

**'THEY SHALL KNOW THAT I AM YAHWEH':  
THE VINDICATION OF YAHWEH IN EZEKIEL'S  
ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of DPhil**

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## SHORT ABSTRACT

*'They shall know that I am Yahweh': The Vindication of Yahweh in Ezekiel's Oracles against the Nations.* Andrew P. Langley, Regent's Park College, DPhil, Trinity Term 2017

This study examines the theological purpose of the oracles against the nations in the book of *Ezekiel* (Ezek. 25-32). Through detailed exegesis, this thesis contends that the recognition formula, 'they shall know that I am Yahweh', is the vehicle for this theological purpose since it is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh. Having specified in chapter 1 that the primary thesis is supported by two further theses, 'the recognition formula illuminates Yahweh's wrath and his mercy', and 'the recognition formula invites a human response', the work begins with a review of recent *Ezekiel* research in general that includes a background sketch delineating the context and authorship of the book. Possible original settings of oracles against nations are discussed, as well as a survey of topical scholarly output. A review of work undertaken on the recognition formula continues the preliminary discussion. In chapter 2, the basic form of the saying is defined and this allows the phrases that have expansions or are related by close resemblance to be categorised. The study proceeds with a consideration of the formula found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 3 examines the formula as it appears in *Ezekiel* outside the oracles against the nations, paying particular attention to the formula's expansions. In chapter 4, detailed exegesis begins with the oracles against Israel's Palestinian neighbours. It is suggested that *Ezekiel* uses language for its potential to remind the people of their own culpability and the possibility is mooted that *Ezekiel* is projecting the guilt and punishment of Israel onto the nations. Chapter 5 contends that *Ezekiel's* illustrations are aimed at alleviating the exiles' concern about the future by helping them appreciate a bifurcated reality of the unseen present, and that the purpose of the oracles against the nations may be perceived when the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy is understood to be elucidated by the above theses concerning the recognition formula.

## LONG ABSTRACT

*'They shall know that I am Yahweh': The Vindication of Yahweh in Ezekiel's Oracles against the Nations.* Andrew P. Langley, Regent's Park College, DPhil, Trinity Term 2017

Oracles against the nations have long been recognised as a major problem-area for exegetes since they appear in the prophetic books as extraneous literary and theological units. This study examines the theological purpose of the oracles against the nations in the book of *Ezekiel* (Ezek. 25-32). Through detailed exegesis of the oracles against the nations, this thesis contends that the recognition formula, 'they shall know that I am Yahweh', is the vehicle for this theological purpose since it is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh.

The catastrophic defeat of Judah by the Babylonians in 597 BCE, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 587 BCE and the attendant dislocation of exile provided the context of this refugee crisis that gave rise to the theological uncertainty which Ezekiel was called to address. The presence of Yahweh in the midst of this crisis was a matter of pressing concern that occupied the prophetic endeavour of Ezekiel and his tradition. The outcome of this quest is reflected in the dramatic statement that ends the book, 'Yahweh is There' (Ezek. 48:35). The contention of this thesis is that Ezekiel was convinced of the presence of Yahweh and the purpose of the book was to illuminate this for his fellow exiles. The perceived presence is seen in the grand visions which emphasise different characteristics of Yahweh. In the opening vision (1:1-28), Yahweh's covenantal faithfulness is seen. His presence with the exiles in Babylonia shows that he has not abandoned his people in exile. The justice of Yahweh is evident in the wrathful judgement of abomination that plays an integral part in the departure of the glory from the Temple in the second vision (8-11), while the merciful return of the glory is described in the final Temple vision (40-48). However, to allow for the return of the glory and the people to the land, all impurity had to be removed so that the process of restoration and

re-consecration could follow. With this purpose in mind, Yahweh sent Ezekiel to the Israelites (2:3) and instructed him to speak Yahweh's very words (3:4). Ezekiel informed the people that they had become a nation of rebels (2:3). They had profaned Yahweh's holy name among the nations (36:22); Yahweh's sanctuary had been profaned (24:21) and the land had been profaned by bloodshed (7:23). To add insult to injury, the nations had shown contempt for Yahweh, his sanctuary, his power and his covenantal relationship to his people and their land (25:3). In response to all of this, Ezekiel appreciated the need for Yahweh's vindication. The recognition formula, a striking phrase that appears nine times in the oracles against Israel's immediate neighbours, and nine times in those against Egypt, is a recurring refrain that underlines Yahweh's purpose.

This thesis contends that the recognition formula is the vehicle for the theological purpose of *Ezekiel's* oracles against the nations since it is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh. The value of the research in bringing this to light, is to offer a theological interpretation of the function of the oracles against the nations within the book of *Ezekiel*. While it benefits from a range of scholarly insight, this thesis also distinctly contributes to the field by bringing three strands of research on the book of *Ezekiel* into a deservedly sharper focus: the oracles against the nations, the recognition formula and the motif of Yahweh's vindication.

Chapter 1 sets out the argument and approach of the study, which envisages *Ezekiel's* oracles against the nations as a theological bridge spanning the chasm between the oracles of judgement against Israel (1-24) and those of restoration (33-39). Having specified that the primary thesis, 'the recognition formula indicates Yahweh's vindication', is supported by two further theses, 'the recognition formula illuminates Yahweh's wrath and his mercy' and 'the recognition formula invites a human response',

the work begins with a review of recent *Ezekiel* research in general, highlighting four major two-volume commentaries by Zimmerli, Greenberg, Allen and Block. This general introduction includes a background sketch delineating the context and authorship of the book. The possible original setting of oracles against nations is then considered before looking at the topical scholarly output, broadly grouped by diachronic and synchronic studies. The discussion develops into an appraisal of the three main functional strands of the oracles against the nations that have been proposed by commentators. Some contend that their purpose is to offer hope to the exiles, while others argue that the element of judgement is emphasised, and whereas many commentators recognise the indictment of *hybris* levelled against the nations, the argument here is that the 'commonality' identified by some is at its most apparent in the *hybris* of Israel and the nations, and that it is this *hybris* which is the object of Yahweh's judgement. A review of work undertaken on the recognition formula continues this preliminary discussion. Zimmerli's assertion that the formula is integral to its context is widely accepted and his innovative work on the formula is established as the benchmark in this area.

Having considered the recognition formula in very general terms, chapter 2 begins to add some details to the understanding of the phrase. The basic form of the saying is defined and this allows the phrases that have expansions or are related by close resemblance to be categorised. Broadly speaking, scholars have identified three possible backgrounds to the recognition formula and several examples from each of these suggestions are considered. A number of themes inherent in the formula are identified and an affinity with its use in *Ezekiel* is acknowledged. For instance, in the book of Exodus, the recognition formula underlines that mighty acts of Yahweh, performed in the sight of the nations, are an unequivocal demonstration of his power; in Deutero-Isaiah, the theme of deliverance for Israel is often associated with the

recognition formula, and in I Kings 20, victories ensuing from predictions of Yahweh's activity, witnessed by the nations, show that he is the one true God.

In chapter 3, the examination of the recognition formula in *Ezekiel* begins in earnest. However, the discussion in this chapter is limited to a selection of cases where the formula is found outside *Ezekiel's* oracles against foreign nations, showing that the purpose of Yahweh's actions that are linked to the formula is to inspire acknowledgement of his presence. While this much is evident from the prophet's use of the basic formula, it is in the expansions that the formula's meaning is really elucidated. Consideration is given to examples that witness verbal expansions,  $\supset$  plus infinitive developments, and those exhibiting participial evolution, as well as instances of nominal transformation.

In chapter 4, detailed exegesis begins with an examination of the oracles against Israel's Palestinian neighbours uncovering a number of important themes that have considerable bearing on the argument of the thesis. For instance, concerning the oracles against Ammon, it is argued that by using evocative imagery, *Ezekiel* recalls the promises of Yahweh and reminds the people of their responsibility to act in accordance with the terms of the covenant. However, underlined by the recognition formula, a positive response to this awareness is encouraged, since the possibility of restoration that the removal of Ammon suggests, invites the exiles to readjust their perspective of Yahweh. Concerning the oracle against Moab, it is argued that because a desire to be like the nations has been expressed by Israel (Ezek. 20:32), it is conceivable that the prophet is projecting the people's guilt in this regard onto Moab. Hence, by highlighting the blasphemy of Moab, *Ezekiel* summons the exiles to respond to Yahweh by reminding them of their own failed commitment to the covenant, thereby illustrating their error and pointing to the impending vindication of Yahweh. Concerning the oracle against Edom,

it is suggested that *Ezekiel* uses language for its potential to remind the people of their own culpability, observing the correlation between the retribution on Edom, and that directed to Israel. The possibility is then mooted that *Ezekiel* is projecting the guilt and punishment of Israel onto the nations, who are typified as Edom. The study points out that reading the oracle this way helps to inform a fuller understanding of the relationship between the judgement of the nations and the restoration of Israel. Indeed, the observation is made that in exacting wrathful vengeance, Yahweh's merciful purposes begin to emerge. The theme of vengeance is also apparent in the oracle against Philistia, not only the merciless vengeance of Philistia, but also divine vengeance administered by Yahweh's own hand as he asserts himself in self-vindication. While discussing the notion of denotation and exemplification with respect to signs and their referents, the distinction between which lies in the direction of reference, it is suggested that the signs of Yahweh's activity exemplify his presence. Concerning the oracle against Tyre, it is contended that Tyre's covetousness and greed were symptomatic of *hybris*, and this presented a barrier to their recognition of Yahweh's sovereignty. Rather than employing imagery that alludes to the exiles' homeland in this oracle, the prophet deconstructs the image of an unassailable Tyre. Concerning the oracle against Sidon, it is argued that the scattering and gathering of the house of Israel throws light on the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy and that the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness might be thought of as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace associated with the gift of life that Yahweh invites his people to receive when they return to him. It is pointed out that the language used reflects that found in the oracles of judgement against Israel, and that since no human agency is depicted, Yahweh's direct involvement illuminates this oracle exclusively from the standpoint of Israel, suggesting that the nations have been *Ezekiel's* rhetorical means to Yahweh's ends.

In chapter 5, the focus of attention is the oracles against Egypt. One of the distinguishing features of these oracles is *hybris*. Mythology also plays a larger part than in the oracles against Israel's Palestinian neighbours. It can be seen that judgement on the nations serves Israel's restoration and the argument is made that it does so by the illustrations the prophet employs to show the exiles the extent of their own *hybris*. In the oracle depicting Egypt as a staff of reed (29:6-9), *Ezekiel's* intention is to exhort the exiles to respond to his rhetoric by returning to Yahweh, for only Yahweh is dependable. This response would be for their own benefit and for the vindication of Yahweh. In the following oracle (29:17-21), the study considers the significance of the idea that Egypt was intended as wages for the Babylonian army and the suggestion is offered that a redemptive motif could be discerned. In Ezek. 30, it can be seen that the idea that Egypt's wealth would not save it on the Day of Yahweh, reflects the idea found in the oracles of judgement against Israel (7:19) and consideration is given to the theme of holy wrath that is articulated by *Ezekiel* using the language of fire and burning. For all that, it is evident that the threat of the Day is concretised by reference to Nebuchadrezzar, who, as Yahweh's agent, will put an end to the pride of idolatrous Egypt. The following oracle (30:20-26) employs the imagery of Pharaoh's strong arm being broken by Yahweh. This thought is developed by the ludicrous idea that the king would not attend to his fracture, an injury that is compounded by the addition of another broken arm. This study argues that the point of the parody was that the exiles would see a reflection of their own disability, and be persuaded to return to Yahweh. Imagery from Ezek. 29 re-appears in Ezek. 32, where Pharaoh, who considers himself a lion among the nations, is compared to a dragon of the sea splashing ineffectively in the shallow reaches of the Nile. The suggestion is offered that *Ezekiel's* illustrations are aimed at alleviating the exiles' concern about the future by helping them appreciate a bifurcated reality of the unseen present. This is considered to be important since Israel had forsaken her identity in favour of the illusory present and unreliability of a future

association with Egypt. Consideration is given to the possibility that if the exiles understood the oracles to be illustrations for their own benefit, then the image of the undisturbed water enriched with restorative alluvium could hint at a future restoration for Israel. It can be seen that these illustrations contain powerful lessons that leave the exiles little choice but to return to Yahweh so that they might live, and the thesis argues that the purpose of the oracles against the nations may be perceived when the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy is understood to be elucidated by the above theses concerning the recognition formula.

In the conclusion, the three central theses are drawn together to express the cumulative impact of these thoughts; namely that when the recognition formula is taken as a statement of the vindication of Yahweh, it illuminates the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy in a way that invites a human response. As such, the oracles against the nations provide a source rich with theological significance that is central to the book of *Ezekiel*.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| AB      | Anchor Yale Bible Commentary Series.  |
| ABD     | <i>The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D. N. Freedman, 8 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 2008.   |
| Ag. Ap. | Josephus, <i>Against Apion</i> .  |
| ANE     | Ancient Near East.  |
| ANEM    | Ancient Near Eastern Monographs.  |
| ANEP    | <i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.  |
| ANET    | <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Pritchard; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.   |
| Ant.    | Josephus, <i>Antiquities</i> .  |
| ARAB    | <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> , 2 vols.; Ancient Records. 1st Series; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926.   |
| ATANT   | <i>Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments</i> .  |
| BCP     | <i>The Book of Common Prayer</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.   |
| BDAG    | <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , ed. W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. |
| BETL    | Biblioteca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium.  |
| BHS     | <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. K. Elliger, W. Rudolph; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.  |
| BJRL    | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i> .  |
| BWANT   | Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament.  |
| BZAW    | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.  |
| ConBOT  | Coniectanea Biblica: Old Testament Series.  |

- DCH*            *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, ed. D. J. A. Clines, 8 vols.;  
Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993-2011.
- EA:            Tell el-Amarna Tablets.
- FAT            Forschungen zum Alten Testament.
- FB            Forschung zur Bibel.
- FRLANT       Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen  
Testaments.
- GKC            *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 2nd edn;  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910.
- HALOT*       *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, ed. L. Köhler  
and W. Baumgartner, 5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1994-2000.
- HAT            Handbuch zum Alten Testament.
- HB            Hebrew Bible.
- Hist.*        Herodotus, *Histories*.
- HKAT        Göttinger Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, 3, Abt., die  
prophetischen Bücher.
- HSM            Harvard Semitic Monographs.
- HUCA*       *Hebrew Union College Annual*.
- IDB*           *The Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G.A. Buttrick; Nashville TN:  
Abingdon, 1962.
- JANESCU*    *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*.
- JAOS*        *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.
- JBL*         *Journal of Biblical Literature*.
- JNSL*        *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*.
- JR*          *Journal of Religion*.
- JSOT*        *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*.
- JSOTSup     Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series.

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|------------------|--|
| KAT              | Kommentar zum Alten Testament.   |
| KeH              | Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament.   |
| KJV              | King James Version of the Bible.   |
| <i>KTU</i>       | Cuneiform Texts from Ugarit ( <i>Keilalphabetische Texte aus Ugarit</i> ).   |
| LHBOTS           | The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies.   |
| LSJ              | <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , ed. H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones;<br>Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.        |
| LXX              | Göttingen Septuaginta: Vol XVI, 1, Ezechiel; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck<br>and Ruprecht, 2006.                             |
| LXX <sup>A</sup> | Septuagint codex Alexandrinus.   |
| MT               | Masoretic Text.  |
| NICOT            | New International Commentary on the Old Testament.   |
| <i>NIDB</i>      | <i>New Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. K. D. Sakenfeld, 5 vols.;<br>Nashville TN: Abingdon, 2006-2009. |
| NRSV             | New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.   |
| OAN              | Oracles against the Nations.   |
| OBO              | Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis.  |
| OTG              | Old Testament Guides.  |
| OTL              | Old Testament Library.   |
| OTM              | Oxford Theological Monographs.   |
| <i>PEQ</i>       | <i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i> .   |
| PTMS             | Princeton Theological Monograph Series.  |
| <i>RB</i>        | <i>Revue Biblique</i> .  |
| S                | The Peshitta Old Testament—the standard version in the Syriac<br>tradition—as cited in BHS.                            |
| ⲧ                | Aramaic Targum of <i>Ezekiel</i> —as cited in BHS.   |
| <i>TDNT</i>      | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> .   |

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|-------------|--|
| ThB         | Theologische Bücherei.                                     |
| <i>TLOT</i> | <i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament.</i>           |
| TOTC        | Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries.                        |
| <i>VT</i>   | <i>Vetus Testamentum.</i>                                  |
| VTSup       | Supplements to Vetus Testamentum.                          |
| WBC         | Word Biblical Commentary Series.                           |
| <i>ZAW</i>  | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.</i> |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Prologue

### 1.1.1 Opening remarks

The book of *Ezekiel* has long been considered the hardest of the prophetic books to understand. It begins with a report of a vision that reaches a dramatic climax at the end of the first chapter where a graphic description of the divine presence is portrayed. Such was the splendour of the presence, described as the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh, that the prophet Ezekiel, overwhelmed by this vision, fell on his face (Ezek. 1:28).<sup>1</sup>

According to Jewish tradition, the opening vision of *Ezekiel* was regarded as being so dangerous that the rules of the Mishnah (*m. Meg.* 4:10) restrict the reading of *Ezekiel* 1 in public, while the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Hag.* 13a) relates the story of a child who, having meditated on the nature of הַשֹּׁמֵל 'gleaming amber' (Ezek. 1:4, 27), burst into flames. Not only was the book of *Ezekiel* deemed to be dangerous, its textual difficulties were also recognised. Not least of these are the apparent contradictions between *Ezekiel* and the Torah.<sup>2</sup> In another story from the Babylonian Talmud, so concerned was Hananiah ben Hezekiah in the first century that these inconsistencies would result in *Ezekiel* being withdrawn from the Hebrew canon, that three hundred barrels of oil were sent to an upper room so he could work through the nights until he had reconciled these difficulties (*b. Šabb.* 13b).

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this work, when referring to the book, the word *Ezekiel* is italicized (but not the abbreviation when it precedes chapter and verse reference). The purpose is to differentiate between the book and the prophet Ezekiel. This distinction is not, however, applied to other prophets and books.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Num. 28:11 stipulates that two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs should be sacrificed at the beginning of the month, whereas Ezek. 46:6 dictates that on the day of the new moon a young bull, six lambs and a ram should be offered.

It is perhaps unsurprising then that the book inspired a reputation among commentators as being difficult.<sup>3</sup> Despite this, an overarching structure of the book finds the material presented in an orderly way. Chapters 1-24 are devoted to Yahweh's judgement on Israel, the oracles against foreign nations are a collection that forms a discrete unit in chapters 25-32, and themes of restoration are found in chapters 33-48.<sup>4</sup>

Research on the book of *Ezekiel* has tended to focus on its first and last sections, the oracles of judgement and salvation for Israel. As for the oracles against foreign nations, scholars consider them to be a major problem-area since they sit like irrelevant literary units within the prophetic books. Added to this challenge, the thought world of these oracles contains some very unfortunate aspects of international enmity which do not make for easy reading in the twenty-first century. Consequently, the oracles against foreign nations have been viewed as expressions of prophetic nationalism at the expense of their theological value. However, an overtly theological characteristic of the oracles against the nations (OAN) is the recognition formula, 'so that they shall know that I am Yahweh'. This appears in the collection nine times in the oracles against Israel's immediate neighbours,<sup>5</sup> and nine times in the oracles against Egypt. Despite this apparent purpose, scholars speak of the recognition formula as being one of the more difficult aspects of the book.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> E.g., the Puritan William Greenhill in a series of lectures described *Ezekiel* as being 'dark, difficult' (Greenhill 1994: 4).

<sup>4</sup> Strictly speaking, oracles of restoration are found in Ezek. 33-39 while chs. 40-48 contain the vision of the eschatological temple, which also contains themes of restoration.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that in *Ezekiel* there is no evidence of antithetical contrast between Israel and Judah, rather there seems to be a synonymous alternation between the two names (Zimmerli 1983: 563).

<sup>6</sup> Callender 2015: 7.

So why is this difficult phrase that abounds in the main problem area of the hardest prophetic book so troublesome? At least part of the problem with the recognition formula lies in the fact that it is used in oracles against Israel *and* oracles against the nations. The use of the recognition formula is not limited to the OAN but is found with some frequency in the oracles of judgement against Israel. So, does this mean that both Israel *and* the nations shall come to know Yahweh, and if so, are they expected to acquire the same kind of knowledge? To complicate the matter further, the recognition formula is found in the context of both judgement and salvation. So, while the thought of the nations suffering the wrathful judgement of Yahweh may well have sounded attractive to the exiles (Ezekiel's primary audience), does that mean that *Ezekiel* also envisaged salvation for the nations? Perhaps clues can be found in the position of the OAN in the book. Many view the OAN as a bridge between the oracles of judgement against Israel and the oracles of restoration, although it should be noted that the oracles in this collection have been compiled from different sources and from different times, having obviously been inserted at this point in the book for a purpose.<sup>7</sup> But if the unit is thought of as a bridge, how does the bridge work? This is the main question that this study aims to address.

This study conceives the bridge as the theological purpose of the OAN, with the recognition formula being the vehicle for that purpose. Accordingly, it is this purpose that will be examined in all that follows. Importantly, though, it is understood here that this purpose can only be perceived when the (redacted) book is read synchronically. Consequently, this study considers the oracles that contain the recognition formula in the main unit of OAN in *Ezekiel*. It does not examine the other oracles against the

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<sup>7</sup> Davis 1999: 227.

nations found in *Ezekiel* outside that unit. In this regard, I follow the rationale of Strong,<sup>8</sup> who observes that, according to Lang, the oracle concerning the Ammonites (Ezek. 21:33-37 [28-32]) was probably originally directed to Israel,<sup>9</sup> the oracle against Edom (Ezek. 35) introduces the restoration oracles of the mountains of Israel in Ezek. 36,<sup>10</sup> and the oracles against Gog and Magog (Ezek. 38, 39) are likely to be a later development that was an attempt to salvage the prophet's reputation after the restoration fell short of *Ezekiel's* vision in 40-48.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, since Ezek. 38, 39 speaks of a full and final restoration in the distant future, they serve a similar function to Ezek. 29:17-21.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, this study does not investigate Ezek. 26:7-21; 27; 28:1-19; 32:17-32 because they do not contain instances of the recognition formula. For all that, it is through detailed exegesis of the relevant passages that this thesis contends that the theological significance of the OAN is elucidated by the recognition formula since it is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh.

### **1.1.2 Thesis 1: The recognition formula indicates Yahweh's vindication**

The catastrophic defeat of Judah by the Babylonians in 597 BCE, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 587 BCE and the attendant dislocation of exile provide the context that gave rise to the theological uncertainty which Ezekiel believed himself to be called to address. Yahweh is said to have sent Ezekiel to the Israelites (Ezek. 2:3) and instructed him to speak Yahweh's very words (3:4). Ezekiel informs the people that they have become a nation of rebels (2:3). They have profaned Yahweh's holy name among the nations (36:22); Yahweh's sanctuary has been profaned (24:21) and the land has

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<sup>8</sup> Strong 1993: 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> Lang 1979: 41.

<sup>10</sup> Strong 1993: 3, 61-62.

<sup>11</sup> Hanson 1979: 234.

<sup>12</sup> Strong 1993: 4.

been profaned by bloodshed (7:23). To add insult to injury, the nations have shown contempt for Yahweh, his sanctuary, his power and his covenantal relationship to his people and their land (25:3). Consequently, Ezekiel understands the need for Yahweh's vindication; vindication in the eyes of Israel, and vindication in the eyes of the nations. Since the vindication of any character requires an acknowledgment of their activity and so, their presence, this thesis touches on one of the broader issues regarding understanding the book of *Ezekiel*. The presence of Yahweh in the midst of this crisis was a matter of pressing concern that occupied the prophetic endeavour of Ezekiel and his tradition. The outcome of this quest is reflected in the dramatic statement that ends the book, 'Yahweh is There' (Ezek. 48:35). Ezekiel was clearly convinced of the active presence of Yahweh and this thesis argues that the recognition formula articulates the thrust of Ezekiel's prophetic endeavour as he seeks to reassure the Israelites that Yahweh's presence can be perceived in the trauma of exile.

### **1.1.3 Thesis 2: The recognition formula illuminates Yahweh's wrath and his mercy**

I have alluded to the decisive position of the OAN in the book of *Ezekiel*. It can be no accident that the OAN have been placed where they are in the narrative that describes the forthcoming destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the news of the city's fall. In Ezek. 24, the prophet is told by Yahweh that his wife, 'the delight of his eyes', shall be taken away from him (v. 16). When that happens, he is instructed not to mourn or weep, for in this way, and emphasised by the use of the recognition formula, Ezekiel is said to be a sign to the people (v. 24). When asked by the exiles what this means, Ezekiel explains that the temple has become the delight of the people's eyes and the pride of their power. Instead of the sign of Yahweh's presence directing the people to him, the *sign* has become their heart's desire (v. 21). So, Yahweh acts in wrathful judgement, announcing that he will destroy the temple. Their pride in the sign of Yahweh's presence

has made them oblivious to the presence of Yahweh himself—their pride has been their downfall. This motif heralds the all-embracing indictment of the nations in the OAN, that of *hybris*, and while judgement is directed to the nations (and Israel), I contend that *hybris* is the object of Yahweh's wrath.

