1972:94; Cooke sees it as an appendix to the temple-vision in 1936:121). As a result they do not see the unity of the present text as a response to the question posed in 11:13 as to whether God will put an end to the remnant of Israel. Aalders speaks against it:

Dit is evenwel niet aanvaardbaar. Zolang er geen dwingende gronden voor het tegendeel worden aangevoerd moeten wij er ons aan houden dat onze perikoop inderdaad deel uitmaakt van het complex, hfdst. 8-11, waarin zij nu eenmaal geplaatst is..... Bovendien moet er een zakelijk verband met de voorafgaande perikoop, vs 1-13, worden aangenomen: wij moeten hier te doen hebben met een reflex op de selfverheffing die zich het waardevolle vlees in den pot achtte, en met een Goddelijk antwoord op de klagende vraag van den profeet in vs 13 (1957:198).

The content of this text is completely connected to the question about the remnants in the preceding passage.

The date of the text is regarded as being just before the catastrophe of 587 B.C. on the basis of dating the temple vision. Some who do not agree with the idea of its belonging to the temple vision put its date after 587 B.C. (Eichrodt thinks it is improbable that this unit should be dated prior to 587, 1970:143; Cooke inclines to "perhaps" a later date, 1936:124). Aalders discharges it:

En de tekst bevat hier geen enkel gegeven, dat ons zou noodzaken aan de ballingen van 586 te denken. Integendeel, ook van elders hebben we een getuigenis dat er bij de na 597 in Jeruzalem achtergeblevenen animositeit bestond tegenover de met Jojachin weggevoerden: in het visioen van de twee vijgenkorven, Jer. 24, moet Gods qualificatie van de weggevoerden als de goede vijgen en van de achtergeblevenen als de slechte, oneetbare vijgen een antwoord zijn op een precies tegenovergestelde voorstelling die in Jeruzalem gangbaar was (1957:198).

2.2 THE MAIN THEME IN THE CONTEXT

In the temple vision the prophet symbolises the departure of Yahweh from the city for the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. In 10:18 the departure started with the description that the glory of Yahweh left the threshold of the temple and got onto the cherubims. The glory of Yahweh and the cherubims stood at the eastern entrance to the outer court of the temple for a while to show the prophet something concerning the city (10:19). Chapter 11 verse 1 starts with the same position as the end of chapter 10. At the eastern gate Yahweh showed him twenty-five men who represent the rulers of the city and the leaders of the inhabitants. They had confidence that the fire of the Babylonians would not reach them because they stayed inside of the safe pot (the city); and they continued their evil enterprises. The prophet was ordered to prophesy against them. While he prophesied he saw that those prominent persons in Jerusalem died. He was so terrified that he fell down, crying "Ah, Sovereign Lord! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?"

The purpose of our present text is to demonstrate that the destruction of the Jerusalemites is not the end of the history of Israel. In spite of the perishing of the remainders in Jerusalem, Ezekiel received a message of hope among "your brothers" (אֶחָיִךְ, "your fellow exiles" by Taylor, 1969:111). It is in line with the hopeful outlook of Jeremiah who claimed that the people in exile are to be counted by God as the founders of the restored Israel (Jr 24:7; 32:39f). Thus, the issue at stake in the present text is the question "who is the true Israel" whom God has in mind for the salvation plan. The text comparatively examines the claim of the Jerusalemites and Yahweh's response to it.

2.3 QUOTATIONS FROM THE CONTEMPORARY JERUSALEMITES' CLAIM (VS 14-15)

The first part of the text brings up the issue of a two-fold assertion by the contemporary Jerusalemites: "They (the exiles) are far away from the Lord"; "This land was given to us as our possession" (v 15). The verb רָחַק is formed in the second person, plural, and imperative in MT, meaning "go far from Yahweh". Brownlee very reasonably makes a comparison between the present text and the imperative sentence "go and serve other gods" in 1 Samuel 26:19-20 that is said to be a curse on the rebellious people who act against God's will (1970:398). In the light of Jeremiah we have a quite clear picture of how badly those remaining in Jerusalem thought of the fellow countrymen among the exiles. They thought that they deserved to be saved while the others were too bad to be saved, and deserved going into exile.

Their claim goes further, to the point that the exiles have no right to inherit Yahweh's promise of possessing the land because they are alienated from Yahweh. It means that those remaining in Jerusalem regard only themselves as being the legitimate Israel.

2.4 YAHWEH'S ANSWER TO THE JERUSALEMITES' CLAIM (VS 16-21)

The second part of the text begins with Yahweh's intervention to those claims (v 16). The direct linkage of Yahweh's reply to the wrong claim of the Jerusalemites is shown by the word *lkn* ("therefore") in verse 16 and 17. The text concerns the true religion of Israel which is not found in the temple building and sacrifices but in the meaning of God's presence. Even while the exiles were scattered among the countries, God Himself would be with them by means of the fact that He Himself becomes a sanctuary, making up to them for the lack of a temple and sacrifices.

The word מ'ט can be translated in two possible ways: "little" (KJV) or "a little while" (NIV). Aalders inclines to the former, namely, a degree of measure. He asserts that there is no reference in either the book of Jeremiah or of Ezekiel that the exile will end in a short time. He pays attention to the description of Megilla of Talmud which talks about the exiles' building synagogues and teaching their children there. Thus the text, according to him, puts an emphasis on the fact that the exiles were deprived of burning sacrifices in the temple by which the communion with Yahweh was accomplished in full measure (Aalders, 1957:199). That interpretation allows that the claim of the Jerusalemites is partly right; and that God did not reject the exiles totally but still gave them "synagogues" to maintain at least some communication with Yahweh.

In objection to that, we may bring up the following issues: First, most cases of reference to מ'ט in the Old Testament apparently have the temporal meaning (more than 11 times) while only three times it is obviously taken as smallness of degree (2 Ki 10:18; Zch 1:15; Ps 8:6). Secondly, the outward sacrificial practice is counted to be worth nothing in comparison with the true worship with the "heart" in both the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Thus we can not agree with the notion that without the temple service the communion with God should be measured in smallness. Thirdly, the meaning of a short time can not always be taken in the Bible as a definite short period. In so many places our lives are called "short" in the sight of God (e.g., Ps 90). Thus, we see that Ezekiel rejects not partly but totally the Jerusalemites' holding something good for themselves before God. By these words Yahweh repudiates their charge against the exiles.

This unit is mainly devoted to the announcement of salvation for the exiles. The unit consists of the following elements which are commonly found in the salvation oracles of Ezekiel and Jeremiah:

(1) Gathering and bringing them back to their own land and giving it to them as their possession (v 17);

(2) Taking away all their iniquities and idolatry (v 18);

(3) Giving a new heart to them (v 19);

(4) Their ability of keeping the law (v 20a);

(5) The covenant formula: "They will be my people, and I will be their God" (v 20b).

It can be very strongly suggested that all the above elements reflect the new covenant although there is no direct mention of the term "covenant".

2.5 THE REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDY OF WORDS AND PHRASES

2.5.1 The remnant

Because the remnant is a core element in the architecture of the future Israel, it is necessary to study the concept of remnant in Ezekiel at this moment. The expression *šaryt ysral* occurs only in 11:13 and 9:8 in Ezekiel, and a synonymous expression *plyty ysral* is found in several places. In the context of the first two texts, Ezekiel, as a prophet among the exiles, utters a crucial question whether the nation or people of Israel can be saved or terminated by the final destruction of Jerusalem. If it is sure that the faithful Lord will never allow his people to be annihilated, the next question arises, "is the remnant of Israel, which is to be the core of the future Israel, found among the exiles in Babylon or among those who are left in Jerusalem and the land of Judah?"

The idea of remnant is not isolated in each book of the Scriptures, but is rather found in the "sequence of development" of the whole of Scripture (Hattori, 1968:328). Thus Ezekiel's view of the remnant is to be understood as being a component part of the entire picture of the remnant in the progressive revelation through the Old Testament and the New Testament. We may observe the following ideas of the "remnant" in Ezekiel's texts.

1) Considering the historical background, the religious leaders in Jerusalem entertained two misunderstandings:

(a) A false optimism of security, thinking that they were secure in the city of Jerusalem because God was with them. They asserted that the promises to Abraham were theirs (cf. 33:24).

(b) A false superiority over the exiles, thinking that they were saved from the disasters because they were better than those fellow-countrymen taken into exile.

The idea of the remnant reflects those misconceptions of the leaders in Jerusalem. They were the "left-ones" (or "spared-ones"), but they were not the "remnant" proper in the eyes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Hattori, 1968:333f).

2) The "remnant" contains the future concept. In looking for the earlier question whether Yahweh had determined to let the history of Israel come to an end, we find only negative answers in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God's plan for Israel is that He let the good go into exile. By Yahweh's leaving the city and following the exiles, the destruction of Jerusalem became certain. Thus the "left-ones" in Jerusalem were not real "remnants". In a sense the exiles carried alive into Babylon could be considered as the "remaining-ones", i.e. "remnant" (1968:338, fn 2). In Ezekiel's time the nation of Israel was fated, and the exiles seemed to be miserable. But they were saved out of the destruction. Their survival means that there is a future for the nation of Israel. The future Israel is to be found only among these remnants, and they have the promise to return to the promised land and to possess it.

3) The remnant contains the idea of "part" (fewness) and "temporary" but it represents the nation as a whole. The exiles were the minority in terms of the total population of Judah (Israel). Furthermore, a few out of all the exiles would finally return to their homeland (20:25ff). However, the small number of the remnant represents the whole nation of Israel as seen in verse 15 of chapter 11. The "left-off" minority were the true Israel at the con-

temporary time, leaving out the majority of Jews. However, we must not see it as the final purpose of God. God's plan goes further for the restoration of Israel (not individuals) beyond the concept of the remnant. Thus, the idea of the remnant is only temporarily in force, and always anticipates the future (see Part VI, 4.8.3).

In the particular situation of the exile Ezekiel strongly draws on the existence of the remnant: As the destruction of Jerusalem is viewed in terms of God's sovereign act (cf. 36:16ff; 39:21ff), the existence of the remnant found among the exiles is viewed as residing in the same sovereign act of God (cf. Jr 24).

2.5.2 The term "the land of Israel"

One of the prominent promises of restoration is that of "returning to the land". According to Martens, the promise of "returning to the land" is given remarkably uniformly, with little variance, in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and we find these various formulae in our present text: "I will bring you into the land of Israel (admt Isral)" and "I will bring (or gather) you from the nations" (Martens, 1972:164ff). In these formulae the term "the land of Israel" is to be distinctively considered in Ezekiel's texts.

The combined word *admt ysral* ("land of Israel") occurs seventeen times only in Ezekiel throughout the whole Old Testament (Plöger, 1977:89,93).¹⁸ Zimmerli notes that *admt ysral* implies more than a reference to the northern area, but the whole land of Israel (including Judah) (1983:565). In the phrase *admt ysral*, according to Zimmerli, the addition of "Israel" not only qualifies the "land" but is reminiscent of the glory of the promised land (1979:203f; cf. Martens, 1972:199). Sometimes the term "Israel" has been observed for the political designation of the country, but it does not mean that Ezekiel works

¹⁸. Among those seventeen instances, direct references to the returning promise are found in 11:17; 20:42; 37:12, along with numerous instances of *admh* alone and *mqwm hzh* ("this place") in connection with the promise of the land.

out these promise formulae from the basis of a geographical, political territory (Plöger, 1977:93). The term "Israel" is already signified when the exiles are called "the whole house of Israel" in verse 15 (cf. 20:40; 36:10). "Israel" represents, for Ezekiel, a totality of the nation rather than any one fragment of it (Zimmerli, 1958:87). On the other hand it does not mean all individuals collectively. Hence the exiles (possibly those of both the northern and southern tribes) are to be "the whole house of Israel", excluding those who remained in the land of Canaan at that time (Martens, 1972:95f). Those exiles are the true "Israel" and representatives of "Israel" (cf. Taylor, 1969:111).¹⁹

Martens notes that the word *admh* has different traditional associations than the word *arṣ* (1972:200). The phrase *arṣ ysral* occurs three times in Ezekiel (21:17; 40:2; 47:18), but is used in a geographical sense rather than denoting the promise.²⁰ *admh* ("the home land") can virtually be distinguished from other countries (*arṣ*) in Ezekiel. When it is specifically combined with the word "Israel", it expresses the pride and the affection of the people for their land (1972:200).