However, it is not the relationship between the recognition formula and divine wrath that is problematic, it is the issue of divine mercy that is more contentious. Perhaps a hint pointing in the direction of reconciliation can be surmised from the passage immediately after the OAN. It is germane to note that Ezekiel's role as sentinel, which is repeated here from chapter 3, comes replete with a dire warning for failure: 'their blood I shall require at your hand' (Ezek. 3:18; 33:6). While foregrounding the cultic principle of talion,<sup>13</sup> this phrase also amplifies the immense responsibility the prophet has for the exiles. Such incentive is likely to have motivated the prophet to use every means at his disposal to ensure that he effectively conveys Yahweh's message to them. Ultimately, of course, the message of *Ezekiel* is one of hope in which restoration (Ezek. 33-39) and a new temple are anticipated (40-48). Indeed, within the OAN themselves, this possibility is highlighted (28:24-26). In the more immediate present *Ezekiel* emphasises that Yahweh's message is one of reconciliation in which he says: 'Turn then, and live' (18:23, 32; 33:11). However, with the exiles in Babylonia and the temple all but destroyed,<sup>14</sup> how can Ezekiel, who was also a priest (1:3), mediate the sacrifices of the exiles to expiate their guilt to allow for this reconciliation? Since *Ezekiel* upholds Yahweh as being faithful to the covenant, justice must surely prevail. The prophet emphasises the people's rebellion and chides them for it, likening it to the rebellion of the people in the

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<sup>13</sup> *Lex talionis* is the principle of an exact retribution as a maximum sentence, e.g. blood for blood.

<sup>14</sup> The book of *Ezekiel* is cast as being set in Babylonia. However, some scholars argue that Ezekiel conducted his ministry in Jerusalem and others that he divided his time between Jerusalem and Babylonia. But see further pp.16, 91.

wilderness years (Ezek. 20). During the book, *Ezekiel* makes use of this and other themes from the exodus traditions and develops them in its own rhetoric. For instance, the nation is reminded that it was Yahweh who chose them and promised to bring them out of the land of Egypt (20:5, 6). Before pursuing this train of thought, however, a word should be said about the relationship between *Ezekiel* and the exodus traditions as found in the Pentateuch.

Since the pioneering work of Wellhausen<sup>15</sup> and Graf before him,<sup>16</sup> scholars have considered the similarities between *Ezekiel* and P.<sup>17</sup> Discussion has tended to focus on determining the chronological priority of one over the other, though since the dating of P is disputed, the extent and direction of the relationship remains unsolved. And so, while this critical problem still exists, it will have to be left to one side in this study. Despite these problems, however, work analysing the dynamic association between *Ezekiel* and other biblical books has flourished. Fishbane's method of 'inner-biblical exegesis'<sup>18</sup> spearheaded this movement which has given rise to research into the way *Ezekiel* uses earlier biblical traditions.<sup>19</sup> These days, scholars speak of *Ezekiel* adapting the exodus or Deuteronomistic traditions to illustrate its message, rather than *Ezekiel* being influenced by the books of Exodus or Deuteronomy. Naturally this still assumes

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<sup>15</sup> Wellhausen 1885: 376-91.

<sup>16</sup> K. H. Graf 1866: 81-83.

<sup>17</sup> According to Wellhausen, four main sources can be distinguished in the Pentateuch: 1) the oldest Jahwist source (J) uses the name Yahweh for God; 2) the Elohist (E), thought to be younger than J, refers to God as 'Elohim' (which is Hebrew for 'God'); 3) Deuteronomy (D) refers to God as 'Yahweh your God'; 4) the Priestly source (P) contains rules about the priesthood and regulations for running the nation as a theocracy. Wellhausen's insight that P was the latest (post-exilic), not the earliest source (as had been previously thought) in the Pentateuch, had a profound effect on biblical studies (Barton 1996: 30).

<sup>18</sup> Fishbane 1985: 7.

<sup>19</sup> E.g. McKeating 1994; Cook 1995; Patton 1999; Kutsko 2000; Kohn 2002; Lyons 2009.

the author's familiarity with the traditions in some form,<sup>20</sup> and this project is working from that assumption.

Returning for a moment to the exodus traditions, an extended treatment of these themes can be found in Ezek. 20. The prophet emphasises Yahweh's merciful deliverance from Egypt and his benevolence in the face of Israel's apostasy (Ezek. 20:21, 22). It is said that Yahweh intends to restore Israel, but prior to that he will 'enter into judgement' with them in the wilderness of the peoples (20:35). So what is the nature of this judgement? One possibility could be that it simply refers to Israel's relocation in the wilderness of the peoples. Another is that something else happens during the exile. It is the contention here that it is in the OAN that this possibility may be perceived, clues for which may be found when a theological relationship between the judgement of the nations and Israel's restoration is discerned. Perhaps the OAN project overtones of implicit judgement on the exiles, and this is where the theological relationship is located. Yahweh's intention to 'enter into judgement' with Israel in the wilderness of the peoples does seem to point in that direction. But as likely as this may be,<sup>21</sup> how would Ezekiel reconcile his priestly cultic convictions with his prophetic mandate to ensure the safe return of the exiles to Yahweh? His theology would inform him that their sin must be atoned for. In the OAN, then, perhaps the possibility that the nations play a role in this is indicated by the following: 'I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he laboured, because they worked for me, says Yahweh' (Ezek. 29:20). A similar idea is found in Deutero-Isaiah: 'I give Egypt as your ransom....nations in exchange for your life' (Isa. 43:3-4). Perhaps then, for Ezekiel, judgement on the foreign nations functions as a rhetorical ruse (since the exiles were his primary audience and the nations probably did

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<sup>20</sup> Kohn 2002: 14.

<sup>21</sup> See Lee 2016: 7.

not hear the oracles), mercifully expressed in the recognition formula. If Ezekiel considered the essence of the *exiles'* sin to be *hybris*, rather than presenting *hybris* as the quintessential sin of the nations, perhaps the prophet casts the nations in the same light as the exiles as an illustration to show them (i.e. the exiles) the nature and extent of their *own* rebellion against Yahweh. Thus, the rhetorical removal of the nations as 'briars and thorns' (28:24) would accord rather well with a cultic theology of expiation. This might go some way to solving the enigma of the OANs' position at this point in the narrative, suggesting, as it does, that their purpose hinges on the implications of the destruction of the temple.

#### **1.1.4 Thesis 3: The recognition formula invites a human response**

Not only is the position of the OAN contingent on what comes before, but the material found immediately after the unit is also of considerable significance. By emphasising Yahweh's presence in the personal experience of his judgement and deliverance, his wrath and his mercy, the recognition formula invites the exiles (the formula is not found in the context of deliverance for the nations) to respond to Yahweh by acknowledging their shortcomings and returning to him. It seems that something about the phrase found straight after the OAN may have contributed to the placement of the unit: 'Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' (Ezek. 33:10). While it is recognised that the OAN interrupt the chronology of the narrative—many of the OAN presuppose the fall of Jerusalem which is only described at the end of the unit (33:21)—perhaps those responsible for the final editing of the book perceived a relationship, or sought to create the impression of one, between the OAN and the acknowledgement of the people's sin. There did not appear to be any hint of repentance before the OAN, but now the people seem contrite, although they are yet to be convinced that Yahweh's activity is just (33:17, 20). Notwithstanding this, the implicit judgement that seems inherent in the OAN appears to have succeeded

where direct punishment failed. Perhaps the carrot was more effective than the stick. Maybe the prospect of the removal of the nations (who were tarred with the same *hybristic* brush as Israel) was sufficient encouragement for the exiles to acknowledge their own shortcomings. Either way, Ezekiel would doubtless have appreciated that only once the impurity had been removed could the process of restoration and re-consecration begin. And restoration of the people to the land would vindicate Yahweh in the eyes of Israel and in the eyes of the nations. It will be my task in the rest of this study to justify these arguments.

## 1.2 *Ezekiel* research

### 1.2.1 General academic landscape

#### 1.2.1.1 Initial considerations

I begin the examination of the recognition formula in *Ezekiel* by first sketching the academic landscape of *Ezekiel* studies in general. This will include a special focus on four twentieth-century two-volume commentaries, frequent reference to which will be made in the exegetical chapters of this project. A consideration of academic output on the oracles against the nations will follow, and finally, scholarly enterprise on the recognition formula will be surveyed.

The overarching structure of the book<sup>22</sup> led scholars to view *Ezekiel* as ‘the logical development of a series of ideas in accordance with a well thought-out, and in part quite schematic, plan’.<sup>23</sup> Well into the twentieth century, commentators confidently attributed the whole book to a single author. Driver says: ‘No critical question arises in connection with the authorship of the book, the whole from beginning to end bearing unmistakably the stamp of a single mind’.<sup>24</sup> However, while the book was held by scholars to be written by the prophet Ezekiel, as early as 1841, Ewald suggested that an element of editorial work on the part of the author was evident, the book arising ‘out of several strata’.<sup>25</sup> A similar stance was taken by Herrmann at the turn of the century. He concluded that the book in general was by Ezekiel, but that additional and later editorial expansions could be discerned.<sup>26</sup> Some years later, Kraetzschmar maintained that there were two

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<sup>22</sup> Judgement on Israel (Ezek. 1-24), oracles against the nations (25-32), themes of restoration for Israel (33-48).

<sup>23</sup> Smend 1880: xxi.

<sup>24</sup> S. R. Driver 1956: 279.

<sup>25</sup> Ewald 1868: 207.

<sup>26</sup> J. Herrmann 1908 and 1924.

recensions of *Ezekiel*, the final form being the work of an editorial redactor.<sup>27</sup> However, this climate of sober critical analysis underwent a dramatic development with the work of Hölscher, who in 1924 radically challenged the integrity of the book.<sup>28</sup> Hölscher argued that Ezekiel was an ecstatic (spirit-filled) poetic writer whose utterances of doom could be distinguished from the work of later editors which included all the prophecies of restoration.<sup>29</sup> He suggested that only one-seventh of the book be attributed to the prophet, with the remainder being reworked by a Zadokite redactor of the fifth century.<sup>30</sup> Such literary excision transformed the landscape of *Ezekiel* scholarship, opening the way for others to contribute to critical research on *Ezekiel*. Among the theories that were proposed, Hertrich maintained that despite the book's claim that the prophet resided in Babylonia, Ezekiel's ministry had instead been conducted in Jerusalem.<sup>31</sup> This idea was developed by others who postulated that Ezekiel travelled between the two locations.<sup>32</sup> As well as geographical uncertainty, questions were raised concerning the specific historical period for *Ezekiel's* activity. Most notable in this regard was the hypothesis of Torrey in 1930. He boldly contended that the book of *Ezekiel* was in fact a pseudo-epigraph without real historical roots, a literary creation written in the Hellenistic period (c. 230 BCE).<sup>33</sup> While there was by no means a general acceptance of these views, such was the upheaval which Hölscher's work generated, that ten years after his theory was promulgated, Cooke was inspired to characterise the development

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<sup>27</sup> Kraetzschmar (1900) discerned one recension written in the first person and the other in the third person.

<sup>28</sup> Hölscher 1924.

<sup>29</sup> Hölscher 1924: 39.

<sup>30</sup> Zimmerli (1979: 5) notes that, of the book's 1,273 verses, Hölscher accepted 144 as genuine. Similarly, fifty years later Garscha (1974) attributed about 30 verses of the book to the prophet.

<sup>31</sup> Hertrich 1932.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Pfeiffer 1948.

<sup>33</sup> Torrey 1930.

as 'a revolution'.<sup>34</sup> Cooke's own major commentary, however, adopted a more conservative approach, affirming the traditional views of *Ezekiel's* prophetic activity. However, *Ezekiel* scholarship took another step forward in the 1950s. Howie argued for a solely Babylonian ministry,<sup>35</sup> and Fohrer refuted all arguments in favour of a late date and Palestinian ministry of the prophet.<sup>36</sup> Rowley also concluded that the ministry of Ezekiel took place exclusively in Babylonia immediately before and after the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup>

### 1.2.1.2 Walther Zimmerli

However, it was Zimmerli's monumental study, published in German in the 1960s, that inaugurated a new phase in the study of the book of *Ezekiel*.<sup>38</sup> Zimmerli applied a rigorous form-critical approach and traditio-historical analysis to the text. By this method Zimmerli was able to show the book's dependence on Hebrew tradition.<sup>39</sup> He also attempted to reconstruct an original Hebrew text free from scribal error and later

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<sup>34</sup> Cooke 1936: v.

<sup>35</sup> Howie (1950: 100) realised that *Ezekiel* did not need to 'set his face' (e.g. Ezek. 21:7 [2]) directly to those whom he was addressing, thus obviating the need for him to be present in Jerusalem, and he cautiously affirmed the substantial accuracy of the more traditional view regarding authorship.

<sup>36</sup> Fohrer (1952: 204-5) notes that, as with the OAN, oral proclamation does not require the addressee to be present. Ezekiel did not preach directly to Ammon, Moab and so on. Thus, his location cannot be surmised from the people he addressed. Fohrer held that the majority of the book is authentic and that editing has not changed its character. Moreover, he believed that much of the editing work was completed by Ezekiel. Following Howie and Fohrer, May (1956: 45) proposed that the writer of the book is both its author and editor.

<sup>37</sup> Rowley 1963: 210, reproduced from Rowley 1953-54. Rowley (1963: 187) insisted that the amount of secondary editorial additions in the book of *Ezekiel* ought not to be exaggerated and, even where there appears to be evidence of a later hand, the thrust of the writing is in a similar vein to that of the prophet himself.

<sup>38</sup> Subsequently translated into English as Zimmerli 1979; Zimmerli 1983.

<sup>39</sup> I.e., parallels with Lev. 17-26—known as the Holiness Code (H)—and the exodus traditions, as well as the historical and call narratives of other prophets.

additions. To do this, he frequently resorted to the ancient versions, in particular the Greek Septuagint (LXX).<sup>40</sup> Of all his contributions, perhaps the most important is Zimmerli's argument for an Ezekiel 'school'.<sup>41</sup> According to Zimmerli's theory, this 'school' developed an original kernel of material and although he suggests that much of the later editorial work may be by the prophet himself, it is this 'school' that accounts for the book's complex literary issues which materialised as the text developed into its final form.

### **1.2.1.3 Moshe Greenberg**

In 1983, the year that Zimmerli's commentary was published in English, the first volume of Greenberg's commentary appeared. However, whereas Zimmerli deconstructed the Hebrew text in order to make sense of it, Greenberg's 'holistic' approach resolutely remains with the Hebrew text (MT) and unlike Zimmerli, Greenberg avoids LXX. Even so, Greenberg discovers a 'consistent trend of thought expressed in a distinctive style'.<sup>42</sup> Greenberg detects this similarity between primary and allegedly secondary material that articulates 'a coherent world of vision...contemporary with the sixth-century prophet and decisively shaped by him, if not the very words of Ezekiel himself'.<sup>43</sup>

### **1.2.1.4 Leslie Allen**

In the decade that followed, two more two-volume commentaries on *Ezekiel* were published. First, Allen's contribution appeared in the first half of the 1990s.<sup>44</sup> Allen contends that while the book of *Ezekiel* 'shows evidence of much editorial activity,

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<sup>40</sup> Wevers (1982) also relied heavily on LXX.

<sup>41</sup> Childs 1979: 359.

<sup>42</sup> Greenberg 1983: 26.

<sup>43</sup> Greenberg 1983: 27.

<sup>44</sup> Allen 1990; Allen 1994. Volume 1 of this work replaces the posthumously published commentary by Brownlee (1986).

undertaken by Ezekiel and his successors, in terms of both arranging oracles and supplementing them to speak to later concerns of the exiles', 'the literary work of the prophet provides the substance' of the book.<sup>45</sup>

#### **1.2.1.5 Daniel Block**

The second two-volume work is written by Block.<sup>46</sup> Like Allen, Block takes a stance midway between the methods of Zimmerli and Greenberg. He attempts to balance a respect for the final form of the text and a standard critical approach to the book. Block, who is happy to cite Zimmerli in many places, follows Greenberg (who is equally happy to cite Zimmerli) in determining the text as being well-planned and unified.

### **1.2.2 Context and authorship**

#### **1.2.2.1 Date**

In the light of the foregoing overview, a brief consideration of the context and authorship of *Ezekiel* is in order. As I have noted, the broad context of Ezekiel's ministry is one that attempts to articulate a response to the theological crisis that the exile and fall of Jerusalem precipitated. As Joyce says, these events 'are the essential key to understanding Ezekiel and his tradition'.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the text, which speaks of Ezekiel beginning his ministry in 593 BCE, indicates an historical setting that supports this view.<sup>48</sup> Thus, holding to the early sixth century as an approximate date for Ezekiel's prophetic activity accords well with the context of exile. Moreover, theological links with

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<sup>45</sup> Allen 1994: xxvi.

<sup>46</sup> Block 1997 and 1998.

<sup>47</sup> Joyce 1989: 17.

<sup>48</sup> '...the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin (Ezek. 1:2), i.e. 593 BCE according to Parker and Dubberstein (1956: 27) whose scheme is followed in this thesis. There are 13 date notices or 'chronological statements' in *Ezekiel* that point to a setting in the 6th century. Mayfield (2010) argues that these provide a framework for the narrative.

other biblical books are suggestive of a date in the late sixth century.<sup>49</sup> Added to that, scholars consider the language of *Ezekiel* to reflect a transitional phase that took place in the late sixth century between classical and late Hebrew.<sup>50</sup> These factors have contributed to the majority view,<sup>51</sup> which is followed here, that places Ezekiel's activity in the sixth century.

### 1.2.2.2 Location

As for the location of Ezekiel's ministry, the text presents the prophet as one of the deportees from Jerusalem in 597 BCE, who was in Babylonia when news of the fall of Jerusalem arrived (Ezek. 33:21). The book does not indicate that the prophet preached elsewhere, and other than the visions (Ezek. 8:3; 40:2), he is presented as being in Babylonia throughout the book. Accordingly, most commentators believe the prophet's activity took place solely in Babylonia and this seems likely to be the case. However, there are two passages that have led some to question this majority view. The first is Ezek. 8, which speaks of Ezekiel being in Jerusalem (v. 3). But since this description is part of a vision, there is no need to assume that Ezekiel was physically present in Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> The second is Ezek. 12, which describes the prophetic sign-act that Ezekiel performed to illustrate the impending judgement on the prince in Jerusalem and those who remained there (v. 10). However, this, like the oracles against foreign nations, is an illustration for the exiles in Babylonia.<sup>53</sup> In the same way that it is unnecessary to insist that Ezekiel delivered the oracle against Ammon whilst actually being present in the country of Ammon, so in these instances, there is no compelling reason to insist that

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<sup>49</sup> E.g. Deut. 30; Jer. 31.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Hurvitz 1982; Rooker 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Those in favour of dating Ezekiel's ministry in the sixth century include Greenberg 1983: 13-15; Joyce 2007: 4, while those against include Torrey 1970; J. Smith 1931.

<sup>52</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 235; cf. Greenberg 1983: 15-17.

<sup>53</sup> Joyce 1989: 19.

Ezekiel be present in Jerusalem.<sup>54</sup> And so, the view held here is in line with the majority of scholars who consider the ministry of Ezekiel to have taken place solely in Babylonia.

### 1.2.2.3 Authorship

In addressing the question of authorship, Joyce identifies seven criteria by which the authorship of *Ezekiel* may be judged.<sup>55</sup> The distinction between poetry and prose is the first criterion and one that Hölscher adopted. Hölscher considered all the prose material in *Ezekiel* to be the work of later redactors. However, while there may be some prose passages that can be identified as being secondary,<sup>56</sup> most of the prose writing in *Ezekiel* does not contrast overtly in style with that of the poetry. Indeed, Cooke believes them to have a common source.<sup>57</sup>

A characteristic feature of *Ezekiel* is repetition, and this is considered a second criterion for assessing authorship of the book.<sup>58</sup> These repetitions have been the target of secondary addition suggestions by some commentators,<sup>59</sup> while others view them as being a trademark of the prophet himself.<sup>60</sup>

The third criterion that scholars look to when attempting to establish authorship is textual criticism. The Masoretic text (MT) as found in the standard critical edition of the Hebrew Bible, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)*,<sup>61</sup> was finalised between the fifth and eighth

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<sup>54</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 269.

<sup>55</sup> Joyce 2007: 8; cf. Joyce 1989: 22.

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Ezek. 27:12-25 which may have been adapted from a trading list.

<sup>57</sup> Cooke 1936: xxvi.

<sup>58</sup> Repetition includes formulas such as the messenger formula 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh' (e.g. Ezek. 7:2), and the recognition formula 'so that they shall know that I am Yahweh' (e.g. Ezek. 6:14).

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Pfeiffer 1948; May 1956; Wevers 1982.

<sup>60</sup> E.g. Carley 1975: 54; Boadt 1978: 489-90.

<sup>61</sup> *BHS* 1983.

centuries CE; however, the oldest surviving edition is the Leningrad Codex of 1008 CE. The text is full of textual problems which some scholars seek to resolve by recourse to the versions, most notably the Greek text as found in LXX. This translation from the Hebrew was probably done in the early second century BCE.<sup>62</sup> However, it is much shorter than MT and in places seems to be based on a different Hebrew text, although these differences may be the result of errors or deliberate changes made by the translators. However, despite the age discrepancy, this does not mean that the Greek text should be prioritised over the Hebrew text since both are indebted to an older, no longer extant Hebrew text (*Vorlage*).<sup>63</sup> Even so, scholars frequently emend MT on the basis of LXX.<sup>64</sup> Others, by contrast, defend MT in nearly all cases.<sup>65</sup> More recently, though, textual criticism has attempted to recognise the integrity of both texts and their distinct histories as opposed to creating a hybrid text that in all likelihood never existed.<sup>66</sup>

Another criterion of authorship considers the language in *Ezekiel* that bears a resemblance to that found in priestly case law.<sup>67</sup> A number of commentators view this material as being secondary;<sup>68</sup> however, as Ezekiel is said to be a priest (Ezek. 1:3), and the heavily cultic and priestly bias of the book is well documented,<sup>69</sup> it does not seem unreasonable to ascribe at least some of the priestly features of the book to him.<sup>70</sup> As well as priestly language, *Ezekiel* contains a certain number of deuteronomistic

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<sup>62</sup> Joyce 2007: 45.

<sup>63</sup> Joyce 2007: 46.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Wevers 1982; Lust 1986.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. Greenberg 1983 and 1997; Boadt 1978.

<sup>66</sup> Joyce 2007: 46.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. Ezek. 3:17-21; 14:1-20; 18:1-20; 22:1-16; 33:1-20.

<sup>68</sup> Hölscher 1924; May 1956; Garscha 1974.

<sup>69</sup> Rooke 2000: 105.

<sup>70</sup> Joyce 2007: 10; Reventlow 1962b.

elements, and these account for another criterion of authorship.<sup>71</sup> Some commentators maintain that this represents secondary material and attribute it to a deuteronomistic school;<sup>72</sup> others, however, recognise these affinities to be the work of the prophet.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, in the same way that there is no reason to deny Ezekiel parts of the book that exhibit Babylonian influence,<sup>74</sup> so there is no reason to deny the possibility that Ezekiel was influenced by deuteronomistic style and theology.<sup>75</sup>

Grammar and motif have been cited as another criterion of authorship. Two examples will suit my purpose. Because the king of Babylon is portrayed as an eagle *and* as an east wind within the space of a few verses (Ezek. 17:3, 10), it has been suggested that this inconsistency is sufficient grounds for denying authorship to the prophet.<sup>76</sup> Inconsistency in person has also been regarded as indicative of secondary accretion.<sup>77</sup> However, since much of the book is written in metaphorical narrative and poetic style, a freer rein in terms of precise uniformity is to be recommended.<sup>78</sup>

The final criterion of authorship is that of theological content. Again, it is consistency or otherwise that has given commentators cause for concern. For instance, passages where themes of judgement and deliverance are found in close proximity<sup>79</sup> are areas which scholars have argued point to secondary hands. Once again, there is a lack of

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<sup>71</sup> E.g. Ezek. 6:13; 36:28.

<sup>72</sup> E.g., S. Herrmann 1965: 241.

<sup>73</sup> E.g. Zimmerli 1979: 46; Kohn 2002.

<sup>74</sup> For discussion on possible Babylonian influence in *Ezekiel*, see e.g. Garfinkel 1983; Bodi 1991.