2.5.3 Transforming their hearts

In addition to the promise of the return the prophet gives further promise of the inward transformation of the returning people, so as to leave no room for any misunderstanding. The exiles can not be qualified to be "Israel" just by being Israelites, but by transforming their hearts and cleansing their sins. Yahweh takes the initiative to modify their hearts from the heart of stone, which is stubborn and insensitive toward Yahweh's decrees, to the heart of

¹⁹ Cooke (1936:124) and Aalders, (1957:198) understand it as being the exiles from the northern kingdom, but it can strongly be doubted after examining all the usages of the term throughout the book of Ezekiel: See especially Zimmerli, 1983:563.

²⁰ In Jeremiah the two terms *admh* and *arṣ* are used interchangeably.

flesh, which can sense and receive Yahweh's messages (v 20). The words "undivided heart" (lb *ahd*)²¹ may mean that they will only devote themselves to the true worship of Yahweh (v 19) (cf. Aalders, 1957:200).

The text points to an outward reformation as well as an inward renewal. They will remove all the vile images and detestable idols (11:18). The true religion of Yahweh will be settled among the returned people. Then the full covenant formula follows.

In conclusion, the basic text of 11:14ff is about the restoration of Israel by the return of the exiles to their homeland, the renewal of their hearts, and the re-establishment of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people.

3 EZEKIEL 20:33-44

3.1 CONTEXT

The whole chapter 20 traces and reviews the main events of the past, beginning with the life of Israel in Egypt, the Exodus, the experience in the wilderness, life in Canaan, and finally dispersion among the nations. The first part of the chapter mainly recalls their evil deeds through the course of history, despite God's merciful endurance. The later part is devoted to the promises of deliverance from the scattered countries.

The unity of this chapter (esp. between judgment passages in vs 1-32 and salvation oracles in vs 33-44) has been testified to through the work of scholars (Eichrodt, 1970:276). The date of the chapter is given as the tenth day of the fifth month in the seventh year of the exile (probably 591 B.C.).

²¹ LXX reads καρδιαν ἑτεραν which presupposes *ahr*, and some Hebrew manuscripts read lb *hds*. But as Aalders suggests the word in MT text is adequate for its meaning in the context (1957:200).

The message came in the deeply depressed situation of the exile while the final destruction of the nation of Israel was expected. The message was given as a response to the elders' enquiry, probably about the length of their exile (Taylor, 1969:156). Yahweh strongly refused to respond to that inquiry, but rather delivered a powerful proclamation of judgment on the ground of their forefathers' sins. The history of Israel from its beginning down to the contemporary days shows itself as having been defiled and deformed by the abominations of unfaithfulness and rebelliousness against God's gracious will (Eichrodt, 1970:263). There seems no hope whatsoever of the existence of Israel. Hope, however, is founded upon divine patience and fidelity. After all the declarations of judgment Yahweh at last proclaims his plan of salvation for Israel. The motive underlying salvation is said to be Yahweh's concern for his own name (v 44). A distinctive feature in this text is that the process of the new deliverance is described in a comparison to the old Exodus event.

3.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The passages run in two parallel movements (vs 32-38 and 39-44). The structure of the two movements is very similar.

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|--|--|
| Introductory formula: "declares the Sovereign Lord" (v 33). | "O house of Israel, this is what the Sovereign Lord says" (v 39). |
| "I will rule over you with a mighty hand" (v33). | "In the land the entire house of Israel will serve me" (v 40). |
| "I will bring you from the na- tions and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered" (v 34). | "I will bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered" (v 41). |
| Yahweh will test them in the desert (v36-38b) | They recall their sins and hate them (v 43) |
| A closing formula: "Then you will know that I am the Lord" (v 38c). | "You will know that I am the Lord" (v 44a). |

3.3 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL CONSIDERATION OF THEMES

3.3.1 A new exodus experience (vs 33-38)

In this chapter, we have noticed that the promise of returning to the land is the central point in both units. In the first unit the return to the land is compared with the old event of the Exodus. In the image of the new exodus, Ezekiel distinctively depicts the people's passing through the test under Yahweh's rod (v 37). While other passages of promise predominantly picture an unconditional and absolutely divine initiative, the present unit seems to stress individual responsibility for salvation in comparison with their forefathers in the desert. We have, however, to bear in mind the background of this whole chapter (esp. the first part of the chapter), namely reviewing the people's sins from the earlier history of Israel and even up to the present time of the exile. Verse 32 well describes the present situation among the exiles in a quotation from their elders' words: "We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve wood and stone". The people wish to assimilate their own religion to the profane idols of the heathen world (compare it with the case of their asking for a king in 1 Sm 8). Eichrodt says:

The situation in which the exiles find themselves serves to bring out a new point, which is the indissoluble connection between the special position of Israel and the temple in Jerusalem. To replace that temple by a sanctuary in a heathen land is to give up all hope of a return to home, and to give oneself a form of religious life in a heathen land, by which one's faith is degraded so as to become merely one religion among many, such as one might see in exile among exiles of other nations (1970:277f).

God's decision is, however, clear in that He will never allow his relationship with the people to be terminated at the point of the exile. In verse 33 Yahweh firmly reveals his will to lead his people out of such a dark situation. First He declares that He will be a King over them (v 33). He will never let them go away from now on, but He will hold them "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (v 33c). Secondly his revealed plan is to bring about a new exodus. The prophet even uses the language of the old Exodus tradition:

"with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (v 34c; cf. Dt 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 26:8).²² It is remarkable that then he adds to the traditional credos, which is his own favourite formula, "with outpoured wrath" (7:8; 9:8; 14:19; 20:8; 13:21; 22:22; 30:15; 36:18). In most cases this phrase has been used against the hostile powers who hold Israel as prisoners, but here it refers to God's wrath against sinners in the house of Israel (cf. Jr 21:5) (Zimmerli, 1979:415). Here we can see God's mixed emotions toward his people, his compassion and his anger, when He leads them back into their own land.

Yahweh's determination is firmly shown: He will never allow the unclean to enter the holy land. He will select the faithful Israelites out of all the returning people. In the process they will be led into the desert in order to be subjected to God's kingly judgment. If they rebel against Yahweh there, they will be executed by his judgment.

The new sojourn in the wilderness is viewed as an antitype to this old tradition. The prophet describes it completely in figurative language. It means that the new wilderness is not necessarily taken as being the Syro-Arabian wilderness (cf. Eichrodt, 1970:279). We also notice that this new exodus extends not only to the exiles in Babylonia but to the Jews scattered among all nations (v 34f,41), as seen in Isaiah (11:11ff; 27:13). Thus, it must be recognised as having an eschatological connotation (1970:280). The words "the bond of the covenant" (bmsrt hbryt) in verse 37 are also used here in the metaphorical sense. It means that the "covenant" is not to be regarded as the "new covenant". The word msrt is best translated as "bond", referring to the "obligation of the covenant" (Aalders, 1957:327). By this word the text stresses the threat to the people. If they refuse to be loyal to the covenant, God will not allow them to enter the land of Israel" (v 39). Thus, it implies the Sinai covenant under which the contemporary people of Israel were living (1957:328).

²² Eichrodt observes the phrase having been used in the accustomed liturgy for recalling the first saving action of God (1970:279).

3.3.2 Establishing the true worship in Jerusalem (vs 39-44)

In the second unit the true worship to God is stressed, in contrast with their offering gifts (even their sons for sacrifice) to idols in the land of Chaldea (v 31). The message of verse 40 and following also looks back to the immediately preceding verse (v 39) which describes the cast-off members of Israel through the desert test going to worship idols. In contrast to such an apostasy, a wonderful picture of the worship of God is contained in the text.

The first part of the message is descriptive as shown by calling Israel in the third person. It gives an overwhelming expectancy of an abundant grace and a great joy on the holy temple mountain. In the passage the word "holy", with its implication, is repeatedly mentioned. All defiled history of Israel has vanished. An entirely new sacred history starts with the resumption of the true temple worship. The choicest gifts will be brought to God, and the people's worship will be good enough to be accepted by the Holy God. It will result in a manifestation of Yahweh's holiness to all the nations: "I will show myself holy among you in the sight of the nations" (v 41) (Taylor renders it "I will be recognised as God among you", 1969:160). All the evil that defiled the people will be recalled and loathed by them. God will take care of all their past evil conduct and life for his name's sake; then they will know "that I am the Lord", "declares the Sovereign Lord" (v 44).

4 EZEKIEL 34

4.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

Some, like Zimmerli (1983:221), think that Ezekiel 34 is an edited chapter. But we can hardly mark the points where the prophet's own words are to be found and where the later work of expansion by the prophetic school begins. At least we recognise that a gradual expansion is involved here to reach its

final form. Verses 23-24 are strongly influenced by the Davidic oracle while verses 25-31 are coloured with the Mosaic tradition (esp. Lv 26). Verse 31, the conclusion of this chapter, is often suggested as a later addition (cf. Zimmerli, 1983:222).

Considering the final form of the text the whole chapter must be taken as one complex of the promise, which consists of various distinctive features. There are clear subdivisions: verse 1-10, 11-16, 17-24, 25-31; but they must not be detached from one another. Taylor observes:

Every new paragraph of this chapter opens out the analogy still further. If the chapter is taken as a whole it will appear full of inconsistencies, but if each section is taken separately it will be obvious that new ideas are added all along (Taylor, 1969:222).

This text takes up the themes of restoration in the illustration of the shepherds of the past and the (true) shepherd of the future. The "judgment" (vs 1-10) and the promise of "salvation" (vs 11-24) are chiasmatically paralleled one after another:

| | |
|---|---|
| The evil shepherds feed themselves (v 2c), | but Yahweh will tend the sheep. |
| No shepherd seeks or searches (v 6), | but He will seek His flock (v 11a). |
| The flock has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals (vs 5,8), | but Yahweh will rescue them and bind up the injured and strengthen the weak; He will remove them (the shepherds) from the flock, but He will place over them one shepherd (v 23). |

The theme of the restoration is explicit in this chapter in the illustration of bad shepherds and the true shepherd. The special characteristic of this passage lies in the fact that Yahweh Himself is represented as taking on the role of shepherd (see esp. vs 12f; cf. Ps 23; Jn 10:1). The following themes of restoration are found in this text:

- (1) Returning to the land (vs 12,13,16);
- (2) Yahweh will be with them (v 24,27b, 30);
- (3) David will rule over them (vs 34:23f)
- (4) Making a covenant (v 25);

(5) Living peacefully in the land with blessing and prosperity (25-29).

4.2 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDIES OF THE UNITS OF THE TEXT

4.2.1 The indictments of Israel's leaders (vs 1-10)

The section designates the rulers as shepherds indicating their responsibility towards the people. It is a common thought in the Old Testament and in other writings from the ANE (Is 44:28; Jr 2:8; 10:21; 23:1-6; 25:34-38; Mi 5:4,5; Zch 11:4-17) (Taylor, 1969:219; Cooke, 1936:373; Zimmerli, 1983:213). The purpose of using a metaphorical word "shepherd" (ryh) can be seen in its original meaning that is possibly derived from the primary sense of "to tend, to attend to, to observe" (BDB:946). The prophets unanimously voice the view that such an idea of responsible leadership has failed to achieve its purpose. In the present text, the shepherds are to be taken as the most recent kings before the exile, and the flocks are the people scattered in exile (cf. 19:1-14; 21:25).