<sup>75</sup> Joyce 2007: 10.

<sup>76</sup> Wevers 1982: 33-34.

<sup>77</sup> Wevers 1982: 31-32.

<sup>78</sup> Joyce 2007: 11.

<sup>79</sup> E.g. Ezek. 11:14-21; 16:59-63.

scholarly consensus. Whereas some deem all the hopeful material to be secondary,<sup>80</sup> others contend that the promise of deliverance is characteristic of *Ezekiel's* theology.<sup>81</sup>

### 1.2.3 Conclusion

These criteria show the need to exercise caution when attempting to distinguish between primary and secondary material in *Ezekiel*, but they also show that, even where there are indications of a later hand, the style and theology are remarkably similar. As Joyce observes, 'there is much evidence to suggest a tenacious continuity of tradition, with regard both to content and to style'.<sup>82</sup> So while it is important to at least attempt to identify primary and secondary material in *Ezekiel*, the results will not be assured, and despite the rich history of the book, much of it may well reflect the work of the prophet. And so, in drawing this brief sketch of the general academic landscape and context of *Ezekiel* to a close, it is time to indicate that the view adopted here is that the prophet Ezekiel conducted his ministry in Babylonia at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (587 BCE) and that the book that bears his name was completed in the sixth century, and is 'profoundly influenced, both in content and in style, by Ezekiel himself'.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> E.g. S. Herrmann 1965: 290.

<sup>81</sup> E.g. Raitt 1977: 108-10.

<sup>82</sup> Joyce 2007: 13.

<sup>83</sup> Clements 1986; Joyce 2007: 16. Cf. Boadt (1986: 199), who contends that *Ezekiel* was a genius whose prophetic vision and programme of restoration has been retained in the considerable redaction that has taken place.

## 1.3 Oracles against the nations

### 1.3.1 Initial considerations

As we have seen, in terms of structure and content, commentators have perceived a unity of authorship that points to a singular plan in the book of *Ezekiel*. But where does the 'extraneous literary block'<sup>84</sup>—the OAN—fit into that plan? I have already alluded to some of the difficulties in determining the purpose of the OAN. One such problem is that despite all the major prophets containing oracles against foreign nations,<sup>85</sup> commentators often treat them 'as appendages to the main work of the prophet'.<sup>86</sup> Research on the OAN has simply been neglected in favour of work on other areas of prophetic literature.<sup>87</sup> Boadt observes that rarely does a commentator integrate the OAN into a summary of the prophet's theology. One of the reasons that scholarship stayed clear of the OAN was because they were thought to be post-exilic and inauthentic.<sup>88</sup> However, the pioneering form-critical work of Gunkel<sup>89</sup> and Gressman<sup>90</sup> redressed this situation by showing that the OAN were one of the earliest, not latest, forms of prophecy. The early dating prompted re-evaluation of the OANs' authenticity, with some scholars maintaining the majority can be attributed to the prophet.<sup>91</sup> Despite this development, it has been observed that scholars 'seem to be embarrassed by these oracles, perhaps because of their violent language, or because they dilute the focus of judgement directed against Israel itself'.<sup>92</sup> However, since fifteen percent of the book of *Ezekiel* is devoted

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<sup>84</sup> Hayes 1968: 81.

<sup>85</sup> Amos 1-2; Isa. 13-23; Jer. 46-52. In fact, apart from Hosea, all the prophetic books in the HB contain oracles against foreign nations.

<sup>86</sup> Boadt 1986: 196.

<sup>87</sup> Sweeney 2015: xvii.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. Mowinckel (1914) excluded the OAN from his commentary on Jeremiah.

<sup>89</sup> Muilenburg (1969: 1) writes that Gunkel was form-criticism's 'pioneer and spiritual progenitor'.

<sup>90</sup> Gressmann 1905.

<sup>91</sup> E.g. Greenberg 1983; Boadt 1986.

<sup>92</sup> Boadt 1986: 196.

to oracles against foreign nations, it is important to come to grips with this unit if an overall understanding of the book is to be attained.<sup>93</sup>

I have raised the possibility that the OAN might be conceived of as a theological bridge between the oracles of judgement against Israel and those of restoration for the nation. Zimmerli believes that the OAN were inserted into a pre-existing narrative that is disturbed between 24:25-27 and 33:12-13.<sup>94</sup> Part of the present task is to shed light on why they were inserted at this point. To that end, it will be helpful to briefly discuss the possible original settings of oracles against the nations that have been identified by scholars.

### **1.3.2 Military setting**

A number of scholars contend that the original setting of OAN is to be found in a military context. Hayes argues that 'the use of oracles and curses against the enemy during military undertakings in other Near Eastern cultures' constitutes the background to oracles against the nations.<sup>95</sup> Gowan also examines the use of oracles in warfare in the ANE,<sup>96</sup> claiming that they originate in the context of holy war,<sup>97</sup> and so, with this in mind, he explores the role of prophets in holy wars of ancient Israel.<sup>98</sup> However, Margulis finds the origin of OAN in other biblical texts. Margulis maintains that pre-classical prophecy is responsible for the literary heritage of OAN.<sup>99</sup> Thus, he discusses OAN with reference

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<sup>93</sup> Raabe 2010: 187; cf. Boadt 1986: 196.

<sup>94</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 72.

<sup>95</sup> Hayes 1968: 84. The usage of oracles in the denunciation of enemies is found in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, the Balaam narratives (Num. 22-24) portray the prophet issuing curses to weaken his enemy and so aid victory over them (see also 1 Kings 20:13-30; Isa. 7:5-7).

<sup>96</sup> Gowan 1964: 6-14.

<sup>97</sup> Gowan 1964: 5.

<sup>98</sup> Gowan 1964: 14-22.

<sup>99</sup> Margulis 1967: 368.

to the Mošlim song, an ancient war poem found in Numbers 21:27-30.<sup>100</sup> Margulis finds parallels between this and other war related themes (fire, captivity, exile)<sup>101</sup> that link Numbers 21 to OAN. This enables him to draw the conclusion that the main concern in the OAN tradition is with Israel's enemies,<sup>102</sup> and that their origin is to be found in the war-taunt literature or Mošlim tradition.<sup>103</sup> Christensen also propounds a war oracle hypothesis by looking at forms of prophetic speech such as summons to battle, battle curses and victory songs that constitute the war oracle in Israel.<sup>104</sup> The presence of oracles against an enemy within the context of warfare in other Near Eastern countries suggests that they were a common part of Israelite warfare as well. They probably first consisted of incantations hurled at an opponent to put them under a curse, such as those found in the Balaam narratives.<sup>105</sup>

### 1.3.3 Cultic setting

While some scholars contend that the original setting of OAN is to be found in a military context, others propose a cultic setting. Mowinckel advocates the New Year festival as a possible background for the OAN. During the festival, says Mowinckel, Yahweh's sovereignty is celebrated and judgement is pronounced against the nations as potentially hostile entities.<sup>106</sup> Bentzen developed Mowinckel's idea, arguing that the geographical pattern of the oracles in Amos is similar in form to the Egyptian execration

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<sup>100</sup> The word Mošlim is derived from המשלים 'the singers', 'reciters of proverbs' (Num. 21:27; cf. Ezek. 17:2-12).

<sup>101</sup> Margulis 1967: 80.

<sup>102</sup> Margulis 1967: 367.

<sup>103</sup> Margulis 1967: 368.

<sup>104</sup> Christensen 1975.

<sup>105</sup> Hayes 1964: 293.

<sup>106</sup> Mowinckel 1962: Vol. 1, p. 154; cf. Chae 2015: 164.

texts which call down curses on Pharaoh's enemies in a fixed geographical order.<sup>107</sup> While some disagreed,<sup>108</sup> others followed Bentzen's theory.<sup>109</sup>

The possibility that oracles of this kind were used in an enthronement ceremony has led scholars to explore this royal emphasis as a potential background to the OAN.<sup>110</sup> Others have been drawn to the cultic context of lament as expressed in 'the national psalms of lament'.<sup>111</sup> However, as it cannot be established with any degree of certainty that the OAN originated in the context of battle and the holy war, or in the royal court, or in the cult, Clements concludes that 'we must regard these prophecies as a distinctive genre of their own which drew from many aspects of Israel's life'.<sup>112</sup> Consequently, encountering them in the prophetic literature should come as no surprise.<sup>113</sup> Even so, since 'oracles against the enemies served not only as a means of venting hostility, but also placed the enemy under the curse and aided in the accomplishment of victory',<sup>114</sup> it is unsurprising that the OAN were regarded as being nationalistic propaganda.<sup>115</sup> The regrettable corollary of this, however, is that scholars have hesitated to attach theological value to the genre.

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<sup>107</sup> Bentzen 1950: 85-99.

<sup>108</sup> Weiss 1969; Wolff 1977: 145-7.

<sup>109</sup> Fohrer 1966: 40-2; Reventlow 1962a: 111. Also, Hayes and Christensen (see above).

<sup>110</sup> E.g. Crouch 2011.

<sup>111</sup> Hayes 1968: 87. The anguish of Israel is frequently portrayed in the Psalms as being the consequence of the activity of the nations (e.g. Psalm 44:9-19; 83:1-8).

<sup>112</sup> Clements 1975: 72.

<sup>113</sup> Hayes 1968: 92.

<sup>114</sup> Hayes 1964: 92.

<sup>115</sup> Chae 2015: 159.

## 1.4 Function of the OAN in *Ezekiel*

### 1.4.1 Diachronic studies

In determining the function of the OAN, scholars have adopted several different methods. Broadly speaking they can be categorised as diachronic and synchronic approaches, although many commentators who pursue synchronic research include an element of diachronic analysis in their work. Indeed, elements of both practices are evident in this study.

A variety of diachronic approaches have been attempted. For instance, Van Dijk attempts a fresh translation of the Hebrew text of the oracles against Tyre (Ezek. 26:1-28:19). Van Dijk notes that previous research which endeavoured to unravel the 'manifold obscurities and problems' of MT have either emended it on the basis of the versions, especially LXX, or resorted to a literary approach, in which portions of the text have been excised to meet poetic and metrical agendas.<sup>116</sup> Rather than discussing form-critical, traditio-historical, exegetical or theological concerns, Van Dijk provides a philological and syntactical commentary, an exercise in which he finds linguistic parallels with Ugaritic and other Northwest Semitic dialects.

A different approach can be found in the work of Strong.<sup>117</sup> He uses an historical-critical method in his investigation, highlighting two main themes in *Ezekiel*. Firstly, says Strong, the exile is but 'one step on the journey to the Promised Land'.<sup>118</sup> The second main

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<sup>116</sup> Van Dijk 1968: vii.

<sup>117</sup> Strong has focused his scholarly endeavour on the book of *Ezekiel*. Since completing his thesis in 1993, his works include: Strong 1995; Strong 1997; Odell and Strong 2000; Strong 2010; Strong 2015.

<sup>118</sup> Strong 1993: 4-5.

theme that Strong explores is the idea that Yahweh is the 'Great King over the house of Israel'.<sup>119</sup>

Another historical study is Corral's monograph, in which he attempts to provide a convincing explanation for Tyre's condemnation in *Ezekiel* (26:1-28:19).<sup>120</sup> Rather than taking into account dubious historical details that the text does not supply, Corral looks to archaeological evidence that points to economic and political factors. The foundation for his discussion rests on the creative translation of דלתות העמים (Ezek. 26:2), which he renders 'the peoples' ports' as opposed to 'gateway of the peoples'. Corral acknowledges that this is 'unconventional' but asserts its use in a 'technical way to designate the ports of the Mediterranean area'.<sup>121</sup> Homing in on Judah's lack of metal resources and its consequences,<sup>122</sup> Corral examines Tyre's extended commercial influence,<sup>123</sup> concluding that 'economic motivations' are very much to the fore in these oracles.<sup>124</sup> He also perceives a 'clear link' between Tyre's economic activities and its Canaanite religion under the patronage of Melkart, observing that for Ezekiel, this would have constituted another good reason to reject all Tyrian activity.<sup>125</sup>

Despite these valiant attempts, the view of Boadt exemplifies those who prefer to explore *Ezekiel* in its finished form. He observes: 'The tension between describing the book in its actual finished style and the (unconscious) form-critical process of searching

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<sup>119</sup> Strong 1993: 5.

<sup>120</sup> Corral 2002.

<sup>121</sup> Corral 2002: 143-44.

<sup>122</sup> Corral 2002: 98-114.

<sup>123</sup> Corral (2002: 115-37) pays particular attention to Tyre's trade in horses, purple dye obtained from the *murex* marine snail and the slave trade.

<sup>124</sup> Corral 2002: 161.

<sup>125</sup> Corral 2002: 175.

to find an original text that conforms to ideas of modern descriptive prose style, leaves many questions still to be addressed.<sup>126</sup>

#### 1.4.2 Synchronic studies

Boadt's monograph, a revised doctoral dissertation, examines *Ezekiel's* oracles against Egypt.<sup>127</sup> He acknowledges Zimmerli's then recent treatment of the subject, but observes that stylistic analysis of the text can only be made when the final form is taken seriously. Like Van Dijk, Boadt resorts to the comparative philological techniques in the manner of Dahood. However, unlike Van Dijk, Boadt makes recourse to form-critical methods in order to delineate the units he examines, although this work is subordinate to his main discussion of the style and structure of the oracles. His comments are seasoned with references to other comparative literature as he analyses the text's symbolic, mythic and religious aspects. Boadt makes use of LXX and the versions when encountering particularly difficult textual problems and concludes that *Ezekiel's* main theological concern is 'towards acknowledgement of Yahweh's pre-eminence as God and rejection of foreign idols'.<sup>128</sup>

As well as philological work, the OAN have attracted other literary studies. For instance, Geyer's monograph, which is not exclusively devoted to *Ezekiel*, considers three major mythological passages in oracles against foreign nations. These describe a tyrant guilty of *hybris* (Isa. 14:4-23), a cosmic ship (Ezek. 27), and a cosmic tree (Ezek. 31). Geyer believes this mythology was employed to convey a worldview as a means for dealing with the foreign nations. The oracles are also characterised by the approaching Day of Yahweh, when injustices will be rectified. Thus, they seem to function in a way that

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<sup>126</sup> Boadt 1986: 184-5.

<sup>127</sup> Boadt 1980.

<sup>128</sup> Boadt 1980: 169.

attempts to provide a bridge between current existence on earth, and a cosmic dimension in which Yahweh's will becomes a reality. The OAN also include elements of lament which when combined with only vague historical features, indicates to Geyer an application in the cult. For Geyer, the cult also provides an interpretative context for these oracles: 'the OAN belong to the sphere of worship making a theological (mythological) statement not a political one'.<sup>129</sup>

A theological statement is certainly to the fore in Wilson's essay. Informed by Pope's argument that the EI myths found in the Ugaritic texts form the background to the Tyrian oracles,<sup>130</sup> Wilson observes that this does not explain their function. Based on his comparison of Ezek. 28:13 LXX, which lists the same jewels found on the priestly breastplate described in Exod. 28:17-20 (MT mentions nine of the twelve), Wilson concludes that 'the purpose of the list must be to identify the figure in the garden as the Israelite high priest'.<sup>131</sup> He further suggests that the garden and mountain of God are synonymous with the temple in which the high priest functioned.<sup>132</sup> These observations allow Wilson to read the oracle in an Israelite context which accords with *Ezekiel's* writing about the priesthood elsewhere in the book (e.g. Ezek. 22:26; cf. 44:23). Wilson refers to this as an oblique oracle,<sup>133</sup> the thrust of which 'could not possibly have been missed by Ezekiel's audience'.<sup>134</sup> He contends that this accounts for its position within

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<sup>129</sup> Geyer 2004: 179.

<sup>130</sup> Pope 1955.

<sup>131</sup> Wilson 1987: 214.

<sup>132</sup> Wilson 1987: 215.

<sup>133</sup> Wilson (1987: 218) indicates that Ezek. 16, 20, 23 are chapters that contain oblique oracles of a similar kind.

<sup>134</sup> Wilson 1987: 217.

the OAN.<sup>135</sup> Other commentators, however, have considered the figure in Ezek. 28 as a primal man or angelic being.<sup>136</sup>

This interpretative variation is well documented in Patmore's treatment of Ezek. 28:11-19. Patmore considers the oracle's interpretation in late antiquity, showing how different translations concerning the identity of the central being of the lament have refigured the character in different communities and in different periods. In his work, Patmore looks to Rabbinic interpretation, which identifies the being as 'Adam' or 'Hiram',<sup>137</sup> while his discussion of the Church Fathers shows the character to be 'Satan'.<sup>138</sup> According to Patmore, the Targum, which 'diverges dramatically' from the Hebrew text,<sup>139</sup> is 'transformed into a political warning that "pride goeth before destruction"'.<sup>140</sup> Patmore also examines LXX where, it seems, the figure is thought to be the High Priest.<sup>141</sup> However, MT, says Patmore, identifies the figure as being the cherub, although the consonantal text presents the possibility that the being is *not* the cherub but was created as a divine being who, on becoming corrupt, was expelled from the mountain garden *by* the guardian cherub.<sup>142</sup> Patmore concludes that even if these interpreters had been working from the same text, 'a diversity of interpretations' would exist depending on where the emphasis of the text was thought to lie.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Wilson 1987: 218.

<sup>136</sup> E.g. Newsom 1987; Barr 1992.

<sup>137</sup> Patmore 2012: 35, 36.

<sup>138</sup> Patmore 2012: 72.

<sup>139</sup> Patmore 2012: 126.

<sup>140</sup> Patmore 2012: 127.

<sup>141</sup> Patmore 2012: 178.

<sup>142</sup> Patmore 2012: 207.

<sup>143</sup> Patmore 2012: 216.

As well as a diversity of interpretation, these texts have inspired divergent methodological approaches. Newsom's work is a prime example. Observing that Ezekiel 'entrusts a particularly large part of his argument to metaphorical language',<sup>144</sup> she discusses the Tyrian oracles with this in view. Explaining how metaphor works, she refers to Prudential Life's logo that depicts the rock of Gibraltar and their slogan 'Get a piece of the rock'. This metaphor, says Newsom, associates the company with enduring strength and dependability. This example is then applied as an illustration to Tyre, highlighting that Tyre is a place that is situated on a rock and whose name 'Tyre' means 'rock' in Hebrew.<sup>145</sup> While it should be noted that Newsom does not contend that Ezekiel had anything to do with naming the place Tyre, she does observe that 'Ezekiel both creates and criticises metaphors that purport to give insight into the relationship between the power possessed by human nations and the sovereignty of Yahweh'.<sup>146</sup>

Metaphorical narratives are the topic of Ellen Davis' essay which explores *Ezekiel's* oracles against Tyre and Egypt as 'evidencing a confrontation between two kinds of religious discourse': 'mythical' and metaphorical'.<sup>147</sup> Davis contends that these differ in their assessment of the relationship between human experience and the divine realm, as well as human perception of these realities and language used to approach them. This, she believes, is particularly useful with respect to Ezekiel because of his self-conscious and impressive use of verbal images as a 'maker of metaphors' (Ezek. 21:5 [20:49]).<sup>148</sup> Davis argues that *Ezekiel's* use of metaphor fulfils the second commandment prohibiting the use of images. Thus, this represents 'a distinctly theological move' that

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<sup>144</sup> Newsom 1987: 188.

<sup>145</sup> Newsom 1987: 192. See further Ezek. 26:1-6 translation and exegesis.

<sup>146</sup> Newsom 1987: 190.

<sup>147</sup> Davis 1999: 225. For another treatment of the metaphorical narratives in *Ezekiel*, see Durlleser 2006.

<sup>148</sup> Davis 1999: 225.

goes beyond being an 'effective way of engaging his audience in the task of interpreting both current events and tradition'.<sup>149</sup> Her essay emphasises (and as such, is an extension of her previous work)<sup>150</sup> that the structure of the book reflects the design of Ezekiel himself. This enabled him, so her argument goes, 'to produce a more thorough ideological critique than had previously been possible'.<sup>151</sup> Says Davis: 'Ezekiel opposes mythic claims with a more truthful form of religious speech, namely metaphor. Metaphor is more truthful because it is more modest'.<sup>152</sup>

If Davis' argument is sound, and the rhetorical purpose of *Ezekiel's* deployment of metaphor is the pursuit of truth, then we might ask, what exactly is truth according to *Ezekiel*? Raabe's discussion points us in the right direction. Noting that the OAN were addressed to the exiles in Babylonia, Raabe identifies two rhetorical purposes to these oracles. First, the announcement of impending judgement for the nations acted as a warning for the exiles, and second, it gave the exiles hope for their future.<sup>153</sup> Raabe suggests that the OAN were preserved, including those that appeared not to have been fulfilled or which contradicted themselves,<sup>154</sup> because they were meant to be considered in a typological way.<sup>155</sup> Raabe highlights the function of the location of the OAN in the book, the 'bridge', as being not only a response to the gloating of the nations at Israel's plight following their own experience of divine judgement, but also a preparation for the restoration of Israel to the land, before which the thorns and briars must be removed

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<sup>149</sup> Davis 1999: 226. For another related discussion, see Bidlack 2000.

<sup>150</sup> Davis 1989.

<sup>151</sup> Davis 1999: 228.

<sup>152</sup> Davis 1999: 233.

<sup>153</sup> Raabe 2010: 204.

<sup>154</sup> E.g., in Ezek. 26:7, Ezekiel announces that Babylon will bring down Tyre, yet in 29:17-21, he proclaims that Babylon will conquer Egypt instead of Tyre.

<sup>155</sup> Raabe 2010: 204.

(28:24-26).<sup>156</sup> However, whereas Raabe observes an element of judgement for the nations that acted as a warning for the exiles, Chae contends that the entire unit of OAN in *Ezekiel* functions as salvation oracles.<sup>157</sup> Either way, it appears that the OAN play a pivotal role in the transition from judgement to restoration. At this point, though, we are no closer to determining how the bridge works. Several suggestions have been proposed.

### 1.4.3 Theological function

#### 1.4.3.1 Hope

Chae's argument for reading the entire unit as salvation oracles is perhaps the fullest development of the idea that providing hope for the exiles is the purpose of the OAN. But while not everyone agrees that the entire unit expresses hope, some see the notion of implicit hope in Ezek. 25, believing that 'its role is to bring reassurance to the Judeans, in a roundabout way'.<sup>158</sup> For Eichrodt, though, it is the three-fold structure that reflects 'the history of salvation' in the final shape of the book.<sup>159</sup> In a similar vein, Block observes that 'the words of hope inserted in Ezek. 28:24-26 function as a fulcrum, dividing *Ezekiel's* oracles against foreign nations into two sensitively balanced halves, virtually identical in length'.<sup>160</sup> This leads him to assert that while the OAN are an extended unit of judgement against the nations, they also function as a 'backhanded message of hope' for Israel.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Raabe 2010: 206.

<sup>157</sup> Chae 2015: 165; cf. Westermann 1967.

<sup>158</sup> Allen 1990: 69.

<sup>159</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 22.

<sup>160</sup> Block 1998: 4.

<sup>161</sup> Block 1998: 4.

#### 1.4.3.2 Judgement

However, while some commentators perceive the OAN to convey a message of hope, backhanded or otherwise, others set forth a case for reading the OAN as predominantly oracles of judgement against both the nations *and* Israel. Barton's study of Amos 1-2 is the classic example of interpreting oracles against foreign nations in this way. In his monograph, Barton considers the moral basis for the condemnation of the practices detailed in these chapters. He contends that Amos was 'appealing to a kind of conventional or customary law about international conduct which he at least believed to be self-evidently right'.<sup>162</sup> In this way, the judgement of the foreign nations is shown to be equally applicable to Israel.<sup>163</sup> More recently, Lee's thesis argues that the OAN convey a message of oblique judgement for the house of Judah that highlights the commonality between Judah and the nations,<sup>164</sup> with the demise of the nations hinting at Judah's own destruction.

#### 1.4.3.3 Hybris

For many scholars, it is the indictment of *hybris* that characterises the nature of these oracles. For instance, Zimmerli's division of the OAN into three groups (Ezek. 25; 26-28; 29-32) allows him to observe that *hybris* is 'undoubtedly a stereotyped feature of prophetic oracles against foreign nations'.<sup>165</sup> Greenberg also highlights Tyre's 'soaring ambition' and 'boundless self-exaltation',<sup>166</sup> and 'Egypt's pride as epitomised in the boastful self-sufficiency of Pharaoh'.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, Davis argues that rather than the

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<sup>162</sup> Barton 1980: 2.

<sup>163</sup> Barton 1980: 36-8.

<sup>164</sup> Lee 2016: 7-8. Wilson (1987: 218) has also suggested that a message of oblique judgement might be perceived in the OAN. Cf. p. 28.

<sup>165</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 60.

<sup>166</sup> Greenberg 1997: 540, 41.