The message is initially an indictment against the evil shepherds in the style of a woe oracle (v 2; cf. 13:3-16, 18-23) (Zimmerli, 1983:212), but it is not limited since it is in the form of a law-suit (Martens, 1972:107). Three kinds of charges against the leaders are issued:

(1) The evil shepherds fed themselves and not the flock (vs 2f);

(2) Nor did they exercise justice over the flock (vs 4);

(3) Instead of keeping the flock in safety they let them be scattered over all the earth (vs 5f).

Because they failed in their responsibilities, they would not be allowed to rule any more (cf. Jr 23:2). The fact that the flock belongs to Yahweh is specifically underlined (Zimmerli, 1983:214). Their evil doings are listed in verbs, "to eat" the fat, "to clothe" with wool, "to slaughter" the choice animals (v 3). The charge also goes on against their negative attitude: "Not to take

care of" the flock, "not to strengthen" the weak, "not to heal" the sick (vs 3cf). The law forbids the brutality of rulers towards their own people (Lv 25:43,46,53). Verses 5 and 6 allegorically picture how the terrible situation of the exile resulted from the leaders' violence against the law. But in verse 7 and the following verses the tone of the prophecy is dramatically changed to a sharp oath. Yahweh claims that the flock is his own. He denounces the bad shepherds, and issues an oath that He Himself is going to seek and rescue the flock.

4.2.2 Yahweh's intervention to rescue his flock (vs 11-16)

This section presents the idea of the good shepherd. God presents Himself as taking the role of being the shepherd for his people. It is emphatically described by the words *hny-any wdršty at-šhany* ("Behold! I myself will search for my sheep"). In this unit no human figure is introduced between Yahweh and his flock. Yahweh, as a good shepherd, will reverse all the treatment given them by the evil shepherds. The first personal pronoun is used emphatically here. His job will be to find the straying, to rescue the lost, and to feed and tend the whole flock, giving particular attention to the weak and ailing members (cf. Lk 15:4ff) (Taylor, 1969:220). The verbs, in contrast to the bad shepherds, illustrate how He will take care of his flock, i.e., "to seek", "to care for", "to examine" (the disease) (cf. Lv 27:33). His work extends to caring for them in the land, said in verse 14, "I will tend them in a good pasture... There they will lie down in good grazing land...". A paradisiac life, i.e., peace and prosperity in the land, is once introduced here and explained further in the next unit of verses 25-31 (cf. Jr 31:12,24; 33:13; Is 32:18; 33:20). The figure of the divine shepherd fits in perfectly with the pastoral office of the Messiah, Christ (Jn 10:11-18).

4.2.3 Judgment over the flock (vs 17-22)

In this section the key word $\acute{s}p\ddot{t}$ is closed up in a dominant place. God's judgment is not limited to the shepherds, but also includes the flock itself. Zimmerli rightly sees the section in the context of the new exodus oracle in 20:35-38, in which the reference was also made to a judgment of separation (1983:217) (see ch. 3.3.1). The animals have to pass under the rod (see 20:33ff which carry on the same idea in the process of restoration). The good sheep will be separated from the evil (or the sheep from goats as seen in 27:21; 39:18). The wicked, depicted in strong and fat ones, pushed and trampled the weak on the pasture and near the water. They used their power only for their self-satisfaction. Yahweh will never pass over their evil doings without taking account of it. Thus, the judgment will be issued to distinguish between the fat and the thin animals on the day of restoration.

The message is concerned especially with social justice. It goes against the powerful and prosperous citizens, most particularly against the religious leaders, who were greedily taking all the good things in the land for their own desires. The people will be purified, not only by taking out the bad leader but also by discarding the bad members (cf. Taylor, 1969:223). In connection with the previous section which tells about the new exodus, and also with the following section which announces the Messianic Shepherd, we may have a clearer idea of the characteristics of the future Messianic kingdom. The people are totally purified. Social righteousness will prevail there, there will be no violence or plundering among the people.

4.2.4 Appointing the Good Shepherd (vs 23-24)

The prophet directs the message directly at the Messianic hope. This unit talks about Yahweh's appointing the good shepherd, called "my servant David", over the flock. He will, unlike those former shepherds, "tend them". The personal pronoun "them" $athn$, referring to the people of Israel, is used

in the feminine gender to agree with the word "sheep" sh which is a feminine word, too.

We are confronted with a problem in this unit: "Does the promise point to the same time as that in the preceding units?"

Aalders separates this chapter into two different periods of time, that is, the passage of the verses 1 to 22 designates the time following immediately after exile; and the text of the verse 23 and 24 is to be seen as a Messianic time. He argues that a verb in the perfect and consecutive form does not necessarily mean the contemporary time to another verb in the same form (1957:167). However, there is no strong reason to separate the chapter into two different time periods. It is justified to see the chapter as a whole to be an eschatological message. But it does not mean that all those details will occur at one specific time.

4.2.4.1 "Servant"

"And my servant David will be prince among them" (v 24b).

"Servant" is someone who belongs entirely to his master and is committed to obedience, but who is nevertheless entrusted with great freedom in the fulfilment of his office (Zimmerli, 1983:219). Eichrodt discusses the combination of the words "servant" and "prince" and suggests that the new Davidic leader is a servant of a new covenant. He states:

In the temporal order of precedence in a princely court, to begin with, the ebed is a minister and trusted adviser to some king. But in the religious sphere the word denotes a specially preferential position among Yahweh's counsellors. Like Moses and other great leaders of the sacred community, David bears this title. But that does not make him the ebed par excellence, in whom, at least for certain circles, Yahweh's past graciousness to Israel was to culminate, in a way never subsequently to be surpassed (1983:476).

4.2.4.2 The name "David"

Some suggest that "my servant David" is not one particular person but a new line of rulers from descendants of David (like Smend, Fohrer-Galling, etc.; cf. Aalders, 1957:167), or even suggest David himself being raised again. They understand that the name David is figuratively used here as the founder of the dynasty. We may argue against it that: (1) The word *whqmty* does not mean "I will raise up (out of death)" but "I will appoint" (Aalders, 1957:167). (2) In the sentence "I will place over them one shepherd", the numeral word "one" is emphatically used, and "one shepherd" points directly to "my servant". Both phrases ("one shepherd" and "my servant") clearly refer to one particular person, and it must be no other than the Messiah. (3) We must take into account the similarity of the present text with 37:24f, where the same words, "my servant David", "king" or "prince", and "one shepherd" occur all together. Taking into consideration 37:25, we are forced to admit the fact that the Messianic idea is closely connected with the terminology "David my servant". Skinner rightly states:

When we read that "My servant David shall be their prince for ever", we can scarcely escape the impression that the prophet is thinking of a personal Messiah reigning eternally (1895:316).

Therefore, we must not understand the reinstatement of the old Davidic dynasty in this text, but the Messianic prediction (Davidson, 1900:251; Eichrodt, 1970:476).

Ever since the word of Nathan in the Davidic covenant, "I will raise up your offspring" (2 Sm 7:12), the Davidic dynasty had begun to be an integral part of Israel's hope of salvation, and the Messianic king is idealised in the name of David. The idea that the Davidic king will bring about salvation is clearly seen in the royal Psalms (Ps 2; 45; 110; see also Is 7-12 where Jesse's root is spoken of). The name David has remained in the thoughts of the people as the ideal future king of Israel (2 Ki 8:19; Ps 89:3,20; cf. Ps 132:11f, esp. in the connection with the Davidic covenant). Zimmerli lists the important features of David:

1) In past history, he was the great ancestor of the royal house in Jerusalem.

2) He was the greatest king, especially in the time when Israel was united.

3) He was the king to whom the promise of continuing permanence of his royal house was given.

4) The Deuteronomistic history sees in Yahweh's fidelity to the house of David the particular proof of Yahweh's close relationship to his people.

5) In the consequence of such an idea of the Davidic kingship God's promise to Israel will be completely fulfilled in him.

6) The name of David or the house of David incorporates the kingdom of justice and salvation (Is 9:5f). Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15 speak of a "righteous branch" which is given to "David"; Ezk 37:25 says "David" is a prince forever; Zechariah also shows its significance in the post-exilic period (3:8; 6:12). Hosea states that the return of the Israelites to Yahweh means the return to David their king (3:5).

7) The same word *hqmty* (I will raise up) in the present text is also used in the passage of the Davidic covenant, and the fact testifies that the idea of the "raising up David" goes back to the fidelity of Yahweh to his initial promise about the house of David (see Zimmerli, 1983:218f).

4.2.4.3 The problem of identification of "my servant David"

A difficulty arises about the identification of David - whether it is Yahweh Himself or a man (a representative of Yahweh). After having said that Yahweh Himself was going to take over the office of shepherd for his people, we are now informed of his intention to appoint his servant David as the "one shepherd" which seems to be contrary to the former (cf. Eichrodt, 1970:475).

We may find satisfaction by looking for two possible ways of interpretation. The prophet directs the message directly at the Messianic hope. On the one hand it can be suggested that God will care for his people through the instrumental shepherd whom He delightedly chooses. Eichrodt puts forward the

idea that God expresses his love for man to have the most intimate personal fellowship with his people, by the very fact that he exercises his own office of shepherding through his servant (1970:478). In comparison with Genesis 1:26f, Eichrodt sees the ideal servant David as being the fully reconstituted image of God, in whom God's will is finally brought into effect.

On the other hand we may think that God Himself is going to be the Kingly Shepherd, as already seen in 34:7-16 (esp. v 15). The servant David is not figured as a human king of the Davidic line, but a divine figure who will reign for ever (cf. 37:25). In other words the Servant is identical with God Himself (cf. Ps 110). It is not a strange idea in eschatological expectations that often describe God's taking over the king's position by Himself being the Messiah.

We can hardly decide on one of these ideas. The first idea seems to fit better into the text, but the latter cannot be discarded easily either. Therefore we may possibly take both ideas at the same time and put them together into the eschatological Messianic features.

4.2.4.4 "Prince"

Here the Messianic ruler is figured as the prince (*nśya*) of peace. When we compare it with the most common idea of a kingly Messiah, the use of the word "prince" (instead of "king") is very characteristic in Ezekiel. Ezekiel usually reserves the title *mlk* for the great king (Babylon), and use *nśya* for the kings of smaller states (Eichrodt, 1970:476). Nevertheless, in the case of Israelite kings Ezekiel always evidently uses the term *mlk* for the legitimacy of the throne of the Davidic house, with the one exception of the banished Jehoiachin. When Ezekiel employs the word *nśya* for the Messianic king here, as Eichrodt suggests, his intention might be to avoid using the legitimate title *mlk*. Thus the word *nśya* in the present text does not suggest anything lower in rank than king, but rather denotes that the office of the ruler in the future kingdom is something totally different in nature (Eichrodt, 1970:477). Cooke

(1936:378) also maintains that in the community of the new age the title is never *mlk*, and the *nśya* does not have a less prominent position than is assigned to Him here.^{2 3}

The picture of the Messianic kingdom is colourfully reminiscent of paradise, as shown in the preceding and forthcoming verses. Even the servant David does not act as a leader in battle carrying out judgment upon the nations. The duties of his office are given as being to preserve justice and righteousness. The title of "prince" here implies an officiating guardian of the divine covenant. Between the descriptions of paradise, the prophet now speaks of a king of paradise, who brings about paradisiac peace, but not by figuring as a warrior (Eichrodt, 1970:477).

4.2.4.5 "One shepherd" (v 24a)

The messianic title "shepherd" implies his responsibility of caring for his people, rather than ruling. It denotes a great deal of self-sacrifice and tender care. The word *aḥd* is emphatically used. It is certainly intended to point to the unity of the nation in contrast to the historical plight of the division of Israel as further mentioned in 37:15ff. It is also compared with the evil shepherds in the previous history of Israel, thereby denoting his uniqueness.

4.2.4.6 The covenant formula (v 24a)

The supreme blessing is conferred by the personal presence of the prince of peace. At this point the covenant formula is added "I the Lord will be their God" (the full account of the covenant formula appears in verse 30). In verse 24 the phrase "servant David" is inserted in the words of the covenant formula, showing that the "servant David" plays an integral part in the new

^{2 3} Aalders (1957:168) does not agree with the idea that the term *nśya* is used to avoid the title *mlk* because in 37:24, *mlk* is also used. He wants to understand the reason for the use of *nśya* as that in connection with shepherd the prophet is reluctant to speak of it in the language of political power.

covenant (Eichrodt, 1970:479). Thus, we observe that both the second Isaiah and Ezekiel describe the "servant" in connection with the covenant. In a consideration of the second Isaiah, we confirm that the "servant" is going to bring a new covenant to Israel. Therefore, we conclude that the present text is filled with the covenant idea. In the covenant formula the aim of God's salvation economy is fully realised. With the covenant formula the text flows into the next unit smoothly.

The last words "I the Lord have spoken" are intentionally used to show the absolute certainty of the fulfilment of the prophecy.

4.2.5 The land becoming a paradise (v 25-31)

We are confronted with a difficulty raised by the question as to whether the paragraph is a description of the blessings of the Messianic time or not. Aalders (1957:168) argues that the verb *wkrty* in the perfect and consecutive form does not imply the same time with the immediately preceding description. He rather suggests that another temporal situation is possibly aimed at and the situation could lie prior to the Messianic period of verses 23 and 24. He takes an example of Jeremiah 30:9f, where the name David indicates the Messiah in verse 9 and the promise of the return from the exile follows in the next verse. However, the source of Aalders' confusion lies in his limitation of understanding the returning promise to the people returning from the Babylonian exile. It would be justified to see this paragraph as a further description after the Messianic promise of the previous verses in the series of an eschatological promise. The paragraph starts with forming a "covenant of peace" in verse 25. The whole account of the restoration promise in the preceding passages is going to be concluded in Yahweh's making a covenant of peace with his people. Thus this "covenant of peace" is no doubt understood as a "new covenant" which must be seen within the eschatological scope (also compare with 37:26).

4.2.5.1 "Covenant"

We may define the characteristic of the (new) covenant in this passage as a renewal of the Sinai covenant. This passage has the dominant idea of the Sinai covenant rather than the Davidic covenant. Von Rad points out that Ezekiel does not uphold the idea of the Davidic covenant alone for Israel after the restoration, but he rather glides into the wording of the Exodus covenant tradition in 34:23ff and 37:25f (von Rad, 1965 II:236). He states:

In Ezekiel 34:23f the formula belonging to the Sinai covenant - I their God, they my people (vs. 30) - follows upon the heels of what is said about the Messianic advent of the king, and in Ezekiel 37:23 it immediately precedes it (the Messianic advent of the king). How then is the covenant concept which appears in both places to be understood from the point of view of the history of tradition? Is it a renewal of the covenant with David, or of the Sinai covenant? undoubtedly the latter.

However, we can not totally eliminate the Davidic-Messianic idea in this passage. Von Rad rightly concludes by saying:

Thus Ezekiel fuses the Sinai tradition and the Davidic tradition, which Jeremiah still kept essentially separate. But the Sinai tradition dominates his thought - under the new David Israel will obey the commandment (Ezk 37:24) (1965 II:236).

In a comparison between the Sinai and the Davidic covenants and the Sinai covenant, Clements sees a difference in emphasis. The Sinai covenant is made with the entire nation, whereas the other is a promissory covenant between Yahweh and an individual in which the nation is involved as a third party. Thus the present text is close to the former (1967:54). Aalders thinks of "a covenant of peace" as being a renewal of the existing Sinai covenant as in Deuteronomy 28:69; Joshua 24:25; 2 Kings 11:17; 2 Kings 23:3 (1957:168). However, it is not justified to regard it as a mere renewal, but as the one that is revolutionised from the old (see Jeremiah's new covenant).

Throughout the whole book, Ezekiel predominantly bears in mind the Mosaic covenant. The Mosaic even supersedes the Abrahamic covenant. Ezekiel alludes twice to the covenant with Abraham in 33:24; 11:15. In both texts Ezekiel deals with the popular interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant that those who remain in Judea during the exile retain possession of the land as

promised to Abraham. The people (esp. the priestly circle) claim that the covenants made by Yahweh with Abraham and subsequently with David are to be continued in force forever. They proudly say that "Abraham was only one and yet he possessed the land. But we are many; surely the land has been given to us as our possession" (33:24). But Ezekiel rejects their claim to the land by taking into account the Sinai covenant which they have broken (Yates, 1972:187). He also holds on to the idea that the Mosaic covenant is based on the new covenant, and vice versa. Because Yahweh remembers the covenant which He made with Israel in the old times, He will establish an everlasting covenant with her (16:60ff).

As most scholars suggest, in this unit of text we find the following elements of blessings which are very similar to those of the Sinai covenant (esp. Lv 26:).

- (1) The people will be secured in the land (vs 25,28);
- (2) The land will yield abundant fruits (vs 26bf,29);
- (3) They will be delivered from captivity (vs 27bf);
- (4) They will achieve ultimate knowledge of the Lord (v 30);
- (5) The right relationship between Yahweh and the people will be established (vs 30f).

The present unit depends heavily on Leviticus 26. Ezekiel's description is not in accordance with that of the Jeremiac new covenant as much as with the Holiness Code in Leviticus (Lv 25:18f; 26:4-6,13,22; 17:26), where the context shows what sort of blessings will fall on a people who are faithful to the law. Eichrodt sees a strong connection between the judgment oracle of the earlier part of Ezekiel 34 and Leviticus 26. He sees that the text of Leviticus was used at the covenant festival, and the blessings and curses were regularly repeated afresh at every covenant festival until it became the fixed spoken form of the liturgical office (Eichrodt, 1970:482). However, although we agree with the idea that the prophet used the language of the law which had been familiar to him, it does not mean that the prophet bound himself into the formed

tradition of the law. His announcement is rather "the decision of the covenant God in his capacity of divine judge in the form of an act of execution of judgment" (1970:482) Eichrodt states:

Accordingly, while one may give all due attention to the traditional forms of speech employed by the prophet, one ought not simply to ignore, but should do justice to, the freedom with which he departs from the priestly vocabulary (1970:483).

By introducing the new covenant, the old (Mosaic) covenant is now to be restored in a broader sense (Yates, 1972:191). The relationship between Yahweh and the people which was broken by the violence of the people against the old covenant is now to be re-established and Israel will again be called his people. The whole series of blessings reaches its climax in the recognition of the covenant between God and the people which is once more re-installed. The formula is found in Leviticus 26:12 and also very often in Jeremiah. The ideal relationship is explicit in the phrases, "I am your God" and "You are my sheep, the sheep of My pasture" (v 31).

4.2.5.2 "Peace" (security)

The whole description of the present unit is most explicit in the word "covenant of peace". Covenant means the establishment of a relationship between the partners (Zimmerli, 1983:220). "Peace" (šlwm) indicates the reality of the covenant (cf. Is 54:10), namely "well-being." After the establishment of the right relationship between God and his people, the well-being will extend over the whole sphere of life of the nation and will result in ultimate peace. Dwelling securely in the land which is a covenant blessing is also found in other passages of the prophets (cf. Hs 2:21f; Is 29:17ff; 32:15ff; Jr 31:4ff; 32:40ff). Those texts commonly take the form of the transformation of the earth into the garden of paradise. The present unit contains the following descriptions:

(1) It speaks of the seasonable showers of rain so that the trees yield their fruit (26f): Men will dwell in the wilderness where terrible thirst is expected

and they will sleep in the forest (cf. Is 32:15). The picture implies the complete transformation of nature from desert and forest to fertile soil.

(2) It describes how the people come to dwell safely. Peace will come from two sides: It will come with deliverance from the hand of their oppressor; and with a sudden disappearance of the wild beasts.

Isaiah 2:4 and Hosea 2:18 describe the picture of paradise as the destruction of weapons and their transformation into implements of peaceful labour. Isaiah 11:6-8 depicts peace with animals in terms of changing their nature so that they become man's play-fellows,²⁴ while peace is the result of driving the animals out of the land. We possibly had better bear in mind that the present text is portrayed with the metaphorical language of "sheep" and "shepherd". It means that the picture of paradise has its unique terminology and ideas by which we may expect different pictures from other passages like Hosea 2:18 and Isaiah 11:6-8. And the text is especially brought in harmony with Leviticus 26:6ff. In the present text the promise rests on and stresses the people. In the light of the Leviticus text, the wild animals here may be suggested as a figurative usage for enemies.

4.2.5.3 Conclusion (v 31)

The fact that verse 31 does not appear in the LXX, lets most scholars consider it as an editorial conclusion. The verse might be intentionally designed to identify the paragraph as being a part of the chapter which contains the idea of flock and shepherd.

The aim of the message is to pass judgment against the political leadership of the people, and to assure that Yahweh Himself remains his people's good shepherd. Ezekiel also claims the responsibility of individuals as emerges in the statement about fat sheep. As the good shepherd, God promises the people

²⁴ The participation of animals in the covenant goes back to the Noaic covenant in Genesis 9:17, where the beasts are also included in the contract of the covenant.

that He will take care of the lost, and that He will gather and bring them back to the promised land. The promise goes on further to send a good shepherd prefiguring David. It means that He still keeps his fidelity to his covenant with David (Zimmerli, 1983:223).

5 EZEKIEL 36

5.1 THEMES IN THE CONTEXT

The theme of restoration, which was started from chapter 34, continues in this chapter, concentrating on the restoration of the land. The text is shaped in two similar addresses to the mountains of Edom (ch 35) and to those of Israel (ch 36). In chapter 35 a judgment oracle against the neighbouring countries is inserted into the long salvation message. Chapter 35, however, must be regarded as belonging to the long series of restorations. The neighbouring country, Edom, occupied and plundered the land just after Jerusalem fell, and now interrupts the restoration of the land of Israel, claiming their right to possess the ownerless territory of Israel (35:10).

In the process of the restoration it is necessary to remove all foreign elements and their hostility toward Israel. It is a significant prophecy in the revelation history because Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, was cast out from the covenantal benediction (Gn 27:22-40; 28:6).²⁵ The prophet indicates that Yahweh reserves the right to execute his judgments against the Edomites because of their malevolence against his chosen people. By invoking his judgment against Edom Yahweh proclaims his faithfulness towards his people. The work of salvation does not depend on the people's good deeds but is done for the sake of his name. Even though He pronounced the punishment against

²⁵ The biblical references of the relationship between Edomites and Israelites are found in Gn 25:22ff; 27:1-41; Nm 20:14-21; 2 Sm 8:13; 2 Ki 8:20f; 14:7; Ps 137:7; Is 34; Jl 49:7-22; Lm 4:21f; Am 1:11; Ob; MI 1:2-5 (Taylor, 1969:225).

his own people, He does not stop the work planned for his people. This logic is continually developed in chapter 36 (cf. Zimmerli, 1983:240).

The prophet takes up the redemption of the people step by step in this chapter. He is concerned with cleansing, prosperity, and permanence in the land. Sometimes, however, he runs off from dealing with the process of the redemption in order to put emphasis on the lesson that the nation should learn through God's redemptive action for his people (Davidson, 1900:260). In the redemptive process, the prophet is primarily concerned with the land throughout the whole unit. Within the block of material in Ezekiel 34-37, one of the most striking issues is a return to the land (Martens, 1972::117). The word "land" is found throughout the chapter: In verses 1 (the mountains of Israel), 2 (the heights of everlasting), 5 (My land), 6 (the land of Israel), 17 (their land), 18 (the land), 20 (his land), 24 (your land), and 28 (the land that I gave to your fathers). The word *admh* is used mostly when it addresses the people of Israel, in contrast with the word *aršwt* which is used in connection with the Gentiles: In verses 19 and 24 it denotes the lands of nations; in verse 5 it is *arš* when Yahweh speaks to the Edomites. In verse 20, when the Gentiles speak of the land, the word *arš* is used. In verses 34 and 35, *arš* is used, but in the sense of "soil" in connection of cultivation (see ch. 2.5.2). The message goes further for the permanent restoration of the life of Israel in the land.