<sup>167</sup> Greenberg 1997: 610.

oracles against Tyre and Egypt being merely the treatment of the foreign nations' enmity to Israel, there is a moral and theological strand that highlights the offence of *hybris* against Yahweh.<sup>168</sup>

#### 1.4.4 Conclusion

So far, this discussion has shown that despite a degree of scholarly accord which recognises the OAN functioning as a bridge between the oracles of judgement and those of salvation, there is a lack of consensus regarding how the bridge is supported by the oracles' function. Some contend that their purpose is to offer hope to the exiles, while others argue that the element of judgement is emphasised, and whereas many commentators recognise the indictment of *hybris* levelled against the nations, my argument is that the 'commonality' of which Lee speaks, is at its most apparent in the *hybris* of Israel *and* the nations, and that it is this *hybris* which is the object of Yahweh's wrath. It can be affirmed that the OAN clearly play a pivotal role in the transition from judgement to restoration in *Ezekiel*. Indeed, Clements argues that it is the 'canonical form and structure which make prophecy as a whole, a message of coming salvation'.<sup>169</sup> But how is this message of salvation articulated in oracles that, on the surface at least, appear to be expressing unbridled and vengeful hostility and judgement? It is the contention here that the recognition formula is the vehicle for *Ezekiel's* prophetic message. My attempt to substantiate this view will begin with a survey of recognition formula scholarship.

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<sup>168</sup> Davis 1999: 230; cf. Premstaller (2005), who reaches the same conclusion while indicating that *hybris* constitutes the main reason for Yahweh's judgement, and that this justifies Yahweh's judgement on Israel and beyond to the nations.

<sup>169</sup> Clements 1977: 44.

## 1.5 The recognition formula

### 1.5.1 Initial considerations

Our concern so far has been to introduce the context of Ezekiel's prophetic endeavours and to briefly survey previous research on the book in general, as well as the more specific study on the oracles against foreign nations. It is against this background that I now consider the phrase that is the focus of this thesis—a phrase that has been strikingly deployed in a popular modern cultural item.<sup>170</sup> In Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction* (1994), Samuel L. Jackson's character Jules Winnfield, a fast-talking intimidating hit-man, repeatedly quotes the following phrase from *Ezekiel's* oracles against the nations: 'And I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful chastisements and they shall know that I am [Yahweh] when I lay my vengeance on them' (Ezek. 27:17).<sup>171</sup> Contained in this verse is a phrase known as the recognition formula, 'and they shall know that I am Yahweh'. This expression frequently recurs in the book of *Ezekiel*, no more so than in the oracles against foreign nations. It is my task now to examine this characteristic refrain.

### 1.5.2 Previous scholarship

Since the work of Zimmerli is widely regarded as being the definitive word on the recognition formula, I will begin with commentators who wrote on the topic prior to Zimmerli's studies before discussing his findings. I will then consider the scholarly output of those who have contributed to an understanding of the recognition formula since Zimmerli's ground-breaking work.

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<sup>170</sup> While it is acknowledged that illustrations such as these (which season the study from time to time) might be considered anachronistic, they are employed to emphasise in an arresting way an important exegetical point.

<sup>171</sup> Winnfield actually says 'the Lord' rather than 'Yahweh'. However, following the book of *Ezekiel*, Israel's God will be referred to as 'Yahweh' throughout this project.

### 1.5.3 Ante-Zimmerli

The pursuit of reading and studying the Bible sustained a paradigm shift in the nineteenth century. Until this point, the traditional view was that the biblical prophets interpreted God's written Law and applied it to their own context. The Pentateuch, which details the origins and history of Israel and Yahweh their God, was believed to be the work of Moses and thought to be the basis for what follows in the rest of the Old Testament. It was normal to think that each book of the Bible had its own author, that 'the books of Samuel' were written by Samuel, and that each prophetic book was written by the prophet whose name the book bears.<sup>172</sup> Modern study, however, has shown that these books are the product of many authors over several generations. Consequently, the final form of the text is the legacy of countless editors (known as 'redactors'), who produced the Bible as we know it.<sup>173</sup> This 'pre-critical' era existed before it was recognised that various textual genres comprise the Bible. Along with this awareness came the discovery that different conventions govern these sorts of literature. The classification of these types of texts into genres governs the kinds of meaning they can have. As Barton notes: 'In this way modern critical study has made it possible to read with understanding texts which previously had to a greater or lesser extent been misread, because they were seen as something which they were not'.<sup>174</sup>

Prior to the 'critical' era and the 'epoch-making' work of Wellhausen, the recognition formula did not receive much attention.<sup>175</sup> For instance in the late nineteenth century,

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<sup>172</sup> Barton 2001: 6.

<sup>173</sup> Barton 2001: 6.

<sup>174</sup> Barton 1996: 16-17.

<sup>175</sup> I am grateful for the work of Evans (2006: ch. 2), whose consideration of the topic has helped shape this overview.

Keil understood the recognition formula simply to be an expression that points to impending judgement as the means by which Yahweh would be recognised and revered.<sup>176</sup> Davidson believed that, in the use of the recognition formula, *Ezekiel* intends to show that all experiences that Israel encounters in the sight of the nations are for the express purpose of Yahweh revealing himself to all.<sup>177</sup> At the turn of the century, however, as previously described, ‘a revolution’ took place in the sphere of *Ezekiel* scholarship.<sup>178</sup> Herrmann, who believed much of the book to contain evidence of editorial expansion, thought that since the recognition formula could be detached from its context, it was likely to be a secondary addition.<sup>179</sup> Hölscher, who found a fraction of *Ezekiel* to be the work of the prophet,<sup>180</sup> also argued that the recognition formula is secondary. However, within twenty years of Hölscher’s work, Blank, in an article that considered the recognition formula in *Ezekiel* in relation to the appearance of the phrase in Isaiah, attributed the meaning of the formula in Isaiah and *Ezekiel* to be an expression that emphasises the monotheistic view that Yahweh is the one God.<sup>181</sup> Blank linked the recognition formula to the phrase ‘For the sake of my name’,<sup>182</sup> and concluded that the writers of *Ezekiel* assumed that their readers would have a prior knowledge of Deutero-Isaiah’s monotheistic understanding of the name Yahweh.<sup>183</sup> Haag also produced a work in the 1940s that considers the recognition formula about which he observed, ‘[F]antastic

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<sup>176</sup> Keil 1876: 358.

<sup>177</sup> Davidson 1892: 210.

<sup>178</sup> Cooke 1936: v.

<sup>179</sup> J. Herrmann 1908.

<sup>180</sup> Hölscher 1924. 144 out of 1,273 is the number of verses Zimmerli (1979: 5) finds attributed to *Ezekiel* in Hölscher’s work. Joyce (1989: 23), discovers 170; cf. May 1956: 42.

<sup>181</sup> Blank 1940: 13.

<sup>182</sup> Blank 1940: 39. On this phrase, see also Strong 1995; Joyce 1989: 97-103; Wells 2000: ch. 5.

<sup>183</sup> Blank 1940: 41. May (1956: 97) follows Blank in assigning the recognition formula’s pedigree to Deutero-Isaiah.

words have been written'.<sup>184</sup> Haag understood the formula by reference to its covenantal significance in the Priestly document of Exodus.<sup>185</sup> By the 1950s the recognition formula had attracted the attention of Zimmerli, whose essays,<sup>186</sup> which rank in importance with his magisterial commentary,<sup>187</sup> are considered by many to be the definitive word on the recognition formula in *Ezekiel*. Indeed, most modern commentators are content to simply cite his conclusions.<sup>188</sup>

#### 1.5.4 Walther Zimmerli

Contrary to Herrmann and Hölscher, Zimmerli regards the recognition formula as primary material that is integral to its context.<sup>189</sup> Even in the few instances that are regarded by Zimmerli to be secondary,<sup>190</sup> he discussed the formula's meaning with reference to the larger literary unit in which it appears. In Zimmerli's examination of the recognition formula, the phrase consists of two parts, each with its own original setting: the statement of recognition, 'they shall know', and the statement of divine self-introduction, 'I am Yahweh'. Looking for an original setting for the statement of recognition, Zimmerli observed that the phrase points to a statement or action which elicits knowledge. With this in mind, Zimmerli discussed the account of Joseph's conversation with his brothers described in Genesis 42:33: 'By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me'. Thus, in this text, truth will be tested by a specific sign. This observation prompted Zimmerli to say: 'Recognition

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<sup>184</sup> Haag 1943: 25.

<sup>185</sup> Haag 1943: 25-27. Zimmerli (1982: 146, n. 30) took exception to this view.

<sup>186</sup> Zimmerli 1953; Zimmerli 1954; Zimmerli 1957 re-printed in Zimmerli 1963 and in ET as Zimmerli 1982.

<sup>187</sup> Zimmerli 1979; 1983.

<sup>188</sup> E.g. Greenberg 1983: 133; Block 1997: 36.

<sup>189</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 37.

<sup>190</sup> E.g. Ezek. 11:12; 20:26; 22:16; 28:24.

comes about by means of a critical testing before which the truth (*'mt*) of the word of whoever is tested must prove itself'.<sup>191</sup>

Following the statement of recognition is the object clause 'I am Yahweh'. Zimmerli favoured an original setting for this phrase in the theophany accounts,<sup>192</sup> in which 'God appears and speaks at the time of the making of the covenant and the giving of the Law'.<sup>193</sup> According to Zimmerli, this formula of self-introduction is 'fully set out in the preamble to the Decalogue'.<sup>194</sup> Zimmerli contended that it is the disclosure of Yahweh's name that is the most important element.<sup>195</sup> It is 'a name containing the full richness and honour of the One naming himself'.<sup>196</sup> This self-introduction involves the free self-communication of his person and, in subsequent repetitions of his self-introduction, Yahweh realises this freedom afresh, even in instances when the self-introduction may recall previously acquired knowledge.<sup>197</sup> It is the combination of the statement of recognition and self-introduction that Zimmerli called the recognition formula, for which he also sought out an original setting, since it is not 'an original coinage of Ezekiel'.<sup>198</sup> Zimmerli believed that *Ezekiel's* usage witnesses an older prophetic tradition<sup>199</sup> and the context of holy war<sup>200</sup> as found in 1 Kings 20:28 (cf. v. 13). However, while holding that this older prophetic source may be in the background of *Ezekiel's* use of the refrain, Zimmerli also noted that 'there can be no doubt that [Ezekiel] has been strongly

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<sup>191</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 73.

<sup>192</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 14.

<sup>193</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 22.

<sup>194</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 37.

<sup>195</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 1.

<sup>196</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 2.

<sup>197</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 38.

<sup>198</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 41.

<sup>199</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 100.

<sup>200</sup> Explained in von Rad 1991.

influenced by Priestly content<sup>201</sup> of the Moses tradition as found in the book of Exodus. However, because Zimmerli posited that 'this writing was very likely composed in the post-exilic period',<sup>202</sup> he suggested that Priestly versions of the Moses story, in which the statement of recognition first occurs in Exodus 6:7, ought 'not to be understood only from the perspective of its proximity to Ezekiel'.<sup>203</sup> Instead, says Zimmerli, P's version of these stories is part of the tradition which is often assigned to J and thought to be older.<sup>204</sup> This poses a problem for Zimmerli. Since the recognition formula is also found in J,<sup>205</sup> it indicates that the formula was used before the events described in 1 Kings 20 and so cannot be solely ascribed to that prophetic tradition. Consequently, Zimmerli concluded that the recognition formula 'seems to have been at home in a variety of circumstances from the very beginning'.<sup>206</sup>

For Zimmerli, the importance of the recognition formula is its theological import which, he says, is only meaningful in connection with the facts that function as proof of the claim in the object clause. These facts are invariably related to the activity of Yahweh.<sup>207</sup> In Zimmerli's analysis, Yahweh's activity functions as a sign proving that Yahweh is who he says he is. Thus, all instances of the recognition formula 'appear in the light of a divine self-evidencing'.<sup>208</sup> The intention of all the oracles that are declared by Ezekiel as an event is that Israel and the nations be brought to a recognition of Yahweh: 'All

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<sup>201</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 146.

<sup>202</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 42.

<sup>203</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 42) asks why the Priestly authors stylised their writing after the model of Ezekiel's prophetic speeches, acknowledging that the question remains unanswered.

<sup>204</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 42. For a different view regarding the dating of J, see Van Seters 1975.

<sup>205</sup> E.g. Exod. 7:17.

<sup>206</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 51.

<sup>207</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 38.

<sup>208</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 38.

Yahweh's actions which the prophet proclaims serve as proof of Yahweh among the nations'.<sup>209</sup>

### 1.5.5 Post-Zimmerli

However, while Zimmerli's work is considered by many critics to be the decisive word on the recognition formula in *Ezekiel*, not all scholars accept Zimmerli's views. For instance, Fohrer critiques Zimmerli's suggestion regarding the origin of the recognition formula. Noting that Zimmerli 'attempts to derive this form' from 1 Kings 20:13, 28,<sup>210</sup> Fohrer's assessment is based on the observation that 'the occurrence of this formula twice in anecdotal prophetic utterances does not provide a broad enough basis for the assumption that centuries later Ezekiel made use of an early literary type'.<sup>211</sup> Fohrer suggests that it is more likely that these sayings in 1 Kings were not Ezekiel's literary prototype but were the words of the last Deuteronomistic redactor who inserted them in their present form on the basis of Ezekiel's writing.<sup>212</sup> What is more, Fohrer argues that this phrase is not a new literary type but 'an interpretive formula that has been appended to other literary types'.<sup>213</sup> According to Fohrer, the purpose of the formula 'is to provide a proper understanding of the event reported or announced...'.<sup>214</sup> Indeed, this, says Fohrer, 'is precisely the function of its first occurrences in the Yahwist's material: Exod. 7:17; 8:6 (10), 18 (22); 9:29; 11:7. It is intended to summon the listener to judge that it is Yahweh who has intervened or is about to intervene, with his wrath or with his aid'.<sup>215</sup> However, despite the lack of accord between Zimmerli and Fohrer regarding the precise

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<sup>209</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 38.

<sup>210</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409.

<sup>211</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409.

<sup>212</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409.

<sup>213</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409.

<sup>214</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409.

<sup>215</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409, 10.

background of the formula, both agree that it had its origins in oracles against foreign nations.<sup>216</sup>

At the turn of the 1960s, Reventlow wrote a number of articles that discuss the recognition formula.<sup>217</sup> Reventlow found similarities between *Ezekiel's* and Deutero-Isaiah's use of the formula and he believed that those recognition formulae directed to the nations indicate the nations' eventual confession and faith in Yahweh.<sup>218</sup> Some years later, Rendtorff suggested that the 'I am Yahweh' clause is a later abbreviation of earlier phrases such as 'I am Yahweh your God' or 'I am Yahweh who brought you out of Egypt'.<sup>219</sup> Rendtorff interpreted the expression as a claim to power, rather than the original form of Yahweh's self-introduction which Zimmerli claimed was the case.<sup>220</sup> He further observed that the Pentateuchal sources which are generally considered to be older than P usually have the fuller statements (Exod. 8:10; 9:14, 29)<sup>221</sup> and that the shorter formula is 'a technical expression summing up his activity'.<sup>222</sup>

By contrast, Eichrodt is content to follow many of Zimmerli's conclusions. For instance, Eichrodt defers to Zimmerli's thoughts regarding the origin of the formula in 1 Kings 20.<sup>223</sup> Like Reventlow, Eichrodt perceives a recognition of Yahweh 'going beyond Israel and including the Gentiles'.<sup>224</sup> For Eichrodt, the recognition formula expresses 'the purpose of God's dealings with Israel and the nations which dominates Ezekiel's whole

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<sup>216</sup> Joyce 1989: 93.

<sup>217</sup> Reventlow 1959 and 1962b.

<sup>218</sup> Reventlow 1959: 35-36.

<sup>219</sup> Rendtorff 1969: 40.

<sup>220</sup> Rendtorff 1969: 40.

<sup>221</sup> According to S. R. Driver (1911: 64, 72, 75), these verses from Exodus may be attributed to J.

<sup>222</sup> Rendtorff 1969: 42.

<sup>223</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 15.

<sup>224</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 44.

message'.<sup>225</sup> Also with Zimmerli is Harner, who speaks of the recognition formula as having two parts: the 'formula of divine self-predication' 'I am Yahweh', and 'the introductory statement' 'you/they shall know that...'.<sup>226</sup> Harner, who identifies the original setting for the divine self-predication as Yahweh's revelation of himself to Moses,<sup>227</sup> observes that Ezekiel clearly regards the wilderness years as a typological model for the exiles' current circumstance and that the recognition formula reinforces those parallels.<sup>228</sup> He concludes that Ezekiel's contribution to the use of the recognition formula was to perceive the link between divine self-predication and the human response of 'knowing'.<sup>229</sup>

In the same year that Harner's work was produced, Odell devoted a chapter of her dissertation to the recognition formula, noting that it 'played a crucial role in the articulation of Ezekiel's interpretation of history'.<sup>230</sup> She considers whether these recognition formulae speak of a decisive event in history, or whether they suggest a figurative solution to the challenge posed by the nations' failure to acknowledge Yahweh.<sup>231</sup> Odell concludes that the recognition formulae in the Gog pericope point beyond the historical realm, to Yahweh's characteristics of holiness and fidelity.<sup>232</sup> A year later, in his monograph, Joyce considers the recognition formula, as Zimmerli did, with reference to its 'integrally related' context, observing it to be 'a central and

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<sup>225</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 38.

<sup>226</sup> Harner 1988: 34.

<sup>227</sup> Harner 1988: 36.

<sup>228</sup> Harner 1988: 37, 38.

<sup>229</sup> Harner 1988: 34.

<sup>230</sup> Odell 1988: 126.

<sup>231</sup> Odell 1988: 127.

<sup>232</sup> E.g. Ezek. 38:23; 39:22. Odell (1988: 128) modifies Zimmerli's (1982: 36) view that the recognition formulae do not speak of Yahweh's nature.

distinctive feature of the style and theology of the prophet'.<sup>233</sup> Joyce highlights the prevalence of the formula elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible noting that as a consequence of this range, it would be inadvisable to relate *Ezekiel's* use of the refrain exclusively to any one background.<sup>234</sup> Accordingly, Joyce recommends considering the formula as a whole, rather than focusing on the elements of divine self-predication and introductory statement.<sup>235</sup> Although his comments fall far short of making a statement, Joyce seems to favour a background to the formula in Exodus as opposed to 1 Kings; however, he is keen to point out that the evidence is slim and inconclusive.<sup>236</sup> He does, however, maintain that the background to the formula is to be found in the oracles against foreign nations. Joyce highlights the extraordinary development of the formula's application in the context of judgement against Israel that is found in *Ezekiel*,<sup>237</sup> observing that at some point the formula's use was extended to include oracles of judgement against Israel. However, regarding the instances where the formula is found in the context of restoration for Israel, Joyce discerns a paradox. For while the motif of oracles against the nations is closely related to the deliverance of Israel, the occasions in which the formula is found in this context are often thought to be the work of a redactor.<sup>238</sup> Joyce speaks of the formula's 'aura of mystery',<sup>239</sup> which highlights 'the theocentricity of Ezekiel's presentation', and he observes that there are no clear instances which indicate that the nations shall come to know Yahweh, but that 'reference to the nations here is a

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<sup>233</sup> Joyce 1989: 92.

<sup>234</sup> Joyce 1989: 92.

<sup>235</sup> Joyce 1989: 92.

<sup>236</sup> Joyce 1989: 155.

<sup>237</sup> Joyce 1989: 93.

<sup>238</sup> Joyce 1989: 156.

<sup>239</sup> Joyce 1989: 94.

rhetorical device, serving to highlight the central concern, which is the revelation of Yahweh'.<sup>240</sup>

In the mid 1990s, Strong published an article which sought to establish that 'Ezekiel's use of the recognition formula is fully nationalistic and does not envision the eventual inclusion of the foreign nations in the covenant with Yahweh'.<sup>241</sup> Referring to Zimmerli's 'definitive study',<sup>242</sup> Strong points out that Zimmerli speaks of a confessional knowledge of Yahweh for those who experience Yahweh's activity associated with the recognition formula.<sup>243</sup> However, Strong indicates that, as far as the nations are concerned, Yahweh's powerful actions are not for their benefit but for the sake of his name (and for the sake of Israel).<sup>244</sup> For Strong, 'the basic issue is not the conversion of the nations',<sup>245</sup> but that they acknowledge Yahweh's power.<sup>246</sup> Strong also draws on the recognition formula's use in the exodus narratives, indicating that it ought to be interpreted in the same way: 'Egypt is not depicted as worshipping Yahweh or joining Yahweh's nation. Rather...Egypt is merely intended to accept this testimony submissively'.<sup>247</sup> Some years after Strong's publication, Block's exhaustive commentary on *Ezekiel* became available.<sup>248</sup> Block's work builds on that of Allen<sup>249</sup> and Greenberg,<sup>250</sup> and essentially

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<sup>240</sup> Joyce 1989: 95.

<sup>241</sup> Strong 1995: 133.

<sup>242</sup> Strong 1995: 118.

<sup>243</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 88.

<sup>244</sup> Strong 1995: 122. It should be noted that *Ezekiel* explicitly denies such a relation: 'It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act...' (Ezek. 36:22), although as Robson (2011: 137) points out, despite this denial, Israel are nevertheless the beneficiaries of Yahweh's action.

<sup>245</sup> Strong 1995: 124.

<sup>246</sup> Specifically, Yahweh's defeat of chaos (Strong 1995: 122).

<sup>247</sup> Strong 1995: 123-4.

<sup>248</sup> Block 1997 and 1998.

<sup>249</sup> Allen 1994 and 1990.

<sup>250</sup> Greenberg 1983 and 1997.

follows Zimmerli.<sup>251</sup> Block endows the 'I am Yahweh' aspect of the recognition formula with particular importance to the extent that he refuses to translate expansions in a way that would camouflage the divine self-predication.<sup>252</sup> Unlike Zimmerli, however, Block indicates that *Ezekiel's* use of the recognition formula is grounded in the exodus narratives,<sup>253</sup> and does not support the notion that the nations will experience a confessional knowledge of Yahweh: Yahweh 'is concerned that all the world recognise his person and presence in their affairs, but his agenda is always focussed on Israel'.<sup>254</sup>

Ten years after Block's work was released, Evans submitted his doctoral thesis. Evans adopts a method of 'inner-biblical interpretation' to discover the literary and theological function of the recognition formula in the book of *Ezekiel*.<sup>255</sup> The central thesis of his study is that 'a demonstrable relationship' exists between the books of *Ezekiel* and Exodus. To that end he presents an intertextual reading of *Ezekiel* and Exodus in which the recognition formula is understood by Evans to be 'an echo of the language of Exodus in some authoritative recension'.<sup>256</sup> Evans argues that the use of the recognition formula in Exodus 'probably guided the prophet in his usage... Ezekiel clearly refashions and reinterprets the formula for his own time'.<sup>257</sup> Evans concludes that there is a textual dimension in which *Ezekiel* betrays many signs of being influenced by Israel's sacred

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<sup>251</sup> It is clear that Block follows Zimmerli as far as the number of instances of the recognition formula in *Ezekiel* is concerned; indeed his assessment of its purpose closely matches that of Zimmerli as well (See Block 1997: 39).

<sup>252</sup> For instance, rather than translating יהוה דברתי אני ידעתם כי as 'then you shall know that I Yahweh have spoken' (Ezek. 37:14), Block insists on rendering the phrase 'then you shall know that I am Yahweh, I have spoken' (Block 1997: 37-8).

<sup>253</sup> Here Block (1997: 38, 39) is similar in thought to Haag, Fohrer and Harner.

<sup>254</sup> Block 1997: 47.

<sup>255</sup> Evans 2006: 11.

<sup>256</sup> Evans 2006: 260.

<sup>257</sup> Evans 2006: 261.

writings,<sup>258</sup> and he specifically states that ‘the full meaning of Ezekiel’s keynote formula as a text depends on its interaction with another text, the book of Exodus’.<sup>259</sup>

More recently Callender has written about the recognition formula in *Ezekiel*, observing that it is ‘one of the more difficult aspects of the book’,<sup>260</sup> and ‘one of the principal vehicles through which the prophet constructs his understanding of God’.<sup>261</sup> Echoing Zimmerli, Callender speaks of signs in relation to the recognition formula: ‘The notion of the sign figures prominently in the calculus of the recognition formula, but this also functions within a broader context according to which the people and the land are signs to the nations. The name, the people, and the land all stand for the subject Yahweh and become sacred or profane as signs of the complex subjectivity of Yahweh’.<sup>262</sup>

#### **1.5.6 Conclusion**

This brief survey has shown that, prior to the innovative work of Zimmerli, issues of authenticity meant that the recognition formula received little attention. Since Zimmerli, however, scholars recognise the formula to be integral to *Ezekiel’s* prophetic oracles. Some see the formula as having two distinct parts with their own original settings, others prefer to interpret the formula as a whole. Some commentators look to 1 Kings as a possible source of inspiration for *Ezekiel’s* use of the formula, some to Deutero-Isaiah and others to the book of Exodus. Some interpret the formula as a statement of divine introduction and others look to Yahweh’s authority as a divine warrior and sole deity. Some believe the formula implies a universal saving knowledge of Yahweh, others see

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<sup>258</sup> Evans 2006: 318.