5.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The introductory phrase used for the mountains of Israel is almost identical with the oracle against Mount Seir in chapter 35. There are certain similarities of expression and antitheses in the two chapters (for the list of similarities and antitheses, see Martens, 1972:111). The two chapters are well designed to have an integral relationship of the judgment oracle against Edom with the salvation oracle for Israel (1972:112). The salvation for the mountains of Israel (36:1-15) is compared with the judgment oracle against mount Seir

(35:1-15). The aim of the entire context (chapters 35 and 36) is to give the promise of re-occupancy of the land by the covenant people.

The oracle is structured in a form of repetition of indictment and promise: Indictment (vs 2b-6) and promise (vs 7-12); indictment (v 13b) and promise (vs 14-15); indictment (16-21) and promise (vs 22-38). Sections are divided by the messenger formulae: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says" (vs 2,13) or "Again (Thus) the word of the Lord came to me" (vs 22,33,37). Those formulas give the signal for a fresh introduction (Zimmerli, 1979:88). Sections are often closed with the form "declares the Sovereign Lord" (v14b, 15c, 32b). Zimmerli suggests that the introductory messenger formulae in verses 22, 33, and 37, which is different from that of verses 2 and 13, stand apart from their main bodies. The chapter, however, clearly shows the complexity of a serial speech (cf. Yates, 1972:116f). These three small sub-sections (vs 16-22, 33-36, 37-38) which have the same introductory formula are well designed to form one larger complex of a messenger speech.

The passages are filled with declarative statements of Yahweh, e.g., "I will...", and the later part of the chapter is strongly painted with the (new) covenant language and its implications, e.g., "cleanse all impurities" (v 25), "new heart" (v 26), "keep my law" (v 27), the covenant formula (v 28); and it concludes with the familiar formula of the "knowledge of the Lord" (v 38).

5.3 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE TEXT

5.3.1 Judgment on the enemies and salvation for Israel (vs 1-15)

The chapter begins with a new full commission to the "son of man" to prophesy (v 1). Although the message begins with an address to the mountains of Israel, verses 2-6 turn back indictments of the enemy (esp. Edom). The speech of verdict against the nations is, however, necessarily brought in to prepare the way for the salvational announcements to the mountains of Israel.

The words of the enemy are cited: "Aha! The ancient heights have become **our possession**" (v2). The enemy here particularly implies the Edomites who greedily claimed the land for their possession (Cooke, 1936:386). The words *wbmwt 'wlm* ("everlasting heights") may refer to the high level of the country (cf. 6:3; Dt 32:13; Am 4:13). Some suggest the corruption of the MT and amend it into *šmmwt 'wlm* ("desolation forever") following LXX (Taylor, 1969:228). However, some wish to retain MT and try to relate to the everlasting nature of Yahweh's promise of the land (Zimmerli, 1983:237).

The repetition of the words *lkn* ("therefore") in verse 3a,4,5,6,7,14 and *y'n* ("because") in verses 2,3a,6b,13a shows the motivation of the divine sayings, i.e., a reason for the indictment and a reason for hope of Israel repossessing the land. Yahweh begins to reply to their whispering in hostility. The nations' challenge was not simply the territorial boundaries, but Yahweh's long-standing promises (Taylor, 1969:229). Yahweh's revenge starts with the expression "in my burning zeal" ("in the fire of my jealousy" in RSV) against all nations who have plundered its pasture land and taken it for their possession (v 5). "I swear with uplifted hand": The judgment against the nations is set forth parallel with the promise for Israel. The announcement of future prospects for Israel is written in vs 8-12: Their malicious joy will be ended; no longer will they devour the weakened nation of Israel. The goal of the judgment is "then you will know that I am the Lord" (v 11). In the message of the judgment God proclaims the logic of his faithfulness to Israel (Zimmerli, 1983:240).

The hope for Israel lies in the deserved judgment upon hostile nations for their claim to possess the land. Yahweh is "against" ('1) the "rest of the nations" and Edom (v 5), but "for" (a1) the mountains of Israel (v 9).

5.3.2 Indictment of Israel within a historical retrospect (vs 16-21)

This chapter reflects a great concern about cultic cleanness. The fact that the people had defiled their land is figuratively expressed as the uncleanness of a menstrual woman (v 17). The priestly regulations proclaim the cultic uncleanness of a woman's body when she is in that period (Lv 15). The key word 'lylh in verse 17 refers to a "wanton, reckless deed" (Yates, 1972:118). The second important word for the defilement, tmat "to make unclean", is also derived from sacred law (Eichrodt, 1970:494). In the cultic regulations we find an outline of the cases of uncleanness: Any article that is touched by an unclean woman; any man who touches her or the defiled article; and any man who has contact with an impure idol. Here the present text takes the priestly regulations figuratively: The people of Israel, as a woman in menstruation and a man touching an idol, defiled the land of Israel and the land where they went into exile. But those cultic terms are taken by the prophet to apply not to cultic sins, as Eichrodt says, but also to the more general sense of showing contempt for God's holiness by breaking his commandments (1970:494).

We recall that the chapter especially focuses on the issue of the land. The land was "holy" as being sanctified by Yahweh's presence in it. Verse 17 reads "When the people of Israel were living in their own land": The land - here expressed admtm ("their land") (also v 24; 34:13, 27:14,21; 3 :26,28), and sometimes admt ysral (7:2; 11:17; etc.) - plays a very important role in the prophecy of Ezekiel. The land in Ezekiel is to be understood as qualified in 28:25 with "which I gave to my servant Jacob (cf. 37:25) (Zimmerli, 1983:246). The land was given as a gift to them by Yahweh and it was their responsibility to keep it holy. The sins of the people, such as idolatry and bloodshed, desecrated the land of Israel and even the land where they went into exile (Davidson, 1900:261). Verse 17 expresses their abomination in the combination of words drk and 'lylh which may be translated into "conduct and life" ("handel en wandel" in Dutch: Aalders, 1957:188). Such uncleanness

of a woman's impurity can hardly be purified except through the ritual ceremony in the priestly laws (cf. Lv 15:19); thus it is declared that "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols" (36:25).

The sins that have been committed by the people have brought the wrath of God upon them (v 18). It is interesting enough, as Eichrodt (1970:494) says, that the retribution of the profanation and defilement of the holy land did not take place in the form of its own autonomous rules, but in the way stated upon occasion in the laws, which declare that a defiled land vomits forth its inhabitants (Lv 18:25,28; 20:22), devours them (Nm 13:32; Lv 26:38), or refuses to yield them its produce (Gn 4:11f; Dt 28:39ff; Lv 25:2,4; 26:34). In other words, the retribution was understood to be Yahweh's personal action of carrying out punishment in Israel's thought. Eichrodt states:

So in the connection between sin and punishment we do not find any impersonal judicial process, but a completely personal reaction on the part of Yahweh against the injury and dishonour committed against him (1970:494).

Verse 20 reads "and wherever they went among the nations...": The word *wybwa* has been very strongly confused with the question, "who is the subject?" Aalders strongly argues that there is no sound reason to alter the MT text in another way, as if a misspelling is involved in that word, taking some Hebrew manuscripts which read *wybaw*, and as if a third person singular shown in MT is to be taken to mean the house of Israel (Aalders, 1957:189). But the latter idea can hardly be justified since in verses 17 and following the collective phrase for the house of Israel always takes the plural combination. If we read it as a third person singular, it denotes God: He Himself went with his people wherever they went (cf. Cooke, 1936:389). It is in accordance with the description of Isaiah 63:9: "In all their distress he too was distressed...he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old". The fact that they went into exile disgraced his holy name. His name suffered when the nations said about Him that "These are the Lord's people, and yet they went among the nations" (v 20). Yahweh did not let the people alone take

all the derision from the Gentiles, but He Himself was there and took all the disgrace. Yahweh is not bound in the land like the pagan national gods who are always limited to the territory (Aalders, 1957:189). He left Jerusalem when they were abominated and moved to the land of the Chaldeans where his people abided (Ezk 1:4ff; 10:18ff; 11:22ff). He promised that He Himself would become a sanctuary among his people in the land of Chaldea (11:16).

God temporarily allowed his name to be put to shame by the heathen (36:20). The word *wahml* is in the consecutive imperfect, meaning something that has already happened and is looked back upon. Yahweh recalls the past event of the disaster so that the people may realise it as brought about by God's intention (Zimmerli, 1983:247). God's final purpose is to bless his people, and this will also result in the heathen's recognition of God with awe and reverence.

5.3.3 God vindicates his holiness to the nations in the action of restoring his people (vs 22-32)

The salvation is logically described step by step in this part. We find the very common elements of the restoration of Israel here. We may compare those elements in the present text and Jeremiah 24:6ff, and note the following common ideas among those passages:

- (1) Gathering and bringing them back to their land (Jr 24:6; Ezk 36:24);
- (2) Giving to them a new heart (Jr 24:7a; Ezk 36:26);
- (3) The covenant formula (Jr 24:7b; Ezk 36:28b);
- (4) Delivering them from all uncleanness (Jr 24:7c; Ezk 36:29a).

5.3.3.1 The motivation of salvation

He is going to do a great thing for the people. Therefore the prophet must let the people of Israel hear God's words. Yahweh's message starts with an introductory formula "This is what the Sovereign Lord says". The proclama-

tion of salvation for the people begins with a rejection of any misunderstanding of Yahweh's motivation. It will be not because of the people's sake but for his own name's sake. It is clearer from Ezekiel's other passages with the phrase *waś lm'n šmy* (cf. 39:25; 20:9,14,22) (cf. Zimmerli, 1983:247). Yahweh is going to take action to restore his name out of the tragedy. Yahweh's decision manifests that the divine love is higher, more faithful, and more steadfast than any human's love (Eichrodt, 1970:485). It is truly the way of salvation through the Old Testament and the New Testament as well (cf. Rm 5:8).

Yahweh's prime concern is to let his own people realise and honour Him through the salvational experience; and secondly it goes further to the nations through that experience that "all men and nations may know that He is the Lord" (v 23). With the words *bkm l'ynyhm* ("through you before their eyes") there is a strong hint here of Israel's special role towards the nations as found in the Servant Songs of Isaiah 40-55, i.e., Israel will be a channel for the salvation of the nations. Taylor expresses with regret that both sides, the Jews and the church, have failed to realise the significance of "Israel" in history. He adds:

The church also finds it a difficult role to accept, but in an age when God's power is all too often discredited by reason of his people's failures, the church needs to be prepared to be treated harshly for the sake of God's greater glory in the world (1969:231).

5.3.3.2 Purification of sins

Among the elements of restoration, the present text puts great stress on **purification and the Spirit**. The "cleansing" in verse 25 is a resumption of the earlier idea, i.e., the cultic sense of the defilement and uncleanness (see ch. 5.3.2). The reference to "sprinkling with clean water" especially with the verb *zrq* is mostly used in connection with the sprinkling of blood (Ex 24:6; Lv 1:5,11, etc.) (Zimmerli, 1983:249; Aalders, 1957:190). Thus, it must refer

to a metaphorical image of forgiveness of all sins as clean water washes bodies free from all dirt.²⁶

5.3.3.3 The renewal of "heart"

In addition to an outward purification, it is necessary to complete the restoration. Their tendency and sinful nature inclining to evil deeds and idolatry must also be renewed. The present text does not miss the most striking point in the new covenant, namely the renewal of "heart". "Put a new spirit in you" is equivalent to "remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (v 26). The "heart of stone" may refer to their stubborn, senseless, careless attitude towards God's words, while the "heart of flesh" represents the completely opposite attitude (cf. 11:19). Thus, the new (flesh) heart will associate with the new way of life to cause a complete obedience to Yahweh's law (v 27b). Yahweh's Spirit involves directly changing people's hearts in Ezekiel's texts (cf. 11:20). It eliminates all kinds of human elements to be fulfilled for the requirement of a new heart. Thus, the promise of "new heart" is secured by Yahweh's vow that He himself will directly conduct the people's way of obedience. It is guaranteed and no failure will be expected in the new era. This idea is found in various places of the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor 12:13; Rm 6; 8:9ff).