<sup>259</sup> Evans 2006: 323.

<sup>260</sup> Callender 2015: 72.

<sup>261</sup> Callender 2015: 71.

<sup>262</sup> Callender 2015: 80.

it as a purely nationalistic expression. However, the question regarding whether the formula should be understood as a concise phrase expressing the vindication of Yahweh remains a pertinent one. In the interests of exploring this question, this study will now consider the use of the recognition formula elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

## 2 THE RECOGNITION FORMULA IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

### 2.1 Introduction

So far, this discussion has been content to speak of the recognition formula in very general terms. It is time to add some details to an understanding of the phrase. In its most basic form, the formula is expressed with the words ‘and they shall know that I am Yahweh’. However, nearly half the total occurrences of this basic form are found in the second person, ‘and you shall know...’—although the number varies: instances of both singular and plural are found. Whether conjugated in the second or third person, I shall refer to this as ‘the basic form’ of the recognition formula. Any deviation from this pattern will be considered as an expansion of the basic saying. A number of different expansions are witnessed. For example: ‘All the trees of the field shall know that I am Yahweh’ (Ezek. 17:24). These will be referred to as ‘developed formulae’. As they are encountered in *Ezekiel*, each will be discussed in more detail. However, as well as these developments, there are many phrases that closely resemble the recognition formula. For instance: ‘Know that Yahweh, he is God’ (Psalm 100:3). These related phrases also inform an understanding of the recognition formula and so a selection will be briefly discussed.

Since Zimmerli posits a background for *Ezekiel’s* use of the recognition formula in 1 Kings,<sup>1</sup> and Fohrer looks to Exodus 7,<sup>2</sup> with Blank suggesting that *Ezekiel’s* readers would have prior knowledge of Deutero-Isaiah’s monotheistic understanding of the name of Yahweh,<sup>3</sup> this study will examine the way these books use the formula before looking in somewhat less detail at its use in other biblical books. A more general review of several related phrases will follow.

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<sup>1</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 41.

<sup>2</sup> Fohrer 1970: 10, 409.

<sup>3</sup> Blank 1940: 41.

In the book of *Ezekiel*, most instances of the formula are found in the context of judgement and are addressed to the nations or to Israel. In most of these cases, the nation indicted and punished is the one who will know Yahweh.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally, however, as a consequence of Yahweh's punishment of the foreign nations, it is said that Israel will know that 'I am Yahweh'.<sup>5</sup> Added to this array, about a quarter of recognition formulae in *Ezekiel* point to the deliverance of Israel. Some of these speak of Israel coming to know Yahweh when Yahweh delivers Israel;<sup>6</sup> in others, that the nations will know Yahweh when Yahweh delivers Israel.<sup>7</sup> There are no explicit instances in *Ezekiel* where the formula is found in the context of deliverance of the nations.

Joyce has produced a very helpful chart which categorises the recognition formulae in *Ezekiel* in this way,<sup>8</sup> and I have attempted to develop this chart and classify the recognition formulae found in the rest of the Hebrew Bible in the same way (see the Appendix to this thesis).<sup>9</sup> However successful or otherwise this effort has been, the scheme provides a useful way to present all the recognition formulae in table form. Space permits the discussion of only one or two cases from these main categories, but

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., Ezek. 6:10; 25:11.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Ezek. 26:26.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Ezek. 28:24.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. 37:28.

<sup>8</sup> Joyce 1989: 91.

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix p. 329. Table 1 also includes the following recognition formula references that were not added to Joyce's chart: Ezek. 13:14; 15:7; 20:12, 38; 21:10 (5); 22:22; 33:29; 37:14. In addition, several references have been re-classified from Joyce's chart in Table 1: e.g., 12:15 has been classed as a developed formula. Cf. 6:10, 13; 11:12; 20:26; 23:49; 24:24; 28:24, 26; 34:27; 36:23; 37:13; 39:7, 22, 28. Meanwhile 13:21 has been allocated to the basic group of formulae (cf. 13:23; 14:8), and 25:14 has been categorised as a related phrase (Table 2).

Table 1 (in the Appendix) presents an accessible point of reference for all instances of both the basic and developed forms of the recognition formula in the Hebrew Bible.

## 2.2 The recognition formula in the book of Exodus

As will be shown there are a number of themes associated with the recognition formula in the book of Exodus that are paralleled with those found in *Ezekiel*. I will consider three examples. The first is one that Fohrer looks to for the formula's original setting:<sup>10</sup>

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה בּוֹאֵת תִּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה

Thus says Yahweh, 'By this you shall know that I am Yahweh'. (Exod. 7:17 J)<sup>11</sup>

In this example, it is said that the nations will know Yahweh when Yahweh punishes the nations.<sup>12</sup> This is a basic example of the recognition formula. In this verse, Yahweh instructs Moses to speak to Pharaoh as he goes to the water to bathe and say: 'Let my people go' (v. 16). As a sign to authenticate that it is Yahweh who issues the command, Moses is instructed to strike the Nile with his staff to turn the water to blood (v. 17). The recognition formula is used in a typical way in this example in which a sign demonstrates the activity of Yahweh. The sign usually comes before the recognition formula; however, the sequence found here is not unusual either (the sign—the Nile turning to blood—is described as happening *after* the announcement of the recognition formula). Speaking of this verse, Dozeman observes that the recognition formula adds 'polemical purpose to the event... Pharaoh must recognise the power of Yahweh'.<sup>13</sup> Durham concurs: 'The

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<sup>10</sup> Fohrer 1970: 409.

<sup>11</sup> S. R. Driver (1911: 60) categorises this as J; however, Dozeman (2009) recommends P. Childs (1974: 131) divides the verse in two halves, designating the phrase here to J.

<sup>12</sup> Category A1 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>13</sup> Dozeman (2009: 217) notes that this requirement is introduced by P in Exod. 7:5 and is a recurring motif through the plague cycle.

whole point of this narrative, as with the additional mighty-act narratives that follow it, is the miraculous nature of an act for which Yahweh is given unequivocal responsibility'.<sup>14</sup> These comments could be applied to the way the recognition formula is used in *Ezekiel* with equal veracity.<sup>15</sup>

In the next example, it is also said that the nations will know Yahweh when Yahweh punishes the nations:<sup>16</sup>

וידעו מצרים כי אני יהוה

The Egyptians shall know that I am Yahweh. (Exod. 7:5 P)<sup>17</sup>

In this passage, Yahweh tells Moses that when Pharaoh fails to listen, Yahweh will perform signs and wonders (v. 3), and the Egyptians will know Yahweh when he stretches out his hand against Egypt and brings the Israelites out of the country. The recognition formula is employed to emphasise that these signs 'prove the power of Yahweh',<sup>18</sup> and demonstrate his presence among the Egyptians. Dozeman claims that Zimmerli maintained these signs always precede the recognition formula and are 'concrete divine actions that are public and momentary'.<sup>19</sup> However, Zimmerli also argued that recollection of these events had the capacity to instil knowledge of Yahweh.<sup>20</sup> Notwithstanding this, the point, as Driver emphasises, is that knowledge of

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<sup>14</sup> Durham 1986: 493.

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Ezek. 36:36.

<sup>16</sup> Category B2 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>17</sup> S. R. Driver (1911: 50, 59) identifies this passage (Exod. 7:1-13) as P. J resumes at v. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Dozeman 2009: 175.

<sup>19</sup> Dozeman 2009: 175. In point of fact, Zimmerli (1979: 39), points out that on a number of occasions the proof element comes after the recognition formula (cf. 5:13; 6:13; 12:15; 15:7; 20:42, 44; 25:17; 28:22; 30:8; 33:29; 34:27; 39:28). This is the motivation for the thesis of Hossfeld (1977: 40), who concludes that out of 80 recognition formulae in *Ezekiel*, only 25 are closing phrases.

<sup>20</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 72.

Yahweh is acquired by 'some signal and impressive manifestation of power'.<sup>21</sup> This point is similarly reflected in *Ezekiel's* use of the formula.<sup>22</sup>

Once again, in a third case from Exodus, the nations will know Yahweh when Yahweh punishes the nations:

לְמַעַן תֵּדַע כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּקִרְבֵּי הָאָרֶץ

In order that you may know that I am Yahweh in the midst of the land.

(Exod. 8:18 [22] J)<sup>23</sup>

On the day that Yahweh sends the plague of flies (v. 21), he will set apart the land of Goshen so that no flies are there. This will be a sign for Pharaoh, showing him that Yahweh, not Pharaoh, is the sovereign God of Egypt.<sup>24</sup> In this expanded formula<sup>25</sup> the idea is found that a mighty act of Yahweh is the sign that verifies his presence in the midst of Egypt.

From this condensed selection, it has been shown that themes related to the recognition formula in the book of Exodus include the mighty acts of Yahweh in the sight of the nations (example 1) as an unequivocal demonstration of his power (example 2), all of which is understood as a sign that points to Yahweh's presence (example 3). Each of these themes also run through *Ezekiel* where they support this study's primary thesis.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> S. R. Driver (1911: 44) notes the frequency of the phrase in *Ezekiel*, 'a prophet who in other respects also displays many literary affinities with P'.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Ezek. 28:22.

<sup>23</sup> S. R. Driver (1911: 67) identifies this passage as J, but Dozeman (2009: 225) singles out this phrase as coming from P.

<sup>24</sup> S. R. Driver 1911: 51.

<sup>25</sup> Category B1 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>26</sup> I.e., the recognition formula is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh (cf. p. 4).

### 2.3 The recognition formula in Deutero-Isaiah

There are also correspondences to be discerned between the way the recognition formula is used in Deutero-Isaiah and *Ezekiel*. Again, three examples will suffice for these purposes. The theme of deliverance for Israel is often associated with the recognition formula in Deutero-Isaiah:

לְמַעַן תֵּדַע כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה הַקּוֹרֵא בְּשֵׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל

So that you shall know that I am Yahweh, the God of Israel who call you by your name.

(Isa. 45:3)

Here the nations will know Yahweh as a consequence of his assistance (by the hand of Cyrus) on behalf of Israel.<sup>27</sup> This passage describes Yahweh calling Cyrus, his anointed one (v. 1), assuring him of Yahweh's presence (v. 2) and victory. With this privilege comes an implicit warning: the arrogance of the king of Assur was his downfall (Isa. 10:15-16), and Nebuchadnezzar's pride accounted for his (Dan. 4:30-32), and now, Cyrus is informed that he is king only by the grace of God.<sup>28</sup> The developed recognition formula is employed to full effect, enabling Cyrus to identify that Yahweh is supporting him. In turn, all will recognise that Yahweh alone is God, and Israel will know that Yahweh is working through Cyrus to achieve his purposes.<sup>29</sup> The choice of Cyrus as Yahweh's anointed one (v. 1) is scandalous,<sup>30</sup> observes Brueggemann. It seems that Israel's deliverance comes at the cost their pride. This idea has much in common with those found in *Ezekiel*.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Category H1 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>28</sup> Watts 1987: 701.

<sup>29</sup> Watts 1987: 701

<sup>30</sup> Brueggemann 1998: 75.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Ezek. 17:24; 24:21.

Many prophetic oracles that pronounce judgement on the nations carry the consequence of restoration for Israel, none more so perhaps than in the second example.<sup>32</sup> When Yahweh brings his children home, carried by the kings and queens of the nations (Isa. 49:23-23), his people shall know that Yahweh will not allow those who wait hopefully for him to be put to shame (v. 23):<sup>33</sup>

וידעת כי אני יהוה

Then you shall know that I am Yahweh. (Isa. 49:23)

This passage speaks of Yahweh's rule over the nations, who come to pay homage to him.<sup>34</sup> Hence we find that here (as in *Ezekiel*) Israel's restoration is not an end in itself, but it serves to promulgate the knowledge of Yahweh.<sup>35</sup>

A third example is found in an extended prediction of Israel's restoration (chs. 60-62), at the end of which Israel will know that it is Yahweh (expressed in an expanded recognition formula) who delivers them:<sup>36</sup>

וידעת כי אני יהוה מושיעך וגאלך אביר יעקב

And you shall know that I am Yahweh your Saviour and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. (Isa. 60:16)

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<sup>32</sup> In this example, Israel will know that 'I am Yahweh' when Yahweh punishes the nations. Category L1 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>33</sup> Watts (1987: 748) points out that this kind of hopeful waiting is a valid form of faith.

<sup>34</sup> Baltzer 2001: 330.

<sup>35</sup> Watts 1987: 748.

<sup>36</sup> Category S2 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

This verse is drawn from the corpus comprising Isaiah 56-66. Israel, suckled by royal wet nurses from the nations (cf. Isa. 49:23), will in turn milk the resources of those nations and their rulers (Isa. 60:16a).<sup>37</sup> Poetic (and divine) justice is seen in the following terms: 'Those who oppressed are now the ones who must submit in humiliation and subordination'.<sup>38</sup> It is an image that is intended to convey the prospect of 'rich and satisfying prosperity'.<sup>39</sup> The idea is that in this glorious state the people shall know the redemptive and salvific might of Yahweh. The notion found here that pride comes before a fall is one that *Ezekiel* explores in its application of the recognition formula.<sup>40</sup>

The points of contact between Deutero-Isaiah and *Ezekiel's* use of the recognition formula, as shown in these examples, emphasise Israel's and the nations' pride (examples 1 and 3), and the restoration of Israel (examples 1, 2 and 3), although it is suggested that primarily this furthers Yahweh's cause (example 2). However, Deutero-Isaiah goes beyond *Ezekiel* by portraying the nations worshipping Yahweh (example 2).

#### **2.4 The recognition formula in 1 Kings**

Zimmerli believes that the following two examples from 1 Kings are where the original setting of the recognition formula can be found. He contends that 1 Kings 20 cannot be dependent on *Ezekiel* since the 'terseness of their diction' and their 'salvation theology' exhibit influence from the idea of the holy war. Thus, for Zimmerli, they represent an

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<sup>37</sup> Blenkinsopp 2003: 216.

<sup>38</sup> Brueggemann 1998: 208.

<sup>39</sup> Blenkinsopp 2003: 216.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Ezek. 31:10, 11.

older independent form.<sup>41</sup> In the first example, a certain prophet speaks to the king of Israel, telling him that Yahweh will give this ‘great multitude’ into his hand.

וידעת כי אני יהוה

And you shall know that I am Yahweh. (1 Kings 20:13)

As a consequence of this divine victory, the king, and so all of Israel, shall know Yahweh by his action.<sup>42</sup> DeVries refers to the recognition formula as “the historical demonstration formula” because it calls to attention the way an historical event demonstrates who Yahweh says he is’.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, as Zimmerli notes, the goal of Yahweh’s intervention is the event of recognition.<sup>44</sup>

The second verse that Zimmerli uses to bolster his thesis regarding the original setting of the recognition formula finds the Arameans having called Yahweh a god of the hills and not of the valleys, implying that he is a local and insignificant god. According to the text, these disparaging remarks motivate Yahweh to send his prophet to the king of Israel to tell him that Yahweh will give the Arameans into the king’s hand, and then:

וידעתם כי אני יהוה

You [i.e. Israel] shall know that I am Yahweh. (1 Kings 20:28)<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 41) justifies his view by observing that the account does not betray the hostile views towards Ahab that are prevalent in the later Elijah traditions and that the chapter leads back to the ninth century when it was probably committed to writing.

<sup>42</sup> Category R1 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>43</sup> DeVries 1985: 249.

<sup>44</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 41.

<sup>45</sup> There is inconsistency in number within the verbs of this verse: it begins with 2 s. ‘your hand’ and ends with 2 pl. ‘then you will know...’. I have categorised the formula as 2 pl. R2 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329. This irregularity is not unusual in the book of *Ezekiel* (e.g. Ezek. 25:3, 5).

Zimmerli observes that the content of both speeches in 1 Kings 20 is the prediction of Yahweh's activity, witnessed by the nations, that shows through his victory that he is Israel's one true God.<sup>46</sup> It is a theme that is never far from *Ezekiel's* thought.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.5 The recognition formula elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible

The recognition formula also appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>48</sup> This example, with an expanded form of the recognition formula, is found in Deuteronomy in the context of covenantal renewal (29:8 [9]):

למען תדעו כי אני יהוה אלהיכם

So that you may know that I am Yahweh your God. (Deut. 29:5 [6])<sup>49</sup>

The backdrop of this passage finds Moses summoning Israel and reminding them of all the signs and wonders that Yahweh had performed in Egypt (29:1, 2 [2, 3]), and how for forty years Yahweh led his people in the wilderness and provided for them (29:4 [5]),<sup>50</sup> all of which, says Moses, was a demonstration that Yahweh is their God.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Moses exhorts the people to diligently observe the words of the covenant (29:8 [9]). Of this Tigay observes: 'Having seen that Israel was incapable of recognising His power behind the events of the Exodus (29:2 [3]), [Yahweh] fed them by supernatural means for forty years to overcome their spiritual obtuseness'.<sup>52</sup> Tigay further observes

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<sup>46</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 41.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Ezek. 28:24.

<sup>48</sup> For list of occurrences see Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>49</sup> Category S2 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>50</sup> Christensen (2002: 712) notes the supernatural aspect of the Israelites' sustenance.

<sup>51</sup> Christensen (2002: 712) indicates that here the word 'knowledge' connotes a legal sense of recognition 'as found also in ancient treaty texts referring to an overlord's recognition of his vassal and vice-versa'.

<sup>52</sup> Tigay 1996: 276.

that the recognition formula points to Yahweh's power.<sup>53</sup> A similar application can be perceived in the use of the recognition formula in *Ezekiel*.<sup>54</sup>

A second example, a developed form of the recognition formula, is found in the context of Yahweh's deliverance of his people from exile.<sup>55</sup>

ידעתם כי בקרב ישראל אני ואני יהוה אלהיכם ואין עוד

You shall know that in the midst of Israel I am, and I am Yahweh your God and there is no other. (Joel 2:27)

Through the prophet, Yahweh announces that if the people return to him with all their heart (2:12), then he will repay them for the years the locusts have eaten (2:25). They shall have an abundance and be satisfied (2:26). The basic tenets of the covenantal relationship back in place, they can enjoy the security his gracious presence creates.<sup>56</sup> It is a theme that permeates the book of *Ezekiel*.<sup>57</sup> Sweeney refers to this developed phrase as an instance of the recognition formula,<sup>58</sup> noting that the formula is 'frequently employed to identify YHWH as the source of action in both the human and natural worlds'.<sup>59</sup> Thus in these two additional examples, it can be seen that once again the formula foregrounds Yahweh's activity, which draws attention to his power in the eyes of the nations, and his faithfulness to Israel.

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<sup>53</sup> Tigay (1996: 276) notes that his phrase is probably a quotation from Exodus since Deuteronomy usually uses the word אֲנִי (e.g. Deut. 4:1) for 'I', not אני.

<sup>54</sup> E.g. Ezek. 20:12; 28:25-26.

<sup>55</sup> Stuart 1987: 260.

<sup>56</sup> Stuart 1987: 260.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Ezek. 16:59-63; 20:40-44; 36:22-32.

<sup>58</sup> Category S2 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>59</sup> Sweeney 2000: 173.

## 2.6 Phrases related to the recognition formula in the Hebrew Bible

I draw this section to a close by highlighting a few phrases related to the recognition formula outside the book of *Ezekiel*. Table 2 (in the Appendix) presents an accessible point of reference for all instances of related phrases in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>60</sup> The first example is from the Psalms:

הִרְפוּ וּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים

Be still and know that I am God. (Ps. 46:11 [10]).<sup>61</sup>

It seems that for the Psalmist, knowledge of God arises from recognition of his presence (v. 6 [5], 8 [7]) and activity (vv. 9-10 [8-9]). However, rather than interpreting the phrase as an imperative to ‘be still’ in order to perceive God’s presence, Schaefer notes that the Hebrew word *רָפוּ* means ‘cease’<sup>62</sup> and as such, is a command to the forces who oppose Yahweh to surrender.<sup>63</sup> If Schaefer is right, then here in the Psalms one might discern an association between this phrase, and the idea of holy war (cf. Ps. 76:3). As we have already seen, it is a relationship that other scholars have noted.<sup>64</sup> However, even if Schaefer is mistaken, the notion of ‘rest’ seems to be associated with knowledge of Yahweh (v. 12 [11]). As Yahweh is exalted among the nations and in the earth, his people can “‘relax’ in appropriate confidence’ that Yahweh is Lord over nature and

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<sup>60</sup> See Appendix p. 329. There are elements of ambiguity in some of these related phrases, but I have categorised them nonetheless.

<sup>61</sup> Category A3 in Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>62</sup> MT *הִרְפוּ* is a *hiph.* imperative of *רָפוּ*.

<sup>63</sup> Schaefer 2001: 118.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Gowan 1964: 5; Zimmerli 1982: 100; cf. von Rad 1991.

history and is with them.<sup>65</sup> These ideas provide points of reference with the way the recognition formula is used in *Ezekiel*.<sup>66</sup>

Similar ideas of restoration and knowledge are found associated with related phrases in the book of Jeremiah:

ולא ילמדו עוד איש את רעהו ואיש את אחיו לאמר דעו את יהוה  
כי כולם ידעו אותי למקטנם ועד גדולם נאם יהוה

No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know Yahweh', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares Yahweh. (Jer. 31:34)<sup>67</sup>

Here deliverance (v. 32) and knowledge of Yahweh is found in the context of a new covenant (v. 31),<sup>68</sup> in which Yahweh's law will be written internally on the hearts of Judah and Israel (v. 33).<sup>69</sup> Thompson argues that in this instance, ידע 'know' 'probably carries its most profound connotation'.<sup>70</sup> Such knowledge emerges from the intimacy of a deeply committed and loving relationship in which the past is forgotten and forgiven.<sup>71</sup> 'All levels of society would possess it as God's supernatural gift to the covenant people'.<sup>72</sup> With loose lexical connections, this verse is linked thematically to the recognition formula and its deployment in *Ezekiel* (16:60-62). Indeed, von Rad comments, 'There are striking

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<sup>65</sup> Craigie 1983: 345.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. Ezek. 25:5; see exegesis.

<sup>67</sup> Category J5 in Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Ezek. 16:60.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Ezek. 36:26. Holladay 1989: 198.

<sup>70</sup> Thompson 1980: 581.

<sup>71</sup> Thompson 1980: 581.

<sup>72</sup> Allen 2008: 357.

parallels with Jer. XXXI. 3ff.; one feels that Ezekiel must somehow have had Jeremiah's prophecies in front of him'.<sup>73</sup>

Another phrase that is closely related to the recognition formula is found in the book of Zechariah:

וידעת כי יהוה צבאות שלחני אליך

And you shall know that Yahweh Sabaoth<sup>74</sup> has sent me to you. (Zech. 2:15 [11])<sup>75</sup>

The passage speaks of Yahweh who, we read, will come and dwell in the midst of his people: 'O daughter Zion' (v. 14 [10]). Then many nations will also join Yahweh. It seems that knowledge of Yahweh will arise from these events—more specifically, knowledge that 'Yahweh has authorised and sent the writer'.<sup>76</sup> Meyers and Meyers observe the 'universalistic statement about the widespread recognition of God's sovereignty'.<sup>77</sup> However, while it may be the case in Zechariah (and Deutero-Isaiah), in *Ezekiel* there are no clear instances of universalistic response to Yahweh. Even so, scholars are not of one mind on this issue.<sup>78</sup>

A final example is from the final book in the Hebrew Bible:

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<sup>73</sup> Von Rad (1965: 235) notes in particular, Jer. 32:37-41.

<sup>74</sup> For a treatment of this theme see Mettinger 1982: 88-115.

<sup>75</sup> Category D2 in Table 2, Appendix p. 329. Here both are 2 f.s. pronouns but cf. Zech. 4:9 (2 m.s. and 2 m.pl.), category D2 Table 2; 6:15 (both 2 m.pl.), category D3 Table 2.

<sup>76</sup> Petersen 1985: 178. Cf. Ezek. 2:5; 33:33.

<sup>77</sup> Meyers and Meyers 1987: 168. Cf. Zech. 8:22; Hag. 2:7.

<sup>78</sup> Among those that do perceive a universalist response are Reventlow and Eichrodt, whereas Strong and Block are among those who do not.

וידע מנשה כי יהוה הוא האלהים

Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God. (2 Chron. 33:13)<sup>79</sup>

Clearly related to the recognition formula in terms of content (Klein observes an instance of the recognition formula here),<sup>80</sup> this phrase brings out the concept that acknowledgement of Yahweh's acts (in this case, the restoration of Manasseh) inspires knowledge of Yahweh's supremacy. Thus, the statement marks a break with Manasseh's past and implies that Yahweh alone is God.<sup>81</sup> Jarick astutely observes that as a consequence of this recognition, Manasseh responds in undivided devotion to Yahweh by initially removing all 'the foreign gods and the idol from the house of Yahweh' (33:15)<sup>82</sup> —a response that Ezekiel would no doubt have applauded.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.7 Conclusion

This selection of recognition formulae found outside *Ezekiel* in the Hebrew Bible has shown that when the formula is used, the events that Israel and the nations experience are credited as being acts of Yahweh. The formula is used to highlight that gaining knowledge of Yahweh is a consequence of Yahweh's activity in judgement, or deliverance, and that in these events, Yahweh's power and presence are invariably to the fore. Pride is also a theme that is never far from scenes spot-lit by the recognition formula. An appropriate response to the recognition of Yahweh is also part of the story, not least because Yahweh's activity is not limited to judgement, but because his covenantal faithfulness is also evident in passages that utilise the formula.

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<sup>79</sup> Category D4 Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>80</sup> Klein 2012: 482.

<sup>81</sup> Klein 2012: 482.

<sup>82</sup> Jarick 2007: 176.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Ezek. 7:20; 8:14; 24:21.

### 3 THE RECOGNITION FORMULA IN *EZEKIEL*

#### 3.1 Introduction

It is now time to examine the recognition formula in *Ezekiel*, beginning with a general discussion that considers a selection of examples of the formula found outside the OAN. The formula is found in the oracles of judgement against Israel (Ezek. 1-24), the oracles against foreign nations (25-32), and the oracles of restoration for Israel (33-39). It does not appear in the vision of the eschatological temple (40-48). The importance of the recognition formula is clearly reflected in the frequency of its occurrence; there are about fifty-five basic formulae, with twenty or so developed formulae and eight or nine related phrases.<sup>1</sup> The developed formulae exhibit a variety of expansions that inform a fuller understanding of what it means to know that 'I am Yahweh'.<sup>2</sup> Most of these can be broadly grouped into either verbal expansions or nominal expansions.<sup>3</sup> Verbal expansions may be perfect, infinitive construct or participial. In nominal expansions, it is usually the name 'Yahweh' that is nominally expanded;<sup>4</sup> sometimes, though, the subject of יָדַע 'to know' is nominally expanded.<sup>5</sup> These expansions are frequently found in a variety of combinations. Starting with two examples of the basic formula,<sup>6</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars differ in their assessment of the exact number found in *Ezekiel*. The reason, in part, for this, is the lack of consensus regarding the categorisation of the basic formula, the developed formula and phrases that are related to it. For instance Zimmerli (1982: 30, 143-4) finds 55 occurrences with 18 variations, while Joyce (2007: 27) speaks of 'some fifty-four times' in its basic form and 'over twenty more times with minor variations'. Strong (1995: 118) lists 70 in total while Evans (2006: 139) finds 72 and Vervenne (1997: 474) detects 69.

<sup>2</sup> Block 1997: 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to these broad groups, in one instance, כִּי is replaced by אֲשֶׁר (Ezek. 20:26).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. 'Yahweh your God' (Ezek. 20:20).

<sup>5</sup> E.g., 'All the trees of the field shall know...' (Ezek. 17:24).

<sup>6</sup> According to my definition (see 2.1 p. 49), these are: Ezek. 6:7, 14; 7:4, 27; 11:10; 12:16, 20; 13:14, 21, 23; 14:8; 16:62; 20:38; 22:16; 24:27; 25:5, 7, 11; 26:6; 28:23; 29:9, 21; 30:19, 26; 32:15; 35:4, 9, 15; 36:11, 38; 37:6; 38:23; 39:6.

following discussion will consider five verbal expansions followed by five nominal expansions.<sup>7</sup> In addition, three related phrases will be briefly reviewed.

### 3.2 Basic formulae

The first example points to the need that, so this thesis argues, the recognition formula addresses, namely that Yahweh's actions, which may on the surface appear destructive, are those that will inspire a renewed experience of his presence:

נפל חלל בתוכם וידעתם כי אני יהוה

The slain shall fall in your midst; then you shall know that I am Yahweh. (Ezek. 6:7)<sup>8</sup>

*Ezekiel* speaks of syncretistic practices that have blurred the people's perception of Yahweh.<sup>9</sup> The prophet maintains that judgement which sees local shrines, and those who worship there, being destroyed is the only way for the people to accept that the images (which, it is supposed, represent deities of the shrine) that they have been worshipping are powerless.<sup>10</sup> Greenberg succinctly summarises the purpose of the recognition formula, noting that it 'expresses the intended effect of the event predicted in the oracle'.<sup>11</sup> In this case, the mystery of Yahweh's name is disclosed by his action that convicts his people of their 'unholiness'.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that most of these examples witness combinations of expansions. It is acknowledged that many could have been grouped differently; however, despite attesting to a variety of expansions, they have been classified according to where the emphasis is thought to be.

<sup>8</sup> Category P2 in Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>9</sup> Allen 1994: 88.

<sup>10</sup> Block 1997: 228.

<sup>11</sup> Greenberg 1983: 133.

<sup>12</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 188.

In a second example, a similar silver lining to the dark cloud of judgement may be perceived:

והותרתי מהם אנשי מספר מחרב מרעב ומדבר למען יספרו  
את כל תועבותיהם בגוים אשר באו שם וידעו כי אני יהוה

But I will spare a few of them from the sword, from famine and pestilence, so that they may recount all their abominations among the nations where they go; then they shall know that I am Yahweh. (Ezek. 12:16)<sup>13</sup>

In this passage, the audience discovers that all is not lost; for some there is hope: some from the rebellious house of Israel (12:2, 10) will be preserved. However, they have not been spared through any merit of their own doing;<sup>14</sup> there is a sting of responsibility that must be fulfilled. Their lives will be spared to divulge their misconduct. In this way, the nations will appreciate why Israel has been captured and 'Yahweh will be vindicated for his harsh treatment of his people',<sup>15</sup> who, in turn, will recognise the true nature of Yahweh in the process of acknowledging their sin.<sup>16</sup> Joyce concedes that Ezek. 12:16 could refer to the nations coming to know Yahweh when Israel makes her confession, but his instinct to categorise it as a reference to Israel coming to know Yahweh makes more sense.<sup>17</sup> These examples offer early support for my contention regarding the formula as a statement of Yahweh's vindication.

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<sup>13</sup> Category P3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>14</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 274.

<sup>15</sup> Block 1997: 379.

<sup>16</sup> Block 1997: 379.

<sup>17</sup> Joyce (1989: 153) also points to Ezek. 21:4 (20:48) and 21:10 (5) as other possibilities that could suggest that it is the nations that will know Yahweh.

### 3.3 Verbal expansions

The most common verbal expansion is: 'I have spoken'.<sup>18</sup> However, this can be translated in a way that masks the recognition formula, hence: 'I, Yahweh, have spoken',<sup>19</sup> whereas the fulsome 'I am Yahweh, I have spoken'<sup>20</sup> highlights the recognition formula and emphasises the efficacy of Yahweh's word.<sup>21</sup> Discernment of the formula's function is greatly enhanced by the expansions that are witnessed. The first example of a verbal development is no exception:

וידעתם כי אני יהוה שפכתי חמתי עליכם

And you shall know that I am Yahweh, I have poured out my wrath upon you. (Ezek. 22:22)

The word of Yahweh comes to Ezekiel, announcing that Israel has become dross to him (v. 18). Because of this, as a silversmith smelts metal to get rid of the dross, so Yahweh, in his anger and wrath (v. 20), will gather the people in Jerusalem and smelt them (v. 21). Importantly, though, Yahweh is not judging them to retain them as precious silver, but rather to discard them as dross. However, even though *Ezekiel* predicts that people in Jerusalem will be destroyed as they experience Yahweh in his wrath, the possibility exists that the exiles, as silver, will be preserved.<sup>22</sup> The short object clause 'I am Yahweh' of the recognition formula, has been verbally expanded ('I have poured out'),<sup>23</sup> to include a summary statement of Yahweh's activity which underlines for the

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<sup>18</sup> Ezek. 5:13; 17:21, 24; 21:22 (17), 37 (32); 22:14; 24:14; 26:14; 30:12; 34:24; 36:36; 37:14.

<sup>19</sup> So Zimmerli, JPS, NRSV.

<sup>20</sup> Block 1997: 37.

<sup>21</sup> On occasions this stress is made explicit: 'I am Yahweh, I have spoken, I will accomplish it' (Ezek. 17:24; 22:14; 36:36; 37:14; cf. 24:14).

<sup>22</sup> Block 1997: 718.

<sup>23</sup> Category Q2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

house of Israel that this is a holy manifestation of Yahweh.<sup>24</sup> As such it points in the direction of the book's climactic ending that asserts the divine presence, awareness of which I contend, is the substance of *Ezekiel's* prophetic aspiration.

The suggestion that the vindication of Yahweh is an important facet of the recognition formula is never far away in these developed recognition formulae as the next example shows:

וידעו הגוים אשר ישארו סביבותיכם כי אני יהוה  
בניתי הנהרסות נטעתי הנשמה אני יהוה דברתי ועשיתי

Then the nations that remain all around you shall know that I am Yahweh, I have rebuilt the overthrown places, and I have replanted that which was desolate; I am Yahweh, I have spoken, and I will do it. (Ezek. 36:36)<sup>25</sup>

This verse speaks of the vindication of Yahweh as the nations witness the restoration of the land and its produce as well as the towns of Israel,<sup>26</sup> all done in the interests of the sanctification of his great name (vv. 22, 23). Greenberg perceives an inference that judgement for these nations will come after they have witnessed 'Israel's restoration and

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<sup>24</sup> Muilenburg 1962: 618.

<sup>25</sup> Category H2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329. Other Perfect verbs are: 'I will answer' (Ezek. 14:4, 7); 'I have deceived' (14:9); 'I bring low' (17:24); 'I have kindled' (21:4 [20:48]); 'I have unsheathed' (21:10 [5]); 'I have poured out' (22:22); 'and I will consecrate' (28:22); 'I have heard' (35:12).

<sup>26</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 109) suggests this is an instance of 'global recognition'. In most cases, the one who recognises Yahweh in his activity is the same as the addressee of the oracle. Here, though, while the oracle is addressed to Israel, it is the nations who will know that 'I am Yahweh' (cf. Ezek. 15:7). Elsewhere, the land of Israel is addressed (7:2), yet it is the king, prince and people that will acquire knowledge of Yahweh (7:27). Inconsistency in number is also witnessed, e.g. 35:9 (2 s./2 pl.), 15 (2 s./3 pl.).

the vindication of God',<sup>27</sup> that testifies to his renewed commitment to Israel.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, once purged of the people's abominations, the land 'would be changed by Yahweh's work of renewal'.<sup>29</sup> Allen observes that this verse 'serves the purpose of promising the vindication of God's people'.<sup>30</sup> However, the purpose of this is for the glory of Yahweh who overthrows, rebuilds and plants (cf. Jer. 1:10; 18:9; 24:6).

This verse attests a 'complex adaptation of the recognition formula',<sup>31</sup> which has been verbally expanded in a number of ways (בניתי 'I have rebuilt'; נטעתי 'I have replanted'). In addition, a second statement of the formula (אני יהוה 'I am Yahweh') is also verbally developed (דברתי 'I have spoken'; ועשיתי 'and I will do it'). Thus, the point of this expansion to explicitly emphasise the manifestation of Yahweh in his activity, is ably made.

### 3.4 ב plus infinitive construct

The first example of a ב plus infinitive construct development is typical of this kind of expansion, although this instance also includes a verbal expansion (דברתי 'I have spoken') which is qualified by an accusative intensifier (בקנאתי 'in my jealousy'), as well as the ב plus infinitive (בכלותי 'when I spend') that follows the recognition formula:

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<sup>27</sup> Greenberg 1997: 733.

<sup>28</sup> Block 1998: 364.

<sup>29</sup> Allen 1990: 179.

<sup>30</sup> Allen 1990: 179.

<sup>31</sup> Joyce 2007: 206.

וכלה אפי והנחותי חמתי בם והנחמתי וידעו כי אני יהוה דברתי בקנאתי בכלותי חמתי בם

And all my anger will be spent and I will vent my fury on them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am Yahweh; I have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend my fury on them. (Ezek. 5:13)<sup>32</sup>

The context of this example speaks of the abominations committed by the people who have not followed Yahweh's statutes or kept his ordinances (vv. 6-9). Because of this, Yahweh will cut them down without pity (v. 11) as he spends his anger on them in satisfaction of his holy justice (v. 13). The phrase והנחותי חמתי literally means, 'I have caused my fury to rest'. This 'rest' speaks of a finality to the event, the like of which shall not be repeated (v. 9). Once Yahweh's righteous anger has been expressed to the extent that there is no more to expend, thus allowing it to rest, his justice will be satisfied. The purpose of this judgement, as the recognition formula highlights, will be the 'recognition and vindication of Yahweh'.<sup>33</sup> The recognition formula is expanded to include the verdict of judgement (cf. 17:21) as an event of established fact (cf. 6:13; 12:15).<sup>34</sup> Zimmerli observes that these expansions stress that the recognition material (cf. 25:14, 17) is almost the same as the recognition content: 'To recognise Yahweh means to recognise his work'.<sup>35</sup>

A second example makes sense in relation to the verse that comes before it, which describes Yahweh accepting the people as a 'pleasing aroma'—although Zimmerli questions whether this phrase denotes the sacrificial act in which the offerer is accepted

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<sup>32</sup> Category Q3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329. Other instances of this type of expansion are: Ezek. 6:13; 12:15; 15:7; 20:42, 44; 25:17; 28:22; 30:8, 25; 33:29; 34:27; 36:23; 37:13, 28; 39:28.

<sup>33</sup> Allen 1990: 76.

<sup>34</sup> Allen 1990: 76.

<sup>35</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 145.

by Yahweh, or whether it refers the offerer metaphorically to the aroma that is pleasing to Yahweh.<sup>36</sup>

וידעתם כי אני יהוה בהביאי אתכם אל ארמת ישראל  
אל הארץ אשר נשאתי את ידי לתת אותה לאבותיכם

And you shall know that I am Yahweh, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country which I swore to give to your fathers. (Ezek. 20:42)

This acceptance of his people will only happen when Yahweh gathers them from the lands in which he has scattered them. During this process, Yahweh will manifest his holiness among the people in the sight of the nations (v. 41). Greenberg observes that this sanctity is equivalent to sovereign authority (cf. Lev. 10:3).<sup>37</sup> It is an event that leads to the recognition formula which witnesses a כ plus infinitive construct development (בהביאי 'when I bring'),<sup>38</sup> that describes Yahweh's gracious act in restoring his people to the land he promised their ancestors. This additional clause also contains a verbal (perfect) expression (נשאתי את ידי 'I lifted my hand', i.e., 'I swore'), that is added to the infinitive phrase. Thus, the people, who had experienced Yahweh's judgement, will be the recipients of his mercy, and, as Yahweh demonstrates his faithfulness to the people who bear his name, his sovereignty will be vindicated as the nations witness this mighty act. This future restoration crucially resolves the defamation to Yahweh's name that the exile had wrought,<sup>39</sup> restoring the reputation which Yahweh set aside in the interests of judging his people to whom he remained faithful.

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<sup>36</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 417. This is the only occasion that the HB refers to people as 'a pleasing aroma' (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-16; Eph. 5:2). It is also the only time *Ezekiel* uses the phrase in a positive way (Block 1997: 657).

<sup>37</sup> Greenberg 1983: 375.

<sup>38</sup> Category S2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>39</sup> Allen 1994: 15.

### 3.5 Participial expansions

The following example of the recognition formula expanded with a participle is one of only three found in *Ezekiel*.<sup>40</sup>

וידעו הגוים כי אני יהוה מקדש את ישראל בהיות מקדשי בתוכם לעולם

Then the nations shall know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forever. (Ezek. 37:28)<sup>41</sup>

This verse concludes the passage in which Yahweh announces that he will make an everlasting covenant of peace with the people (v. 26).<sup>42</sup> This firm affirmation of hope for the people's future is secured by the promise of Yahweh's presence dwelling among them. The choice of the Hebrew word מִשְׁכָּן 'tent' (v. 27) as the focus of Yahweh's presence evokes the desert Tabernacle (Lev. 26:11; Exod. 25:8 P).<sup>43</sup> Greenberg notes that the divine cloud was associated with the desert Tabernacle by day and the divine fire by night. He refers to Isa. 4:5 where the cloud evolves into an image of a protective cover. According to Greenberg, *Ezekiel* draws these two ideas together so that the notion of Yahweh's divine presence among his people is as a protective מִשְׁכָּן over them.<sup>44</sup> It is this notion of the people being set apart by Yahweh as he sanctifies them by his presence, that will be acknowledged by the 'international world'.<sup>45</sup> This recognition

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. 7:9; 20:12.

<sup>41</sup> Category H2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Ezek. 16:60; also compare Jer. 32:40; Gen. 9:16; Num. 6:26.

<sup>43</sup> Both these texts are generally thought to be identified with the Priestly source. See Childs 1974: 529; Lyons 2009: 23. Cf. 25:4 exegesis p. 100.

<sup>44</sup> Greenberg (1997: 757-58) notes that this image of a divine sheltering presence is later developed becoming the post-biblical idea of the Shekinah. Cf. ט 'I will make my Shekinah dwell among them'. In a footnote Levey (1987: 105) translates MT as 'My dwelling place shall be over them'.

<sup>45</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 277; cf. Zimmerli 1982: 109.

formula has a nominal expansion (וידעו הגוים 'Then the nations shall know'), a predicate participle (אני יהוה מקדש את ישראל 'I am Yahweh who sanctifies Israel') as well as an additional ב plus infinitive construct (בהיות מקדשי 'when my sanctuary is'). This development emphasises the manifestation of Yahweh in his activity.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.6 Nominal expansions

Not only does the recognition formula exhibit verbal development, but nominal expansions are also attested.<sup>47</sup> In this example, the recognition formula presents an 'awkward formulation'<sup>48</sup> with ל plus infinitive construct (לדעת 'that you may know'); the predicate has also been nominally expanded (יהוה אלהיכם 'Yahweh your God'):

לדעת כי אני יהוה אלהיכם

That you may know that I am Yahweh your God (Ezek. 20:20)<sup>49</sup>

It is verses such as these (cf. Ezek. 20:12) that inspire some scholars to suggest that *Ezekiel's* use of the recognition formula is grounded in the exodus narratives.<sup>50</sup> In this passage, *Ezekiel* recounts the nation's wilderness history (v. 18), and a time when Yahweh instructed the second wilderness generation to follow his statutes and be careful to observe his ordinances (v. 19).<sup>51</sup> In particular, they were to hallow the Sabbath. It was this practice of setting apart the Sabbath that would be a sign between Yahweh and his people, so the people would know that Yahweh was their God. Thus,

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<sup>46</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 110.

<sup>47</sup> These are: Ezek. 13:9; 20:20; 23:49; 24:24; 28:24, 26; 29:16; 34:30; 39:7, 22, 28.

<sup>48</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 36.

<sup>49</sup> Category S2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>50</sup> Block 1997: 38, 39; cf. Evans 2006 passim.

<sup>51</sup> Allen 1990: 11.

we find in *Ezekiel's* use of the recognition formula, knowledge of Yahweh is recognised in his historical acts and in the maintenance of Sabbath observance, both of which are construed as signs that point to him.

Here too in the next example, the short object clause of the recognition formula has been nominally expanded (אני אדני יהוה 'I am the Lord Yahweh').<sup>52</sup>

בבאה וידעתם כי אני אדני יהוה

When this comes, then you shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh. (Ezek. 24:24)<sup>53</sup>

Of the four hundred and thirty-four occasions on which the name Yahweh occurs in *Ezekiel*, over half of them occur in this expanded form, one that is characteristic of the prophet. Only once does the fuller 'Yahweh the God of Israel' appear (44:2).<sup>54</sup> In addition to the nominal expansion, this recognition formula is unusual since the כ plus infinitive clause that often comes after the statement of recognition, comes before it.<sup>55</sup> Speaking about this phenomenon, Zimmerli suggests that a better translation, which includes the temporal aspect of כ, while also highlighting 'the instrumental secondary meaning' of כ, would be: 'In the fact that this comes you shall know that I am Yahweh'. Thus, in this example of the recognition formula, the infinitive clause introduced by כ includes both the moment of recognition and its cause,<sup>56</sup> which is destruction of the temple. Too

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Ezek. 13:9; 23:49; 28:24; 29:16. For some reason, Zimmerli (1982: 144) observes five occurrences but excludes 24:24 from his list.

<sup>53</sup> Category Q2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>54</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 556. See also 25:3 translation note p. 83.

<sup>55</sup> Also Ezek. 32:15; cf. 33:33.

<sup>56</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 39.

stunned even to mourn,<sup>57</sup> the people will, in that calamitous event, recognise the character and person of the Lord Yahweh.

The next example is 'an adapted version of the familiar' form.<sup>58</sup>

וידעו כי אני יהוה אלהיהם אתם והמה עמי בית ישראל נאם אדני יהוה

And they shall know that I am Yahweh their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord Yahweh. (Ezek. 34:30)<sup>59</sup>

The recognition formula has been developed in a number of ways: firstly, it has been nominally expanded (אלהיהם 'their God');<sup>60</sup> secondly, the predicate is uniquely formed by a prepositional phrase (אתם 'with them');<sup>61</sup> and thirdly, the addition of 'the house of Israel are my people' constitutes a so-called 'covenant formula'.<sup>62</sup> According to von Rad, this shows that *Ezekiel* is speaking of an act of Yahweh's deliverance equivalent to the making of the old covenant.<sup>63</sup> Finally, this recognition formula forms part of a pair (cf. vv. 27-30)<sup>64</sup> that has been developed (in v. 29) by a ב plus infinitive (בשברי 'when I break'). The formula is found at the end of the passage in which Yahweh announces that he will make a covenant of peace with the people (v. 25) as their true shepherd (v. 15) who will raise up his servant David to feed his sheep (v. 23). They will be secure on

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<sup>57</sup> Allen 1990: 61. Block (1997: 794) suggests that the reason for the exiles' inability to express their grief was not emotional rigidity, but 'because they would recognise the dawn of a new age'.

<sup>58</sup> Joyce 2007: 199.

<sup>59</sup> Category S3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ezek. 28:26; 39:22, 28.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲקֵי 'I am Yahweh whose statutes...' (11:12), where the predicate is expanded with אֲשֶׁר + a relative clause.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 34:24; 36:28; 37:23, 27.

<sup>63</sup> Von Rad 1965: 235.

<sup>64</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 39.

the land around Yahweh's hill (v. 26) where they will no longer suffer the insults of the nations (v. 29). They shall know that Yahweh is their God and is with them (cf. Gen. 26:24) and that they are his people, the sheep of his pasture (v. 30). Thus, the tragedy of exile will be reversed; the prophetic utterance formula that seals the recognition formula proclaims Yahweh's true goal in his salvific activity: that the family of Israel might realise the presence of God among them, and the covenant relationship between the people and their God will be re-established.<sup>65</sup>

In the fourth instance that contains a nominal expansion (אלהיהם 'their God'),<sup>66</sup> the recognition formula is also developed with a ב plus infinitive construct (בהגלותי 'because I exile'). This is further expanded by a suffixed consecutive *pi.* perfect (וכנסתים 'and I gather them'):

וידעו כי אני יהוה אלהיהם בהגלותי אתם אל הגוים וכנסתים על אדמתם

Then they shall know that I am Yahweh their God because I exile them among the nations, and I gather them to their land. (Ezek. 39:28)<sup>67</sup>

In this passage, we read that the fortunes of Israel will be restored (v. 25), when Yahweh has brought them back from exile and through them has manifested his holiness in the eyes of the nations (v. 27). Then, from the security of their own land, they will recognise that it was Yahweh who sent them into exile, not some earthly king,<sup>68</sup> and that it was Yahweh who restored them to the land. Yahweh did this *because* he is their God. According to *Ezekiel*, in this event, Yahweh will leave no-one behind and, when he pours

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<sup>65</sup> Block 1998: 306.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Ezek. 28:26; 34:30; 39:22. But for nominal expansion, see also יהוה קדוש בישראל 'Yahweh the Holy One in Israel' (39:7).