5.3.3.4 The covenant formula

The next step of the restoration is found in the covenant formula and the promise of prosperity in the land. Due to recovering from their abomination and keeping a perfect obedience to the law, the relationship between Yahweh and the people will be restored as shown in the formula "I will be your God

²⁶ One may pay attention to the theory that the Qumran community possibly adopted Ezekiel's passage to introduce the water baptism of purification which is often argued to be an origin of the Christian baptism: See Dupont-Sommer, 1961:81; cf. Zimmerli, 1983:249.

and you will be my people" (v 28). The new communion between God and the people will take place again.

5.3.3.5 The formula of "The land I gave your forefathers" (v 28)

Verse 29b and the following verses deal with the blessings of fertility. We had better bear in mind at this point that we must not eliminate any element of the restoration due to a bias based on a Christian doctrine, but to take both the spiritual restoration (namely cleansing and renewing the heart) and the restoration of nature. It is said in one sentence that "You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people..." (v 28). The word "forefathers" forbids any suggestion that this land could be other than the very land of Canaan. The element of the land and restoration of their fortune is obviously spoken in line with the spiritual blessings. The new people of Israel can not be thought of without their own land by the contemporary prophets. The importance of restoration to the land may be noted as subsidiary in its function to the idea of the vindication of Yahweh's name in this chapter (Eichrodt, 1970:497; cf. Martens, 1972:126f). Yahweh's vindication, however, is a matter of public testimony of his power which will be shown to the nations by his bringing the people to their land (Eichrodt, 1970:504). The nations will speak of Yahweh's land as "his land"; and Yahweh speaks to Israel of "your land" (Martens, 1972:127). We may borrow Eichrodt's strong statement concerning this:

A third aspect of Ezekiel's portrayal of salvation, finally, consists in making due allowance for the way in which the whole Old Testament hope forms a contrast to all false spiritualization. Here God's created world is not light-heartily dismissed as a thing of minor value in comparison with a purely spiritual relationship with God. On the contrary, creation is brought in so as to form part of the new world-harmony; the inward and outward fulfilments mutually correspond, as the acts of the Creator and the Redeemer. The deeper the realisation of man's alienation from his Creator..., the more indispensable does it seem that the glory of the original designs should be brought out in all their fullness and clarity in a new creation, without which no real fulfilment of salvation can be conceived (1970:505).

Thus, we may have a complete picture of the restoration in terms of the fact that the renewed people are living in the renewed land.

The land is occasionally described in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel as "land which I gave to your (their) fathers" or "land which I gave to my servant Jacob."²⁷ In some cases, especially judgment oracles, the term "fathers" refers to ancestors in general (cf. Jr 3:24,25; Ezk 2:3; 20:27). Sometimes it signifies the people in the Mosaic time (Ezk 20:36). In most cases where that promise formula of the land with "fathers" is used, it is not clear whether the "fathers" are the patriarchs or ancestors. Only in one passage of Ezekiel 37:25 are the "fathers" apparently distinguished from the patriarchs: "they will live in the land I give to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived". Except for Jeremiah and Ezekiel the name patriarchs often appear in connection with the land gift (cf. Gn 35:12; 50:24; Ex 6:8; 33:1; Nm 32:11; Dt 1:8; 6:10; 34:4; etc.) (Martens, 1972:205, fn 1). The name Abraham appears just once in Ezekiel 33:24 and "my servant Jacob" twice, and the facts provide enough evidence that the prophet Ezekiel is familiar with patriarchal traditions. Thus it is highly possible that in Ezekiel's oracles, the promise of the land is based on Yahweh's relationship to the patriarchs and his gift of the land to them.

The best assumption about the forefathers, to whom God gave the land, is, however, to be the fathers who entered the land under the leadership of Moses and Joshua. In the narratives of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan, God's promises to the patriarchs were repeatedly stated as having to be fulfilled (Ex 6:2-8; Dt 6:18,23; Jos 5:6; Jud 2:1) (Oudersluys, 1979:5). Deuteronomy 6, the so-called "shema Israel" which must have been recited through generations, provocatively reminds them of the land in two ways, backwards to the promise to their forefathers (the patriarchs) and forwards to the possibility of losing the land; it said:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you..... then when you

²⁷ It occurs in the following passages: Jr 3:18; 16:15; 24:10; 30:3; 32:22; Ezk 20:28; 20:42; 25:5; 28:25; 36:28; 37:25; 47:14. Elsewhere in the Old Testament it appears thirty-four times, fifteen of which are in Deuteronomy (see Martens, 1972:203).

eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.... (Dt 6:10-12).

God affirms to Solomon the conditions of the land: "But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them..." (1 Ki 9:6f).

When the Israelites stood at the borders of the promised land, their responsibility to keep the land was repeated in commanding terms. All individual members would be given full participation in the promises of the covenant (Oudersluys, 1979:6). Thus they would not lose their possessions permanently (Lv 25:25-55; Dt 15:1-18; 22:1-4). It is a gift and the gift can not be sold. But the gift can be lost when their covenant relationship with God is broken. Alfaro maintains that "The fact that the land is a gift is one of the most powerfully stressed in the whole Old Testament" (Alfaro, 1978:53). The conquest of the land passing through all difficulties was a most outstanding gift from God. It was the place where God put his name to a promise and in sovereign grace chose Israel to be his people.

The present text is, therefore, to be understood best as that it speaks about the "gift" of the land to the fathers, implying directly the conquest of Canaan, and indirectly the land promise to the patriarchs.

5.3.4 Rebuilding settlements in the land (vs 33-38)

They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited" (v 35).

Verses 33-36 form a literary symmetrical complement to verses 16-21. This section also contains both elements: the spiritual renewal (the divine cleansing from guilty deeds) and the restoration of nature. The renewal of nature is pictured in two ways: "rebuilding the settlements" and "cultivating the field" which have been devastated. The cities which once were devastated (by

invaders) will again be inhabited and fortified. Now the land will become most luxuriantly fertile so as to be a garden of Eden (v 35; cf. Is 11:6-9; 51:3; Jl 3:18; Am 9:13-15). In chapter 47 the prophet expresses the great miracle which changes the barren land into fruitful paradise. It will be just as much an act of God's creation as was the original garden of Eden (Taylor, 1969:233). The ideas of repopulation and prosperity are intertwined here. The abundance of people is described with the metaphor of a flock, and their prosperity is depicted in the illustration of abundance of sacrificial animals at the feasts in Jerusalem.

The real aim of the oracle goes beyond Israel herself, to the confession of the surrounding nations (v 36). The description looks back at the oracles of chapter 35 and the earlier part of chapter 36 which we encounter against the oppression and mockery of surrounding nations upon Israel. The formula "I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it" confirms the certainty of its fulfilment, by the authority of the Lord of hosts.

As a postscript to the promise of restored lands, Ezekiel turns his eyes to the cultic observation by mentioning "the appointed feasts" in Jerusalem in verses 37-38. After depicting the agricultural environment of the land in general and giving the picture of a garden of Eden, the prophet now turns his attention to the great holy city of Jerusalem and its sanctuary which are the central places of the futuristic ideal kingdom (cf. 37:26-28). The sanctuary and the cultic observation are greatly dealt with by the prophet in the last part of his book as a part of the restoration architecture (chs 40-47). The metaphorical idea of a flock for the people, which appears in chapter 34, the present text, and 37:24 (with the word of "shepherd"), reminds us of the whole unity of the promise passages which covers chapter 34 to 37 (cf. Aalders, 1957:194).

6 EZEKIEL 37:1-14

6.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

Ezekiel 37 is divided into two major parts which are closely related to each other and well designed to convey the idea of the restoration. The first part (vs 1-14) is introductory and provides the characteristics of the restoration, while the second gives more details of the restoration.

The visionary oracle in the first part of this chapter consists of two sections, namely, an image or metaphor (vs 1-10) and its interpretation (vs 11-14). The lack of the opening of graves in the metaphorical vision has often brought about a problematic observation by some scholars, asserting the latter section to be an editorial insertion (Fohrer, 1955:209-10; Hölscher, 1924:175; etc.). But it is not necessary to see it as if the two were in conflict with one another. When the people lamented "we are cut off" in verse 11, it meant "we are given to death" or "we are cut off through burial".²⁸ Consequently the salvation oracle may take it into account and express their hope as rising out of their graves (cf. Martens, 1972:131). The relationship between the two sections is identified in the statement of verse 11a: the former is the report of the vision and the latter is an interpretation, although it is not a word-by-word application. The later section replaces the image of the dead bones into the graves, but it also does not lead us into separating those two sections as if they were not originally related to one another (for further discussion, see Zimmerli, 1983:257).

6.2 A THEME IN CONTEXT

As Zimmerli describes it, this present text is to be labelled "the prophet's proclamation of the massive promise for the future" (1983:112). These familiar

²⁸ The word *gʒr* ("cut off") is often used for "death" (Ps 88:6; Is 53:8; Lm 3:54).

passages have easily misled critics: Some adopt the text for a teaching of a doctrine of bodily resurrection (Currey, 1882:406; for an opposite view, see Keil, 1885:120ff; Taylor, 1969:234); and some others understand it as showing an analogy of the spiritual regeneration for the New Testament believers (see Taylor, 1969:234; Eichrodt, 1970:509). Taylor says:

All that can be said of it is that Ezekiel uses the language of resurrection to illustrate the promise of Israel's return to a new life in her own land from the deathlike existence of the Babylonian exile (1969:236).

The issue at stake in this text is to represent the hope of the restoration of Israel out of the contemporary skepticism.

Ezekiel's experience of the vision by an ecstatic trance as in 1:3ff and 8:1ff is made to serve as a reality of the true meaning rather than the language itself (Eichrodt, 1970:570). The text announces the restoration of Israel in the metaphorical language of the resurrection of the dead (Davidson, 1900:266; Hengstenberg, 1869:317). The nation is dead and the bones have been scattered over the dry valley. The dried valley is symbolically used for a place which, having suffered through Yahweh's judgment, becomes the place of triumph. The dried valley and bones imply the current thought of the people, saying, "our bones are dried, our hope is lost; we are wholly cut off" (Davidson, 1900:267). The words *abd* ("perish" or "vanish") and *gxr* ("cut off" or "exterminate") indicate a severe punishment from Yahweh, implying the total destruction of their homeland (cf. Dt 4:26; 11:17; Lv 26:38; Jr 27:10, 15; Lm 3:54; etc.) This most likely indicates that the vision is not a general teaching of the restoration but linked with the specific historical situation, namely the Assyro-Babylonian invasions.

We must also note at this point that the figure speaks of the idea of nationality rather than of individuality (see v 11) (Cooke, 1936:397). It can properly be stated that the restoration of the nation is accomplished by the resurrection of individual members of Israel. Thus, we may conclude that the bones of the valley simply symbolise the contemporary dead state of Israel, and the miracle of resurrection indicates the future restoration of the nation. Through

the vision Israel must learn that "the present state is not the final one; life, not death, is God's will for his people" (Cooke, 1936:397).