<sup>67</sup> Category S3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>68</sup> Block 1998: 487.

out his spirit on the house of Israel, he will never conceal his presence again (v. 29).<sup>69</sup>

This recognition formula exhibits the quintessence of *Ezekiel's* attempts to show the character of Yahweh.<sup>70</sup>

In the final example of a nominal expansion, not only is the predicate 'I am Yahweh' nominally expanded by 'their God' (אלהיהם), but the subject of ידע is also developed, 'the house of Israel' (בית ישראל):

וידעו בית ישראל כי אני יהוה אלהיהם מן היום ההוא והלאה

Then the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day forward.

(Ezek. 39:22)<sup>71</sup>

In the narrative, it is said that Yahweh will display his glory among the nations who will see the judgement he has laid upon them (v. 21) after the burial of Gog (vv. 11-20). From that day onwards the house of Israel will recognise the presence of Yahweh and appreciate more fully his character. *Ezekiel* envisages that there will be no more doubt in the future regarding Yahweh's relationship to his people.<sup>72</sup> Zimmerli speaks of this complex (which begins in the previous verse) as one which shows a freer development: 'all the nations shall see'. This leads into an accusative statement, את משפטי 'my

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<sup>69</sup> Allen (1990: 209) says, from that moment onwards, 'the worst onslaught of alien forces' would be powerless to undo this work of salvation that Yahweh was to perform.

<sup>70</sup> That is because, I contend, it shows the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy. But see further 28:25 exegesis p. 197.

<sup>71</sup> Category S3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329. Other examples of this kind of expansion are: 'All the trees of the field shall know' (Ezek. 17:24; cf. 34:27); 'The nations shall know' (36:23; 37:28; 39:7); 'The nations who remain all around you shall know' (36:36); 'All flesh shall know' (21:10 [5]).

<sup>72</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 319) observes that despite the judgement on Gog described as being 'on that day', it is not understood to be an event at the end of time but that it marks a point after which there will be no doubt regarding the relationship between Yahweh and his people (cf. Block 1998: 482). Alternatively, it *might* be referring to the eschaton and thereafter eternity in Yahweh's presence.

judgement' (cf. 25:14; 38:16), added to which is a double statement of recognition (vv. 22, 23). Says Zimmerli, this unique expansion is 'developed to extreme fullness by using the double expression of seeing-knowing'.<sup>73</sup> As a precursor to the final passage that speaks of Israel's restoration prior to the vision of the new temple, a last opportunity is taken to emphatically underline the vindication of Yahweh in the recognition formula.<sup>74</sup> Yahweh will be vindicated in the eyes of the nations by his acts of judgement (v. 21) and he will be vindicated in the eyes of the exiles, his primary audience, who will know that the events of judgement (vv. 23, 24) are ultimately a means to re-endorse their covenant relationship (v. 25).

### 3.7 Related Phrases

Consideration will now be briefly given to three phrases that, while not being recognition formulae in the strictest sense, are related in terms of vocabulary and content. In the first example, the phrase which may not have a particularly close lexical equivalence with the recognition formula, does express content that points to the activity of Yahweh through the sending of his prophet which the people of Israel are expected to recognise:

וידעו כי נביא היה בתוכם

Then they shall know that a prophet has been among them. (Ezek. 2:5)<sup>75</sup>

Zimmerli is so impressed with the similarity between this phrase and the recognition formula that he maintains this is the first example of the formula in the book of *Ezekiel*.<sup>76</sup> According to Zimmerli: 'This form of speech about recognition is rooted in the

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<sup>73</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 31.

<sup>74</sup> Allen 1990: 208.

<sup>75</sup> Category H5 Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>76</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 133.

proceedings by which a fact is ascertained through specific things or events (“signs”).<sup>77</sup> In this instance it is Ezekiel who is the sign (cf. Ezek. 24:24) by which Israel will know Yahweh.<sup>78</sup> The same phrase appears in Ezek. 33:33 where a similar emphasis is found. This directly refutes the view of Ezekiel’s exilic audience who, rather than taking him seriously, consider him in terms of an entertaining performer, ‘a pop star’,<sup>79</sup> ‘like a singer of love songs, one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument’ (v. 32).<sup>80</sup>

A second example speaks of Israel’s on-going rebellion:

נודעתִי אליהם לעיניהם

I made myself known to them in their sight. (Ezek. 20:9)<sup>81</sup>

and despite being honoured with the privilege of being chosen by Yahweh, his people Israel continued in their idolatrous ways (v. 8). Provoked to anger by their actions (v. 8), Yahweh acted ‘for the sake of his name’. This refrain, which recurs throughout *Ezekiel*, refers in this chapter to Yahweh’s ‘gracious forbearance in the past, repeatedly sparing Israel when punishment was fully deserved’.<sup>82</sup> This pattern portrays Yahweh as a picture of ‘long-suffering grace’.<sup>83</sup> By delivering his people from Egypt (vv. 9, 10), Yahweh made

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<sup>77</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 133, cf. Zimmerli 1982: 72-75.

<sup>78</sup> 2 Kings 5:8, 15 make this point—although Zimmerli (1979: 133) refers to 2 Kings 5:9 and 15. Similarly, Moses, acting at Yahweh’s behest, is the sign that points to Yahweh (Num. 16:28); cf. Zimmerli 1982: 49-50.

<sup>79</sup> Allen 1990: 154.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. SirB 19v: 12 ‘Ben Sira 50:18’ קולו יתן השיר ‘The song gave its voice’, i.e. the song stands for the singer (Greenberg 1997: 687).

<sup>81</sup> Category D1 Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>82</sup> Joyce 2007: 149.

<sup>83</sup> Allen 1990: 10.

himself known in the sight of the nations. The motif of the nations witnessing Yahweh's divine revelation is at the heart of the recognition formula.<sup>84</sup>

In a final related phrase, much of the thematic material associated with the recognition formula is apparent:

וְנִדְעֵתִי בָּם

And I will make myself known among them. (Ezek. 35:11)<sup>85</sup>

and indeed, it is immediately followed by an extended recognition formula (vv. 12, 13). The phrase is cast in the context of judgement against Mount Seir and all Edom (vv. 1, 15) because it cherished an ancient enmity (v. 5) and had designs on possessing the land of Israel (v. 10). Accordingly, the passage reports that the hatred and envy of Edom will be punished in kind by Yahweh who will make himself known in the punitive process. As Allen observes, 'Yahweh's judgement of them would be his way of vindicating himself to Israel'. Moreover, by casting Yahweh as making himself known, *Ezekiel* 'gives expression to the aim of the chapter, to use the foreign oracle form as a means of ministering to Israel'.<sup>86</sup> It is a comment that adds considerable support to the present thesis.

### 3.8 Conclusion

The above discussion has provided a better view of the scene that forms the backdrop for *Ezekiel's* use of the recognition formula. So far, I have shown that the theme of Yahweh's power (to punish and to rescue) is very much in the foreground. The purpose

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<sup>84</sup> E.g. Ezek. 36:23.

<sup>85</sup> Category A1 Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>86</sup> Allen 1990: 173.

of Yahweh's actions in these endeavours is to inspire acknowledgment of his presence. A by-product of this acknowledgement is a conviction of 'unholiness'. The revelation of Yahweh's character expressed by wrath is a holy manifestation, which emphasises his presence (albeit in judgement) and points to the book's climactic ending. The recognition formula also underlines *Ezekiel's* view that the word of Yahweh is true and his judgement well founded and restorative. Moreover, the judgement associated with the formula is not gratuitous or endless; once Yahweh's justice has been satisfied, then his righteous wrath will 'rest'. Another emphasis of the recognition formula is that Yahweh is Israel's God. It is he who gives his people signs by which they can recognise him and be reminded of his presence. Furthermore, the formula highlights the purpose of the narrative sequence in *Ezekiel* which presents the exile being followed by restoration. This reveals Yahweh's character and a desire to vindicate his name as well as being a way of ministering to Israel. It is to this point that particular attention will be paid in the detailed exegesis that follows.

## 4 EXEGESIS:

### ORACLES AGAINST ISRAEL'S PALESTINIAN NEIGHBOURS

#### 4.1 Initial considerations

In chapter 1 I set out my argument, laying a foundation for the work by sketching out the general academic landscape of *Ezekiel* studies and highlighting the need for this study. The discussion included a consideration of the book's context and authorship from which it was concluded that *Ezekiel's* prophetic activity took place solely in Babylonia in the sixth century, and that the book which bears his name was completed at that time and is profoundly influenced by the prophet himself. A consideration of the oracles against the nations which followed, included a brief outline of their background and previous scholarship on the OAN in *Ezekiel*. I showed that while most scholars appreciate a unity of authorship for the book, there is a lack of accord regarding the function of the OAN. An exploration of the recognition formula began with an overview of scholarly output on the formula that concluded by recognising that the theological significance of the formula is rooted in its context. In chapter 2 I looked at some examples of the formula's appearance in the Hebrew Bible, observing that the context bears witness to Yahweh's activity which testifies to his power and presence. This was followed in chapter 3 by a brief consideration of the formula as it appears in *Ezekiel* outside the OAN. There I investigated the formula used to emphasise Yahweh's power to judge and to save, activity that was seen to reveal his character. Having set the scene in this way, the next task is to proceed with the detailed exegesis of those texts in which the recognition formula appears in the OAN.

## 4.2 Ezek. 25:1-7: Oracles against Ammon

### 4.2.1 Translation

1 And the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

2 ‘Son of Man, set your face towards the people of Ammon<sup>1</sup> and prophesy against them

3 and say to the people of Ammon, Hear the word of the Lord Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>3</sup> “Because you<sup>4</sup> said ‘Aha’<sup>5</sup> over<sup>6</sup> my sanctuary when it was profaned and over<sup>7</sup> the land of Israel when it was made desolate and over the house of Judah when they went into exile,

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<sup>1</sup> Lit. ‘Sons of Ammon’.

<sup>2</sup> LXX (2006) κύριος. According to Allen (1990: 65), MT adds אֲדֹנָי ‘Lord’, which violates normal usage, but anticipates the next clause. The occurrences of the double appellative are far fewer in LXX than MT and without pattern (Greenberg 1983: 65). The tetragram, originally transmitted in Hebrew letters by Greek translators, was replaced by copyists with κύριος ‘Lord’ or θεός ‘God’. Since the double name (κύριος κύριος) was repetitious, it was often omitted (Howard 1977: 63-83).

<sup>3</sup> LXX κύριος. According to Zimmerli (1983: 556-62) יהוה אֲדֹנָי ‘the Lord Yahweh’ is to be retained.

<sup>4</sup> MT 2 f.s. but pl. in LXX and S. *BHS* recommends reading MT.

<sup>5</sup> MT הֵאָחָה ‘an expression of joy usually at the expense of another’s misfortune’ (*DCH* 1995: 485). LXX ἐπεχάρητε from ἐπιχαίρω, ‘rejoice’, rarely in a good sense (cf. *LSJ* 1996: 672).

<sup>6</sup> *BHS* indicates that אֶל ‘to’ = עַל ‘upon’. Zimmerli (1979: 85-86) observes that the book of *Ezekiel* throughout shows ‘a quite surprising blurring of the distinction between אֶל and עַל which can be interchanged without fixed rules’. LXX includes direct address ἐπὶ σέ ‘upon you’.

<sup>7</sup> See previous note.

4 behold therefore, I am handing you<sup>8</sup> over to the people of the east as a possession. They shall set up<sup>9</sup> their encampments<sup>10</sup> among you and they shall pitch their tents in your midst. And they shall eat your fruit and drink your milk.

5 I will make Rabbah<sup>11</sup> a pasture for camels and Ammon<sup>12</sup> a fold for flocks. Then you<sup>13</sup> shall know that I am Yahweh.”

6 For thus says the Lord<sup>14</sup> Yahweh: “Because you<sup>15</sup> have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the contempt in your soul<sup>16</sup> against<sup>17</sup> the land of Israel,

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<sup>8</sup> MT 2 f.s., LXX is pl.

<sup>9</sup> MT וישבו ‘and they shall set up’—the only occurrence of *pi*. ישב ‘to dwell’ in HB. *BHS* suggests וישמו ‘and they shall pitch’ from שים ‘to set’. Zimmerli (1983: 7) contends it is a synonym for נתן ‘to give’. LXX appears to follow MT with κατασκηνώσουσιν ‘they shall dwell/encamp’.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Gen. 25:16; Num. 31:10; Psalm 69:25; 1 Chron. 6:39 (54).

<sup>11</sup> LXX τῆν πόλιν τοῦ Αμμων ‘the city of Ammon’.

<sup>12</sup> MT ואת בני עמון ‘the sons of Ammon’. *BHS* suggests ואת ערי עמון ‘and the cities of Ammon’ or ואת ערי בני עמון ‘the cities of the sons of Ammon’.

<sup>13</sup> 2 m.pl., i.e. the inhabitants of Ammon (Block 1998: 14).

<sup>14</sup> See note v. 3. LXX κύριος.

<sup>15</sup> The pronouns in vv. 6-7 are m.s.

<sup>16</sup> MT בכל שאטך ‘with all your contempt’ absent from LXX, S—possibly due to confusion surrounding שאט ‘contempt’ (from שוט ‘to despise’), which only occurs in Ezek. 25:6, 15; 36:5 (Allen 1990: 65).

<sup>17</sup> על – אל. See note verse 3.

7 behold<sup>18</sup> therefore, I have stretched out my hand against you and will give you as plunder<sup>19</sup> to<sup>20</sup> the nations. I will cut you off from the peoples and I will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy<sup>21</sup> you and you shall know that I am Yahweh.”

#### 4.2.2 Exegesis

The opening chapter of *Ezekiel's* OAN formally constitutes a single section marked by a prophetic word formula that introduces the whole:<sup>22</sup> ‘And the word of Yahweh came to me’ (Ezek. 25:1). Addressed as בן אדם ‘son of man’ at the beginning of these oracles against Israel’s closest neighbours, the prophet is instructed to ‘set his face’ towards Ammon. No further symbolic action accompanies the utterances against Moab, Edom and Philistia.

A speech form referred to by Zimmerli as ‘the prophetic word’ or ‘self-manifestation formula’, which is commonly known as a ‘proof saying’, characterises the chapter.<sup>23</sup> The pattern of proof-sayings in these oracles is as follows: a messenger formula, ‘thus says the Lord Yahweh’; an indictment which is introduced by יען ‘because’; an announcement of judgement that begins with לכן ‘therefore’; and a recognition formula, ‘and you shall

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<sup>18</sup> MT הנה ‘behold’ not attested in LXX and S.

<sup>19</sup> בן ‘portion’, ‘share’ (DCH 1995: 90), a hapax. Following LXX διαρπαγή ‘booty’, ‘spoil’, BHS emends to בז ‘plunder’, so NRSV and followed here. Greenberg (1997: 520) notes that another ג miswritten for ז is זה rather than זה ‘this’ in 47:13. There and here ג recurs in the following word. Further variants occur in נתן לבז ‘give up for plunder’ (7:21; 23:46) and ‘be for plunder to the nations’ (26:5). Barr (1968: 322) contends that בן ‘share’, ‘lot’ is a scribal error for בז ‘plunder’, suggested by בג, Aram. from Iran. *baga-*.

<sup>20</sup> MT לגוים ‘to the nations’. Some manuscripts read בגוים ‘in the nations’, so LXX.

<sup>21</sup> LXX ἀπωλεία ‘destruction’. Zimmerli (1983: 8) observes that it does not fit into the parallelism so is likely to be a secondary addition.

<sup>22</sup> Hals 1989: 362.

<sup>23</sup> Tuell 2009: 169; cf. Hals 1989: 179-82; Zimmerli 1982: 99.

know that I am Yahweh', to conclude. This pattern, with minor variations, is found in the four oracles in chapter 25, the first Tyre oracle (26:1-6) and the oracle against Sidon (28:20-26).<sup>24</sup> This pattern is suggestive of an original collection that has subsequently been expanded.<sup>25</sup> The oracles in Ezek. 25 (as well as those in 26:1-6; 28:20-26) share a basic structure, and are notable for their indictment and absence of mythological motifs, which sets them apart from the other oracles in *Ezekiel*.<sup>26</sup> The nations addressed follow a progression from Ammon in the north clockwise to Edom in the south and Philistia in the west.

There are seven nations addressed in *Ezekiel's* OAN.<sup>27</sup> This number may reflect the tradition found in Deut. 7:1, in which seven nations need to be removed before Israel can possess the land of Canaan.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the oracles in Ezek. 25 declare that Yahweh will clear out the enemies of his people as he prepares the land for the return of his people.<sup>29</sup> The four nations addressed in chapter 25 had at some point lost land to Israel

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<sup>24</sup> Proof-sayings may also simply consist of a divine proclamation and a recognition formula (e.g. Ezek. 12:19, 20).

<sup>25</sup> Tuell 2009: 169. The first Tyre oracle functions as a transition that looks back to the previous chapter with 'because...therefore...' structure. It also includes the recognition formula that effectively states the purpose of Tyre's downfall (Raabe 2010: 192).

<sup>26</sup> Geyer 1986: 132.

<sup>27</sup> Ammon (25:1-7), Moab (25:8-11), Edom (25:12-14), Philistia (25:15-17), Tyre (26-28:19), Sidon (28:20-26) and Egypt (29-32).

<sup>28</sup> Raabe 2010: 206; Zimmerli 1983: 3; Hals 1989: 180. Strong (1993: 132) suggests that the conquest tradition plays a major role in the choice of nations addressed, while Renz (1999: 94) observes that the placement of the OAN between the judgement oracles and those of restoration contributes to this possibility. But see further 28:22 exegesis p. 186. There are also seven nations addressed in Amos, depending on how they are counted: Aram (Amos 1:3-5), Philistia (1:6-8), Tyre (1:9-10), Edom (1:11-12), Ammon (1:13-15), Moab (2:1-3) and Judah (2:4-5). As in *Ezekiel*, there is also a lengthy judgement addressed to Israel. See Barton 1980: 16-35.

<sup>29</sup> Strong 1995: 130, 131. Bidlack (2000: 149) indicates that there is a concern for destroying the territory of each nation.

or been subject to it. Greenberg notes that although this past is veiled here, it ‘alone can account for the animosity toward Israel denounced in this oracle’.<sup>30</sup> The conspicuous derision from Israel’s neighbours expressed in the oracles of chapter 25 assumes the fall of Jerusalem and they are thus to be dated after 587 BCE.<sup>31</sup> The theme of revenge characterises these oracles, although the concept of Yahweh’s outstretched hand, which is reminiscent of the holy war terminology, also emphasises the idea that here Yahweh is found vindicating himself.

The prophetic word formula וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה אֵלַי, ‘And the word of Yahweh came to me’ (v. 1)<sup>32</sup> is found fifty-one times in *Ezekiel*.<sup>33</sup> The formula usually introduces a new speech section and so helps define units in the book.<sup>34</sup> The phrase reports a ‘revelation experience by way of introducing a prophecy’.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the formula is found one hundred and thirteen times, although the book of *Ezekiel* is unsurpassed in the number of occurrences.<sup>36</sup> The prophetic word formula has its roots in the language of prophecy;<sup>37</sup> however, the introduction of the first person to the phrase

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<sup>30</sup> Greenberg 1997: 523.

<sup>31</sup> Boadt 1986: 198; Renz 1999: 93. For a full study of the chronology in *Ezekiel*, see Kutsch 1985; Mayfield 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Hals 1989: 362.

<sup>33</sup> Either in its pure form or with variations, e.g. the addition of a date found in the OAN (26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17).

<sup>34</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 144; Raabe 2010: 190.

<sup>35</sup> Greenberg 1983: 83.

<sup>36</sup> The phrase frequently appears in Samuel-Kings. The word of Yahweh also comes to Abram (Gen. 15:1). Superscriptions to Hos., Zeph. and Joel witness the formula, yet it is absent in literary prophets pre-Jeremiah, although it is often seen in Jeremiah. Haggai and Zechariah also attest the phrase. Cf. Jon. 1:1; Dan. 9:2.

<sup>37</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 144. Greenberg (1983: 83) confirms the prophetic origin, since there is no secular equivalent.

is a development characteristic of *Ezekiel*.<sup>38</sup> The formula's appearance in the narratives of the early monarchy suggests the phrase was also used by the pre-classical prophets.<sup>39</sup> With regard to its content, Zimmerli speaks of a 'theology of the word'<sup>40</sup> emerging in prophetic circles that points to 'a very well developed conception of the "word of Yahweh"'.<sup>41</sup> While the expression is not cast as a personal address from Yahweh, the 'word' is understood as an objective entity with its own power of encounter.<sup>42</sup> However, this idiom does not imply distance between Yahweh and the prophet as if the 'word' was a medium of conveyance. This is shown to be true in Jeremiah and especially in *Ezekiel* where direct address of the prophet by Yahweh is abundant.<sup>43</sup> That the word of Yahweh is integral to Ezekiel's message, is shown by the way the prophet is instructed to eat Yahweh's very words (Ezek. 3:1).<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the announcement of the coming of Yahweh's word highlights the historicity of the impending occasion. The frequency with which the formula appears in connection with a date notice in *Ezekiel* amply confirms this.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 144.

<sup>39</sup> The formula is used of Samuel (1 Sam. 15:10), Nathan (2 Sam. 7:4), Gad (24:11), the prophet from Bethel (1 Kings 13:20); Jehu (16:1), Elijah (17:2, 8; 18:1; 21:17, 28), and Isaiah (2 Kings 20:4; cf. Isa. 38:4). The phrase is used moderately in Jeremiah and extensively in *Ezekiel*. It is also witnessed in the post-exilic Haggai and Zechariah. Editorial usage is apparent in the superscriptions of some pre-exilic prophets (Hosea, Zephaniah and Joel), but this reflects later usage.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. von Rad's (1965: 80-98) discussion.

<sup>41</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 145.

<sup>42</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 145.

<sup>43</sup> Greenberg 1983: 84. E.g. Jer. 1:11; Ezek. 24:15, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Davis 1989; Odell 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Ezek. 1:2-3; 3:16; 20:1-2; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17.

The address בן אדם 'son of man' (v. 2) occurs ninety-three times in the book of *Ezekiel*.<sup>46</sup> Yahweh (or his representative) always addresses Ezekiel in this way.<sup>47</sup> It is a relational phrase that emphasises the 'finite dependence and insignificance' of the prophet in contrast to the 'awesome grandeur of Ezekiel's holy God'.<sup>48</sup> Rather than highlighting his personal name and being, or an aspect of his role, the expression highlights that Ezekiel is an individual (בן) of the created order (אדם).<sup>49</sup> Moreover, Ezekiel's priestly background, which uses אדם for 'person' as the subject of a rule (Lev. 1:2; 13:2; Num. 19:14), is, according to Zimmerli, sufficient explanation for its use.<sup>50</sup>

The command for Ezekiel to 'set his face' (v. 2) is found introducing a prophetic denunciation nine times in the book of *Ezekiel*.<sup>51</sup> An original objective meaning of the saying may be found in the Balaam narrative (Num. 22-24) in which direct visual contact

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<sup>46</sup> Joyce (2007: 76) notes that this is many more times than in the rest of the HB put together.

<sup>47</sup> In the visions of Amos (7:8; 8:2) and Jeremiah (1:11; 24:3) the proper name of the prophets is found. The name 'Ezekiel' appears in 1:3 and 24:24. 'Ezekiel shall be a sign to you' (Ezek. 24:24) is a saying of Yahweh *about* the prophet, not *to* him.

<sup>48</sup> Joyce 2007: 76; Greenberg 1983: 62. Pharaoh and the king of Tyre failed to acknowledge this distinction (Ezek. 29:3; 28:2). See also Balaam's distinction between God (אל) and man (איש) and 'son of man' (בן אדם) in Num. 23:19.

<sup>49</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 131.

<sup>50</sup> Zimmerli (1979: 131) rejects Dürr's (1923: 40) translation of the more tender 'child of man' as well as any suggestion that this term of address refers to Gilgamesh ix, 38 where Ea addresses the hero of the flood as 'man'. I have been unable to consult Dürr's work. Block (1997: 31) observes that while some translate the phrase as 'mortal' (so NRSV), Ezekiel's mortality is not the emphasis. Rather, as noted in the main text, it is a relational phrase that emphasises the contrast between the insignificance of the prophet and the grandeur of Yahweh. Throughout, I translate the expression בן אדם as 'son of man'.