6.3 EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT

6.3.1 The metaphor of resurrection (vs 1-10)

The introductory words "The hand of the Lord" and "by the Spirit of the Lord" (v 1) imply the powerful supernatural characteristics of the vision (cf. 1:3; 8:1). The experience of the vision may be said to be as an ecstatic trance (Eichrodt, 1970:507). The prophet's mind is curiously mingled with the real and the imaginary (Cooke, 1936:397). Although the dry valley was laid before the prophet's physical eyes and he saw the event upon the bones as if visible, it might be a fantastic and ecstatic experience of his spirit. The valley is possibly the same place as that where Ezekiel had a previous experience of a vision in 3:22f. The description, "bones that were very dry" in verse 2, suggests the meaning of "the utter deadness of the nation and the apparent hopelessness of its revival" (Davidson, 1900:267).

In verse 3 the prophet faces a difficult situation when being questioned by God, "Son of man, can these bones live?" He must admit the powerlessness of man, and that he cannot say anything about the possibility of life for these dead bones (cf. Hengstenberg, 1869:321). At the same time, however, he has to face the situation by faith that God's ability must not be curtailed by man's lack of abilities (cf. Zimmerli, 1983:260). It is more to say that the answer unmistakably appears to be "No" in Ezekiel's mind, but he reserves it for God's hands, meaning that it could happen if He wants it to. Ezekiel surely knew that God who killed could also make alive (Dt 32:39). The secrets belong only to God. It is above human understanding. A human attitude towards the current dead state of Israel must be put into God's plan and his Sovereign performance of a miracle for her.

In verse 4 Ezekiel is told to command them to "Hear the word of the Lord!", and it is worthwhile to note that the miracle is accomplished through the medium of the word of God via the mouth of the prophet (cf. Keil, 1885:116). The cause of the restoration must be accompanied by "hearing the message". Here we see the sudden transformation of the state of the prophet from being the spokesman of human impotence to the spokesman of divine omnipotence (Zimmerli, 1983:260). He appears now as an authorised messenger calling upon the dead to pay attention, a deliverer of divine message for a hope, and a commander to bring the "breath" of life into the dead bones. The Almighty God could have done it by his own action, but wishes his messenger to carry on with it. If we turn to the New Testament, we may have a clear idea that the people of Israel must also be raised through the preaching of the Gospel, hearing and believing in Christ (cf. Rm 10:16-18; see Part VI, 4.5).

Verse 5 says, "I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life". The word rwḥ is translated into various words in most modern translations: "Spirit" in verses 1 and 4; "breath" in verses 5,6,8,9, and 10; "wind" (or winds) in verse 9. Taylor understands that in reality it is the same word every time (1969:237). The word can have the double meaning of "wind" and "spirit" as in John 3:8. Here it has the meaning, in the very wide sense, ranging from the Spirit of the Lord to the spirit of nature which may be called "wind". Even in the latter case, however, it must be taken in the sense of "spirit" rather than of "wind". Although the word is identical with the wind or air, it is often used as the sign of life (cf. Gn 2:7; 6:17; 7:22; Ps 104:29,30). Thus rwḥ here must be the breath of life (Keil, 1885:117).

When the prophet prophesies, the ears of the dead hear and begin to respond. The words "noise" (qw1) and "rattling" (r'š) are used for the impressions of shock (cf. 12:18; Zimmerli, 1983:261). It denotes a great awakening which has never been paralleled with such momentum in history. The breath is summoned from "the four winds" which means "the four corners of the earth", or "all directions of the earth" (cf. 7:2; Taylor, 1969:238). The same phrase

denotes the flooding of its full power into the lifeless bodies, awakening them into life (Eichrodt, 1970:508). We may sense that the whole world participates in awakening the dead bodies as God commands. The metaphor implies an event of the future among the Israelites. The people have not listened to the prophets - as seen in the worst case of Isaiah (Is 6:9ff and compare with Acts 28:25- 27, see Part V. 1.2.1) - but at the same time the prophet recognises that it will happen with a great response of the people toward God's word when God takes action. The vision demonstrates that the hope under such a desperate condition lies in the supernatural and miraculous power of the Lord. The future event is displayed as the overwhelming power of the victory of divine salvation.

6.3.2 The interpretation of the metaphor (vs 11-14)

This sub-section (from verse 11) begins with the contemporary people's experience. The message is given in response to the laments of the exiles, saying "Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off". The "bones" figure the present situation of Israel. They lost Jerusalem; the temple was destroyed. The lamentation of the people with the rhyme syllables of '-enu' and '-anu' follows the pattern of the language of the lament (33:10; Ps 31:11; Pr 10:28; cf. Ezk 19:5; Ps 9:19; Job 8:13; 14:19). All three expressions, "our bones are dried up", "our hope is gone", and "we are cut off", show a great degree of lamenting, and a hopeless fading in the utmost situation after the final destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. When they speak of "no hope" it is of the nationality. The destruction and dissolution of the nation appeared to them as being final (Davidson, 1900:269). All these words were actually heard by the prophet. When we see it in the judgment perspective, the people's utterance fits well into the purpose of God's punishment. Indeed, the prophet's message is about the fact that when no hope exists in the people, there is still hope from Yahweh.

The promises are given by three steps in this section:

(1) Yahweh Himself will open the graves and take the people out of the graves;

(2) He will lead them to the land of Israel and settle them there;

(3) He will put his Spirit in them so that they may recognise the messages and acts of the Lord.

All these accounts are strongly parallel to the old exodus.

The Spirit in verse 14 plays an important role in this section, that is to say, it is the same Spirit of the Lord that gave life in the first part (cf. Ps 104:30). However, the present part more clearly indicates that it is the Spirit which revivifies the spiritual life of Israel in the religion of Yahweh (rather than physical dimension). In the same verse, "the spiritual revival" is closely connected with the promise of the people's settling in their own land. Thus the fact shows that all the religious, social and political dimensions are not separated from one another. The phrase "the whole house of Israel" must be seen in the light of the next paragraph, namely, the reunification of both kingdoms (cf. Keil, 1885:119).

Israel, through the prophets, had to hear what Yahweh said in a moment of despair when everything seemed silenced. The message of divine self-disclosure is about to make new history. For Ezekiel there is no other ground of hope than Yahweh (Zimmerli, 1983:111-133).

7 EZEKIEL 37:15-28

7.1 THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The unity of this text is demonstrated by an introductory formula beginning with "The word of the Lord came to me" in verse 15 and ending with a conclusive phrase "Then the nations will know that...". One may wish to divide it into two sub-sections, taking into account a coupled covenant formula (vs

23,27) (Zimmerli, 1983:271). Some may think of a division into three sections with two divine commissions for Ezekiel to speak, "say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says'" (vs 19a and 21a) (Martens, 1972:136f). We may divide the text into three sections, namely verses 15-19, 20-23, 24-28, due to the following facts: The second instruction of symbolic action begins from verse 20, and it noticeably ends with the covenant formula in verse 23c; from verse 24, the tone changes sharply to a purely eschatological description. However, we must not put emphasis on the divisions themselves because there is a continuous theme and a logical development of the theme through the verses. Thus, it is important to watch carefully the development of the theme from a low point to a high, flowing from the first section into the later section.

7.2 THEMES IN THE CONTEXT

This text serves as an integral part of the series of restorations which has begun since chapter 34. A coupled covenant formula in this text (cf. 11:20; 14:11; 34:30) with the direct mention of making a covenant demonstrates that the promise is based on the covenant. The Davidic king and the repeated word "everlasting" indicate the eschatological character of the promise. The last statement concerning the "sanctuary" points to the coming great description of the new temple vision from chapter 40 and onward.

One dominant theme continuing through all sections is the reunification of the nation under one king out of the two divided kingdoms when the restoration of the nation is accomplished (cf. Hs 1:11; 8:3,4; Is 11:13; Jr 3:18). This main emphatic theme is introduced in the first section. The following sections begin with this main theme but extend to the other aspects of restoration. This text especially tells us that the prospect of nationhood is not separate from the prospect of a national home. Political oneness calls for a geographical base (Martens, 1972:139). All those themes consist of sketching a picture of political and religious stability of the nation.

7.3 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDY ON THE TEXT

7.3.1 The first symbolic action: The promise of "unification" (vs 15-19)

The prophet issues the message of God with the aid of a symbolic action which has been used often by him (cf. 4:1; 5:1). In verse 16 the prophet is ordered to take two sticks (compare with the rods of tribes in Nm 17:2ff), and to mark them with different inscriptions on each stick: The first stick with the name of Judah represents the southern kingdom; and the other (taking both names Ephraim and Joseph) is assigned to the northern kingdom. Calling it Ephraim is the most popular way of expression for the ten tribes (cf. Is 7:2,5,8f,17; 9:9; Hs 4:17; 5:3,5,12,13; 6:4,10) (Aalders, 1957:202), but the prophet may have realised the important role of Joseph in the revelation history as it is indicated in Genesis 49:26 (cf. Zimmerli, 1983:274). The sticks must be well smoothed pieces of wood so that the inscription can be easily visualized. They are often regarded as sceptres of a ruler. It is, however, clear that an inscribed stick at least demonstrates the ownership of a certain property. The prophet was given a further instruction to hold the sticks together joined to one another (v 17).

Verse 19 provides the meaning of that action in front of the countrymen. The strange formation of the words *awtm 'lyw at-'š* is confusing (LXX renders *καὶ ὄσω αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν πύλην Ἰουδα*). Cooke (1936:26) reads "I will join them 'unto' the stick of Judah". The phrase gives an idea of the way of the unification: That the ten tribes will be taken into Judah's dominion. Judah was given attention as the central place for the whole people in the re-unification. We may compare this with the unification of the people under the one Shepherd, the King of David (v 22).

The message of verse 19 contains a divine promise rather than a mere interpretation of the sign-action. The manner of description places emphasis on the word of Yahweh as strongly as possible as shown by the words "I will

take...", "I will make..." (Zimmerli, 1983:275). We may make a comparison between the phrases "the hand of Ephraim" and "the hand of Yahweh", so that we are reminded that the split of the kingdom was initiated by Ephraim but the reunification will take place by Yahweh's initiative (Aalders, 1957:204). The allegorical act aims at giving a divine assurance to the people, showing first that Yahweh has not forsaken the nation, and secondly that the nation will be restored by Yahweh's hand into the united kingdom.

7.3.2 The second symbolic action: The promise for the new kingdom (vs 20-23)

Verse 20 enters into a new instruction to the prophet from Yahweh. He is to hold the same sticks on which he has written in the previous section. It indicates that Yahweh is going to deliver a further message after the previous allegorical lecture. This section consists of various aspects in connection with the theme of "reunification".

The divine promise of gathering the dispersed and bringing them into their own country is reinstated in verse 21 (cf. v 12). The gathering and returning, which were the really urgent issue for the contemporary people, are the first steps toward rebuilding the kingdom. The returned people will establish one nation under the leadership of one king (v22). The united kingdom will be built on the basis of the promise of the Davidic King (cf. 34:24). Eichrodt (1970:512) states:

Once again, we should remember that God's saving act would not be complete unless it restored Israel as a whole. The election of that people, once made, must inevitably come to its goal. In turn, the calling of a second David made it a likely presupposition of his rule that the two long divided parts of the nation should be reunited.

The restoration in the religious sphere along with the political realm is also promised by the purification of their sin and idol worship (v23). Then, the relationship between Yahweh and the people will be firmly established: "They will be my people, and I will be their God" (v 23b).

7.3.3 A complete picture of the united Messianic kingdom (vs 24-28)

This section starts with descriptions of king David and one shepherd over the returned people which was the utmost concern in the previous section. It extends, however, to the most important issues of the restoration in connection with the new sacred kingdom.

7.3.3.1 "My Servant David"

Once again the promise of the Davidic king remains a dominant feature in the idea of restoration, showing the ongoing fidelity of Yahweh to this promise. The manner of description and the terminology are identical with those in chapter 34:23f. The sentence "they will all have one shepherd" shows the prophet's intention to keep to the main line of the theme, namely "unification". The one shepherd is called "my servant David" (cf. Is 9:6-7; Jr 23:5-6). His using of "prince" of the kingly-Messianic title may come from his awareness of the corruption of pre-exilic kingship, so he may have avoided the same title to use for the ideal king (Klein, 1979:88f; also see ch.4.2.4.4). His kingly quality is an "everlasting" rule.

7.3.3.2 The possession of the land

The promise concerning the land reflects the previous announcements of possessing the land (11:14ff; 36:28), rebuilding the cities (28:26; 36:33), and multiplying the population (36:10f, 36-38). Any kind of spiritualisation of the land can not be justified in this text. The land "I gave to my servant Jacob" and "where your fathers lived" can not be thought of as anything other than the promised land of Canaan. By giving the land back to the people, Yahweh will remain faithful to his promises to the patriarchs (esp. "Jacob" is named by Ezekiel in 20:42; 28:25; 47:14). The land was given by the covenant. Therefore, it must be permanent, just as the Davidic kingship should be permanent.

7.3.3.3 A covenant of peace

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant (v 26).

It is the new covenant, even though the word "new" is not explicitly used. There is nothing unclear in this text (cf. Klein, 1979:87). The new covenant is part of God's faithfulness to his earlier relationship with Israel. Although the people forsook the covenant (16:59-63), He promises to remember the earlier covenant (16:8,60). Jerusalem has forgotten her faithful youth (16:22,43), but Yahweh remembers, so that he will establish an everlasting covenant. It is also part of his gracious freedom from the old (1979:87).

7.3.3.4 Inwardness

The restored Israel will be faithful and obedient (v 24c). God will enable Israel to obey his commandments by inwardly transforming them: "A new heart, a new spirit..." (36:26- 27,29; 11:19).

7.3.3.5 The holy sanctuary

I will put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people (vs 26c,27).

The temple as a sign of God's presence constitutes the essential element in Ezekiel's message (Phythian-Adams, 1942:77ff). The promise of restoration reaches its summit concerning the temple in the present text. The temple, the "most holy place" (40:47-41:4), was the focal point of the divine presence among the people. The doom of the nation was bound up with the departure of the glory of Yahweh from the temple (chs 8-11) (Rust, 1972:135). In the same manner, the hope of restoration would be brought up with the return of the divine glory into the new temple (43:2; 44:1,2). God's abiding in the midst of the exiles in 11:6 is significant because it testifies to the fact that they are still his people.

The sanctuary will be planted among the very people that returned from exile (v 28). This promise is repeated three times in this short paragraph. Twice it is underlined by the term "forever". The term 'wlm is used in various meanings throughout the Scriptures: (1) ancient time (cf. Is 63:9,11; Ezk 26:20; etc.); (2) a long duration with a fixed span of time (Ex 21:6; etc.); (3) limitless duration (Gn 3:22; Ex 3:15; Ps 146:6,10; etc.; esp. for the existence of God, Gn 21:33; Is 40:28; etc.). The word appears in numerous places in the Old Testament in connection with the covenants and promises. It is important to define the meaning of the term when it is connected with the covenant or promise. In the case of the Davidic covenant, it says "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Sm 7:16). The meaning can hardly be derived from the text itself, but it is clear from the evidence of other passages. Psalm 89 reiterates the promise to David and affirms that the Davidic line will be established for "as long as the heavens endure" (v 29), and his throne is to last "as long as the sun and moon last" (vs 36f). In the case of the new covenant, Yahweh as the creator of heaven and earth declares that only if these decrees of nature vanish from his sight, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me" (Jr 31:35ff). And Yahweh also takes an oath for his covenant promise to David, saying "If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant....can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne" (Jr 33:20f) (cf. McComiskey, 1985:24). All these references testify to the endless character of the covenant. In the present text this promise of putting his sanctuary among the people forever is directly connected with the covenant formula, i. e., "I will be their God, and they will be my people". Thus it can be said it was given as an everlasting promise of the covenant. And this promise focuses on "God's glory", it says, "the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy..."

This promise is further explored in the new temple vision in chapter 43. Ezekiel was brought back to the east gate, where he saw and heard the glory of God returning from the east (i. e., Babylonia). This is the same glory that has appeared at his calling (chs 1-3); and at the vision of the destruction of the city (chs 8-11). The glory, that entered through the east gate, has filled the temple (43:1-5), and closed it permanently (44:1-2). Yahweh's presence will be sealed permanently, showing a vow that He will never depart from it (cf. Klein, 1979:94). When the new exodus is accomplished by entering into the land, the land is to be allotted to the tribes (ch 45; 47:13-48:35). The central strip of the land is assigned to the Levites, the priests. Within the priest's portion the temple is to be located. According to the new map the centrality of God's presence in his temple is very significantly characterised (cf. Klein, 1979:92).

What would the returning of God's presence mean for Israel? It is explained in the figure of the flowing water in chapter 47. Ezekiel's vision teaches of the miraculous power of God's presence to transform death into life. Although the Glory is closed within the temple gate, his presence overflows through the land even to the end of the earth. It brings the infertile wilderness to life, and the dead sea brings forth new creatures. The land and the whole earthly world will be healed and restored by God's presence.

In conclusion, God's temple, God's presence, is the most important figure of restoration promises in Ezekiel. God is going to be enthroned among his people permanently. His everlasting covenant is ratified by his presence. We are aware of the significant conclusion of the book Ezekiel by the prophet himself testifying to God's presence in the Holy City (48:30-35). It declares:

**"The name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE"
(48:35b).**

8 CONCLUSION

After deeply experiencing the total despair of the catastrophe caused by the invasion of Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel turns his attention to the coming of the future hope and the restoration of his nation. Although he has once portrayed the "doom" upon his people so deeply that the existence of the nation seems threatened up to "zero point" (see esp. the image of dried bones on the valley in ch 37), he holds the unshakable faith that the punishment will not mean the end of the history of Israel, but will be used to achieve Yahweh's purpose to create new life for the nation. Thus, Ezekiel's restoration messages can be described as "life from death".

His restoration message starts with Yahweh's answer to Ezekiel's crying, "Ah, Sovereign Lord! Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?" (11:13). Yahweh answers that He had spared the exiles from the destruction, and that He is going to use this small spared portion of Israel (the remnant) to rebuild the nation. However, the situation among the exiles was not good, as the elders in exile said that they wished to become similar to the idol worshippers of the Gentiles (see ch 20). Although the situation was difficult, the prophet still found hope in Yahweh's grace.

The salvation messages of Ezekiel are based on Yahweh's remembrance of his covenants which were made with the forefathers of the people. His remembrance of the old covenants is directly expressed in the passage of 16:59ff, and indirectly through the words of promise, such as "enthroning the Davidic king over the people" and "bringing back to the land which He gave to their fathers" (see esp. ch. 4.2.5.1, for the connection of the land promise to the Mosaic covenant). Although his remembrance of the old covenants is stated as a basis for the restoration of hope, the prophet does not give the restoration messages in the terms of the old covenants, but in the terms of the new covenant. Although there is no direct mentioning of the word "new", the covenant of which Ezekiel tells in his restoration messages is no other than

the "new covenant" of Jeremiah. After delivering all messages of judgment which seem to appear as "discontinuity", Ezekiel's message is highlighted by the continuity of God's promise. Thus, we stand for the idea of "continuation" of the covenants. The "restoration" means, for the prophet, "the making of a new covenant" with Israel by Yahweh. The direct mention of "covenant" (34:25; 37:26) and the frequent appearance of the "covenant formula" (in almost all the restoration passages) strongly testify that the restoration oracles reach their purpose in the covenant.

In most cases the restoration oracles start with the promise of the people's return to their homeland from scattered countries, and this fact testifies that the return promise was the most urgent issue for the contemporary people and the most prominent element in the restoration passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The phrase of the "land of Israel" is the unique terminology of Ezekiel, indicating the covenant nation and land. The phrase "the land which I gave to your forefathers" also implies the covenantal gift of the land to the patriarchs and the ancestors in the Mosaic time. The land is to be restored like the garden of Eden. The peaceful and prosperous life of the people in the land is also figured by the prophet.

The revival of the nation as a whole and rebuilding the nation is clearly pictured in Ezekiel. While chapter 24 concerns deliverance of the people in terms of testing by individuals, chapter 37 sketches the revival of the nation as a whole. The kingdom will be re-established by the returned people of all the tribes from both the northern and southern kingdoms under the leadership of king David (34:23f; 37:24f). However, it does not imply the restoration of the old Davidic dynasty, because the passages are clearly eschatological, and even chapter 34 refers to the divine kingship. Thus we must understand it in terms of a Messianic kingdom.

The restoration also marks the spiritual and religious revival as follows: The forgiveness of sins (30:43; 36:25; 37:23; etc.), the renewal of the heart

(11:19; 36:26), and obedience to the law (11:20; 36:28; 37:24). The Spirit of God plays an important role in the revival of the nation and the revival of the individual lives of people. Among the elements of the restoration, the holy sanctuary is marked very significantly. The true meaning of the temple, namely Yahweh's presence is well indicated in Ezekiel by describing his departure and his entering again into the temple (chs 8-10; 40-43). The everlasting covenant is assured by his presence among his people.

Although the restoration is described in a spiritual way on the one hand, there is, on the other hand, an undeniable picture of the restoration of nature which marks the people's return to their homeland, abundant fertility of the land, and the peace of nature. The restoration is also described not only in the religious dimension, but also in the political dimension which marks the re-establishment of the kingdom by the peoples of both kingdoms (the northern and the southern) and safety in the land. Thus it is not easily justified that all the promises of the prophets are applied to the church as being spiritually fulfilled. For instance, the land promised is obviously the land which Yahweh gave to his servant Jacob and in which the forefathers of the people lived, so no other than the land of Canaan can be meant. It seems that the temporary loss of the land can not be said to terminate the everlasting promise to Abraham and their forefathers. The restoration by the new covenant is in this sense a renewal and a completion of the old. We cannot easily say that the old covenant was for Israel, and the new is for the church. In the argument about "spiritualisation", we must retain the promise of restoration as being for Israel as if it is actually said to be for Israel, and those to be for the Gentiles which are said to be for the nations. If anyone tries to make all the promises harmonise with present day Christianity, he will fail to understand it completely (Mayo, 1973:28).

The complete picture of the restoration must be seen both spiritually and naturally. The ideal theocracy was marked with the kingship and the sanctuary in the time of David (see Part II, 6.4). However, it does not return to the

old kingdom of Israel. The Davidic king mentioned in 34:23 and 37:24 must be the Messianic king. The true meaning of the temple (i.e., Yahweh's presence) must also be emphasised more than the temple building itself (we will discuss this idea more in Part IV). However, it must not be spiritualised as if the kingship of the Messiah will remain in the spiritual way for the believers, and as if the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus Christ entered and dwells in the present time will be their permanent place (see Part VI, 5.2). His return to earth was promised. The heavenly sanctuary (Jerusalem) will come down to earth (Rev 21:1ff).

The whole body of the promise message of Ezekiel is governed by the simple principle that God is faithful to his old promises and that God is free to act according to his will (Klein, 1979:96). Ezekiel witnesses to the fact that "God who in any new beginning will maintain his old promise" (Zimmerli, 1982:133). Because of the fact that He has elected the people as his, the humiliation of the people among the nations disgraces the Lord. He will not tolerate this disgrace. He is going to restore his name. This fact serves as a motivation for the restoration of Israel.

However, Yahweh's purpose is not merely the restoration of the nation itself. His aim includes world-wide recognition (36:23). The alien share the settlement with the tribes of Israel (47:22f). His sanctuary gives meaning not only to the nation of Israel, but to the world (37:28). The whole earth and sea change from death to life (47:1ff). This is the true meaning of the restoration, namely that Yahweh dwells among his people on the whole world (including people from the nations).