<sup>51</sup> Ezekiel is commanded to 'set his face' towards: the mountains of Israel (6:2); the false prophetesses (13:17); the south (20:46); Jerusalem (21:2); Ammon (25:20); Sidon (28:21); Pharaoh (29:2); Mount Seir (35:2); Gog (38:2). Joyce 2007: 85. Hals (1989: 361; cf. Block (1997: 221), refers to this figurative idiom as 'the hostile orientation formula', while Allen (1994: 86) speaks of 'this pose of attentiveness'.

seems to be important.<sup>52</sup> Carley indicates that such acts had a magical significance; the act of casting the evil eye was a well-known means of invoking malevolence.<sup>53</sup> However, these acts are to be distinguished from Ezekiel's actions which were performed on Yahweh's command as his representative, rather than at the bidding of another person.<sup>54</sup>

Zimmerli indicates that these expressive gestures 'undoubtedly belong in close proximity to the prophetic sign-acts' of chapter 4.<sup>55</sup> However, the gestures were not independently formulated actions which conveyed their own message, but those which 'gave emphasis to the prophet's word or qualified it in a particular way'.<sup>56</sup> Appearing to introduce a section, they are 'simply the underscoring of the dynamic character of the word, which is manifested in the prophet's action'.<sup>57</sup> Says Zimmerli, this does not undervalue the gestures, but rather 'they establish a reminder of the character of the word as event'.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the gesture, like Ezekiel's acted prophecies, 'were as much a part of Yahweh's message as the words Ezekiel had to speak'.<sup>59</sup> However, FriebeI thinks that by Ezekiel's time, the phrase was probably just a figurative expression indicating a negative attitude towards the addressee, and that it probably was not even

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<sup>52</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 182. Elisha also fixes his gaze on a man until he was ashamed (2 Kings 8:11).

<sup>53</sup> Carley (1975: 40), who follows Fohrer (1955), indicates that such malevolence included succumbing to illness, the victims losing property, and even death. These acts were thought to be most effective when the prospective victims were healthy and prosperous.

<sup>54</sup> Carley 1975: 42.

<sup>55</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 182.

<sup>56</sup> Zimmerli (1979: 29) writes: 'The purpose of the prophet's sign-actions is to set forth in a visible action the event announced by Yahweh as something already begun'.

<sup>57</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 30.

<sup>58</sup> Zimmerli (1979: 182) notes that the gestures accompany the preached word, which is reinforced and clarified by the action.

<sup>59</sup> Carley 1975: 41.

accompanied by any specific behaviour.<sup>60</sup> A different view is offered by Brownlee, who looks to a literal interpretation.<sup>61</sup> Brownlee suggests that Ezekiel set out on a journey and travelled to the places mentioned. Notes Brownlee, the idiom 'is a well attested travel formula in the Bible and in ANE literature' and the phrase 'occurs in Ezekiel only as a dispatch formula'.<sup>62</sup> Others<sup>63</sup> find no difficulty in attributing a symbolic interpretation which, notes Allen, 'accords with the phenomenon that foreign oracles in the prophetic books have rhetorical audiences, while the real audiences were the prophet's own constituency'.<sup>64</sup> Despite being rhetorical, however, 'a gesture in some direction was called for'.<sup>65</sup> According to Greenberg, 'by glaring at (in the direction of) some object, the prophet represents God's angry purpose regarding it'.<sup>66</sup> Tuell also sees this as a priestly expression for divine judgement. 'When Ezekiel sets his face against people or places, he is enacting the role of God; through symbolic action, the prophet both models and

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<sup>60</sup> Friebel 1999: 16.

<sup>61</sup> In his unusual exegesis of Ezek. 8, Brownlee (1986: 129) suggests that the reasons for interpreting the prophet's journey to Jerusalem literally are overwhelming. He bizarrely posits that Ezekiel either ran from Gilgal in a state of ecstasy, in which it seemed as if the prophet was flying, or he did actually fly 'literally through the air from Babylonia to Jerusalem' (p. 130). Brownlee contends that flying or running would account for the lapse in time between the elders' visit (8:1), which says Brownlee, in all likelihood happened during the day, and the events of chapter 8, which, argues Brownlee, took place at night. That being the case, Brownlee, somewhat strangely, acknowledges that if Ezekiel did fly, he did so faster than a bird, but slower than a plane. Moreover, Brownlee intimates that if Ezekiel was indeed physically transported, it may very well have been at a speed somewhat like that of Millar Burrows, who on 28 Feb. 1948, drove by car from Baghdad to Jerusalem in a day (p. 130).

<sup>62</sup> Brownlee 1986: 96; cf. Brownlee 1983: 83-110.

<sup>63</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 29-30, 182-83; Carley 1975: 40-42.

<sup>64</sup> Allen 1990: 25.

<sup>65</sup> Greenberg 1983: 130.

<sup>66</sup> Greenberg 1983: 104. E.g. Ps. 34:16; Lev. 17:10; 20:3; 20:6; 26:17.

invokes God's judgement'.<sup>67</sup> Greenberg calls this action 'physical symbolisation of intention',<sup>68</sup> which he notes occurs in Israel's worship (cf. Dan. 6:11).

According to biblical tradition, Ammon was the son of Abraham's nephew Lot and one of his daughters (Gen. 19:36-38), and the eponymous ancestor of the Ammonites, whom the Israelites encountered during the exodus to the Promised Land (Num. 21:24). There is, however, no biblical record of the conquest of the Ammonites, and indeed, in Deuteronomy 2:19, 37, an explicit command of Yahweh not to attack Ammon is recounted. Even so, from early days Ammon had been hostile to Israel (Judg. 11:4; 1 Sam. 11:1; 2 Sam. 8:12; Amos 1:13-15). In the prophetic literature, Ammon is generally associated with Moab and Edom as the traditional enemy of Israel.<sup>69</sup> Positioned east of the territories of Gad and Reuben (Deut. 3:16), the land of Ammon was not as well defined as that of Moab. The Ammonites' deity was Milcom (1 Kings 11:5),<sup>70</sup> although they also worshipped Chemosh, the god of Moab (Judg. 11:29). Both gods were worshipped by Israel at times (1 Kings 11:33; 2 Kings 23:13), a fact that is unlikely to have escaped the attention of Ezekiel who denounces the idolatry of the people (Ezek. 6).<sup>71</sup>

*Ezekiel* has articulated concern over Ammon's derogatory comments elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> The reason the denunciation of Ammon comes at the beginning of the OAN may be

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<sup>67</sup> Tuell 2009: 41.

<sup>68</sup> Greenberg 1983: 104. Carley (1975: 41) also observes that this action had significance in the realm of worship and priestly activity. Yahweh is said to have set his face towards the people as a gesture of both divine favour and disfavour. Cf. Ezek. 7:22; Num. 6:25.

<sup>69</sup> Amos 1:13-15; Isa. 11:14; Ezek. 25:1-7; Dan. 11:41.

<sup>70</sup> Block (1998: 15) retains 'Sons of Ammon' rather than the gentile 'Ammonites'.

<sup>71</sup> Idolatry is frequently paired with Israel's crime of bloodshed in *Ezekiel* (Ezek. 16:36; 22:3-4; 36:18).

<sup>72</sup> Ezek. 21:33, 34 (28, 29).

attributable to the dismay that Ezekiel and the people felt when Nebuchadnezzar decided to attack Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:27 [22]), instead of Rabbah, the capital of Ammon.<sup>73</sup> The invective and retribution described in the oracles would thus have surely been welcomed by the exiles.<sup>74</sup> However, notwithstanding previous political alliances and disagreements between the nations, the indictment of Ammon refers to the mockery of Jerusalem's fall.<sup>75</sup>

The first of these oracles against foreign nations begins with a firm emphasis on their provenance: these prophetic utterances are the very word of Yahweh. A double introduction underlining this is expressed firstly by the use of the 'call to attention formula', 'Hear the word of the Lord Yahweh', that opens this public address with the intention of attracting the audience to what follows.<sup>76</sup> It is important to note that while the oracle is cast as being directed to the people of Ammon, Ezekiel's immediate audience, for whom he tailors all these oracles against foreign nations, are members of his own ward, the exiles who are with him in Babylonia.<sup>77</sup> The messenger formula which follows implicitly affirms the divine commissioning of the prophet.<sup>78</sup> This formula first appears in Ezek. 2:4 where no specific message content is given. This is significant since it shows that Ezekiel's prophetic role was not restricted to one circumscribed message; 'the prophet's office rested solely on his personal connection with the sender, who retained in his own power the content of every message with complete freedom'.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Block 1998: 15. *Ezekiel* refers to the king of Babylon as 'Nebuchadnezzar' (a spelling that is followed hereafter); cf. Ezek. 29:18 translation note.

<sup>74</sup> On retribution in *Ezekiel*, see Wong 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 13.

<sup>76</sup> Hals (1989: 359) indicates that typically the main constituents of the call to attention formula are an invitation to listen, addressee introduction and a comment signalling content.

<sup>77</sup> Block 1997: 5.

<sup>78</sup> Hals 1989: 361. The phrase appears more than 120 times in *Ezekiel*.

<sup>79</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 133.

The messenger formula (25:2), which marks the beginning of the first proof-saying in the OAN, proceeds with the indictment: 'Because you said "Aha"' (v. 3). 'Aha'<sup>80</sup> is an expression of satisfaction usually at another's misfortune.<sup>81</sup> The clause is a typical instance of an indictment that forms part of a proof-saying. Shown to originate in the context of holy war, the earliest prophetic example is found in 1 Kings 20.<sup>82</sup> 'Because the Syrians have said, "Yahweh is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys"' (1 Kings 20:28). No doubt *Ezekiel*, at least in part, is utilising the formula in this context to remind the exiles that this is Yahweh's battle,<sup>83</sup> and that familiarity with their legends involving the mighty hand of Yahweh<sup>84</sup> allows them to rest assured of the outcome. The second person feminine singular address here (vv. 3b-4) is the common way of addressing cities and nations.<sup>85</sup> Ammon is also addressed in the masculine plural (vv. 3, 5) because of the toponym בני עמון 'Sons of Ammon'. Additionally, the masculine singular is found throughout the second oracle (vv. 6-7), included perhaps to agree with 'people', 'nation', or it could be a reference to the king as the representative of the nation.<sup>86</sup> Inconsistencies of this kind are found throughout the Hebrew text of *Ezekiel's* OAN.

The combination of the desecration of the sanctuary, the desolation of Israel and the expulsion of the people (v. 3) strikes at the heart of Judean national self-

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<sup>80</sup> For discussion of the term 'Aha!', see Gosse 1986: esp. pp. 543-45.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Ezek. 26:2; 36:2; 6:11. Also Job 39:21; Ps. 35:21, 25; 40:16; 70:4.

<sup>82</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 99-110; cf. von Rad 1991.

<sup>83</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 100) defers to von Rad's (1991) work, indicating that holy war is not a battle between human beings but between Yahweh and his enemies.

<sup>84</sup> E.g. Exod. 15:6 (J).

<sup>85</sup> Greenberg 1997: 518. עיר 'city' f., sometimes m. (*DCH* 2007: 369); see also the f. endings referring to nations in Ezek. 32:19-29.

<sup>86</sup> Greenberg 1997: 518.

consciousness.<sup>87</sup> In the OAN, these events are given a theological interpretation that focuses on Yahweh.<sup>88</sup> Yet Ammon fails to recognise that the profanation of the sanctuary is a consequence of Yahweh's righteous anger, and their subsequent derision is thus an offence against Yahweh's holiness.<sup>89</sup> Says Greenberg, gloating over the fall of an enemy was regarded in the teaching of ancient literature as an offence to their deity.<sup>90</sup> The teaching<sup>91</sup> is that misfortune is a divine decree and, therefore, ridiculing it is an insult to Yahweh's purpose, which has been defamed by Ammonite contempt. Consequently, divine retribution is in the interests of Yahweh's own vindication, thus advancing my argument here. As a tentative suggestion in passing, rather than using the word *היכל* 'temple',<sup>92</sup> perhaps Ezekiel the priest intentionally uses the term *מקדש* 'sanctuary' to evoke the years of exile in the wilderness when the presence of Yahweh was associated with the *מקדש*.<sup>93</sup> Not only is the mobility of Yahweh's presence affirmed in the opening vision that encourages the exiles in Babylonia (Ezek. 1:4-28), but here

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<sup>87</sup> Block 1998: 17. Cf. Jer. 49:1-6, which speaks of the devastation of Ammon and the deportation of its population as being exiles of Milcom, the Ammonite patron deity.

<sup>88</sup> Renz 1999: 93.

<sup>89</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 13. Cooke (1936: 282) observes a link between the profanation of the temple in 25:3 and that of 24:21. On the theme of holiness in *Ezekiel*, see Ganzel 2005; Miao 1998; Gammie 1989: 45-70.

<sup>90</sup> Greenberg 1997: 525.

<sup>91</sup> E.g. Prov. 24:17-18; Sir. 7:11. See also 'Wisdom of Amenemopet', *ANET* 1950: 424.

<sup>92</sup> *Ezekiel* uses the word *היכל* in Ezek. 8:16. It is, however, recognised that for *Ezekiel* there is only one central sanctuary (Joyce 2007: 38) and that its location in Jerusalem is a religious premise (Mein 2001: 115).

<sup>93</sup> E.g. Exod. 25:8 P; Lev. 16:33. In the earlier parts of the book, the root *קדש* 'holy' occurs as *מקדש*. Apart from the solitary reference to Yahweh as a sanctuary (Ezek. 11:16), most cases refer to the profanation of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 5:11; 8:6; 9:6; 21:7 (2); 23:38, 39; 24:21; 25:3). Most occurrences of the root *קדש* 'holy' appear in chapters 40-48, which describe Ezekiel's vision of the eschatological temple. However, while the etymology of *קדש* is uncertain (*HALOT* 1995: 647), Barr (1961: 111-14) argues that it is not etymology but usage that determines a word's meaning. This is the rationale behind Clines (*DCH* 1993: 14), which renders *קדש* as 'holy' (*DCH* 2010: 190).

too, memories of that dynamic may be recalled, offering reassurance to the exiles and vindicating Yahweh's faithfulness.<sup>94</sup> As Kutsko says: 'It was only if the presence of God could be perceived in exile that they could have hope'.<sup>95</sup>

The land was the third entity in the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel. It functioned as a gauge of the relationship's state of health. For instance, bloodshed, frequently cited by *Ezekiel* (9:9; 23:45; 35:6), was thought to pollute the land, a sin which could only be expiated by the blood of the killer (cf. Num. 35:33). Consequently, banishment from the land and its ensuing desolation (v. 3) was a mark of the nation's punishment.<sup>96</sup> The punishment fitted the crime, though, and the removal of the people from the land, was an integral part of the divine plan in which cultic principles can be discerned. All impurity must be removed from the land, which experienced 'devastation' as part of the purification process. As Rooke judiciously comments, the basis of restoration for *Ezekiel* 'is expressed in the purging and cleansing of the evil from the pre-existing order'.<sup>97</sup> She further observes that this important principle is applicable to any aspect of *Ezekiel's* treatment of Israel's future. In due course, the people will also be purified by the removal of their hearts of stone that will be replaced with hearts of flesh (Ezek. 36:25-28; cf. 11:19, 20). This re-birth will enable them to follow Yahweh's statutes and ordinances, so allowing them to live in the land once more (36:28; cf. 20:11). There, they will recognise the activity of Yahweh (36:38) whose presence will return, re-consecrating the people and the land (43:4). However, a lot of water must flow under that bridge before it can be crossed.

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<sup>94</sup> For faithfulness in *Ezekiel*, see Wendland 2007. Zimmerli (1960: 227) writes that the faithfulness of God with regard to the sinner is one of grace that makes all things new, since it is the faithfulness of the one who is holy.

<sup>95</sup> Kutsko 2000: 156; cf. MacDonald and de Hulster 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Allen 1990: 67.

<sup>97</sup> Rooke 2000: 107.

The usual term for Ezekiel's primary audience is the 'house of Israel'.<sup>98</sup> Here, though (v. 3), its political name, the 'house of Judah' is employed as the representative of Israel.<sup>99</sup> Elsewhere in *Ezekiel*, the same distinction is made between the house of Judah and the house of Israel (4:4-6; 8:11, 17). However, rather than contrasting Israel as the northern kingdom with Judah as the southern kingdom, a parallelism may be observed between the sanctuary, the land of Israel and the house of Judah (v. 3). This shows, notes Zimmerli,<sup>100</sup> that Jerusalem, Judah and the land of Israel are understood by *Ezekiel* as concentric circles.<sup>101</sup> This understanding is also evident in 25:12 where the house of Judah is the object of Edomite derision which Yahweh vindicates by the hand of 'my people Israel' (v. 14).<sup>102</sup> Although he acknowledges the reasons are unclear, Zimmerli observes the possibility that *Ezekiel* reflects a priestly influence,<sup>103</sup> which from early times addresses the covenant people of Yahweh as 'Israel'.<sup>104</sup> Such a view is particularly relevant in this context where his people have lost face and Yahweh's intervention vindicates his covenantal faithfulness.

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<sup>98</sup> Block (1997: 31) observes that the phrase occurs 83 times in the book, which accounts for 57 percent of the expression's usage in the OT.

<sup>99</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 13. Wevers (1982: 144) believes this shows a secondary hand.

<sup>100</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 563.

<sup>101</sup> A similar idea may be discerned in the 'sacred geography' portrayed in *Ezekiel's* great temple vision (e.g. 41:7), arranged to emphasise the temple at its centre. Cf. Levenson 1976; Levenson 1984.

<sup>102</sup> Block (2014: 32) notes that in the phrase 'my people', the covenantal basis for the relationship between the nation and Yahweh is evident. Cf. covenant formula (Hals 1989: 360), e.g. Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 34:24, 30-31; 36:28; 37:23.

<sup>103</sup> For Ezekiel as priest, see Betts 2005; Sweeney 2013.

<sup>104</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 563, 65) indicates that social, political and geographical considerations fade into the background as theological content is given expression.

On the heels of legitimation, the consequences are now announced: ‘therefore I am handing you over...’. While retaining the recognition formula, *Ezekiel* does not seem to entirely preserve the characteristic proof-saying structure as found in 1 Kings 20 where Zimmerli suggests an original setting for the recognition formula is to be found.<sup>105</sup> However, despite the lack of the phrase ‘I give them into your hand’ (cf. 1 Kings 20:13), Zimmerli observes a ‘more than accidental’ appearance of the verb נתן ‘to give’ in the OAN.<sup>106</sup> In the preceding judgement oracles against Israel (Ezek. 1-24), the phrase ‘I give (נתן) them into your hand’ does not appear; here, though (25:4), a variation is heard: ‘Therefore I am handing (נתן) you over to the people of the east as a possession’. This refrain is echoed in the oracle against Moab: ‘I will give (נתן) it...to the people of the east as a possession’ (25:10). However, whereas in the old prophetic idiom Yahweh directly intervenes—‘I give (נתן) them into your hands’ (1 Kings 20:13, 28)—in this new context the people of the east become the agents of Yahweh’s judgement.

The people of the east, tent-dwelling nomads of the Syro-Arabian desert (cf. Isa. 11:14; Jer. 49:28), were a constant threat to their border nations (Jdg. 6:3). Such a threat is cast in a different light in Ezekiel’s vision of abominations in the temple; Ezekiel sees twenty-five men at the temple entrance facing east to worship the sun (Ezek. 8:16). Now, though, Ammon, who has exulted over the destruction of the temple, is invaded by an insurgence of people from the east. Lee posits that the rhetorical function of the ‘sons of the east’ is the contrast they present in coming from the east, as opposed to Israel’s

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. pp. 41, 56.

<sup>106</sup> E.g. Ezek. 25:4, 7, 10, 14, 17; 35:7. But see also 11:9, where Israel is given into the hands of foreigners. Zimmerli (1982: 108) contends that the OAN ‘most clearly preserve the inheritance from 1 Kings 20’. He includes 1 Kings 20:13, 28 in the genre of OAN and observes that these oracles ‘are the germ cell of prophetic speech in the form of the proof-saying’.

location to the west of Ammon.<sup>107</sup> What is more, she suggests that handing the land to the people of the east prevents Judah in the west from benefitting from the judgement.<sup>108</sup> It is these nomads who will set up their encampments among the people of Ammon. Their 'encampments' (cf. Ezek. 46:23) are Bedouin camps which were marked off by stones,<sup>109</sup> indicating a degree of permanence to their sojourn. Thus, the prospect of being invaded by 'foreigners' would strike at the heart of Ammonite pride, where Yahweh's wrath is directed, as retributive justice for their contemptuous 'Aha' (v. 3) is announced.

If it is plausible in the use of 'sanctuary' (v. 3) to hear an echo of the wilderness years, then perhaps here too (v. 4) a similar motif might be discerned. The wilderness years speak not only of Yahweh's presence with the people—'My presence will go with you and I will give you rest' (Exod. 33:14 J)—but also of their rebellion (Ezek. 20:13; cf. Ps. 78:40). Despite the signs that Yahweh had performed, including the appearance of the glory at the tent of meeting (Exod. 29:43 P), the people still refused to believe in him (Num. 14:11). The wilderness years were characterised by discontent; these were years when the people grumbled in their tents (Deut. 1:26) and failed to receive the blessing of rest associated with possession of the land (Josh. 22:4), neither trusting nor obeying Yahweh (Deut. 9:23). The exiles in Babylonia were in a similar situation; Ezekiel was called by Yahweh to address the rebellious house of Israel (Ezek. 2:5) with Yahweh's words (3:4). The people had allowed the temple to become a source of national pride, which accounts for Yahweh's wrath, rather than appreciating it as a sign of Yahweh's

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<sup>107</sup> Lee 2016: 55; cf. Odell 2005: 327.

<sup>108</sup> Lee 2016: 77.

<sup>109</sup> Greenberg 1997: 518.

presence dwelling among them (Ezek. 24:21).<sup>110</sup> Thus, in the use of מִקְדָּשׁ 'sanctuary' (v. 3) and מִשְׁכָּן 'tent' (v. 4) in this oracle, rather than הַיְכָל 'temple' and אֹהֶל 'tent', *Ezekiel* might be deliberately employing language designed to recall Yahweh's promise made in the wilderness exile that he would dwell with his people:

And have them make me a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ), so that I may dwell among them. In accordance with all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle (מִשְׁכָּן) and of all its furniture, so you shall make it. (Exod. 25:8, 9 P)

However, while the concepts that may be discerned here (v. 4) do seem to appear in the exodus narratives, it should be remembered that the direction of any influence which may have operated is a matter of speculation. Notwithstanding this important issue, from his rhetorical perspective, the prophet may have hoped that recollection of these traditions would stimulate the people to reconsider their ways. Support for this idea might be gleaned from Kutsko, who says that for *Ezekiel*, the exile was the wilderness revisited.<sup>111</sup> *Ezekiel* perceived the exile to be a fresh beginning, not the destruction of Israel.<sup>112</sup> Kutsko is surely right to observe that 'these associations contribute to the fundamental aspect of Ezekiel's theology: exile is both a means of punishment and an opportunity for divine presence'.<sup>113</sup> *Ezekiel* clearly understands that Yahweh's presence is mediated through the כְּבוֹד 'glory' and the divine throne (Ezek. 1:28).<sup>114</sup> However, in

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<sup>110</sup> Kutsko (2000: 150) observes that the people's idolatry, the illegitimate expression of Yahweh's presence, resulted in the destruction of his symbolic dwelling.

<sup>111</sup> Kutsko 2000: 152.

<sup>112</sup> Strong 1995: 128.

<sup>113</sup> Kutsko 2000: 152.

<sup>114</sup> Strong (2000: 69) argues that it is through the use of 'kābôd-theology' that *Ezekiel* sought to maintain Zion theology. In this regard, Mettinger (1982: 109) speaks of the kābôd replacing the designation 'Yahweh Sabaoth', which is the usual name of Yahweh in the Zion cult. Kutsko (2000: 28-33), however, looks to the traditions of H and P for his thesis regarding the absence and presence of Yahweh.

the phrase 'pitch their tents' (Ezek. 25:4),<sup>115</sup> *Ezekiel* might also be evoking the notion of Yahweh's presence by its association with the כבוד 'glory' and the מִשְׁכַּן 'tent', 'tabernacle'. While being addressed to Ammon, *Ezekiel* appears to employ this expression to emphasise this point for the benefit of his exilic audience. Yahweh has made a covenantal commitment to dwell with his people as their God (Lev. 26:11-13).<sup>116</sup> Indeed, according to the Priestly writers, this was the explicit purpose of Yahweh's deliverance of the people from their bondage in Egypt:

I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God. And they shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them; I am Yahweh their God. (Exod. 29:45, 46 P)

Despite this tradition, it seems that the people have failed to recognise Yahweh's presence with them.<sup>117</sup> It is proposed here, however, that *Ezekiel* develops the notion of Yahweh's presence among the nations using the recognition formula and re-iterates this within the context of Yahweh's sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) and covenantal restatement:

My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is among them for evermore. (Ezek. 37:27, 28)

The idea of promise and covenant is also visible in the veiled reference to the plenty associated with the Promised Land seen in the phrase 'they shall eat your fruit and drink

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<sup>115</sup> Implicit in the phrase 'pitch their tents' is the meaning 'to dwell'. Ps. 84:1; 132:7, 8; cf. John 1:14.

<sup>116</sup> שֹׁכֵן, 'dwell' is the root of מִשְׁכַּן, 'tent', tabernacle'.

<sup>117</sup> Kutsko (2000: 151) suggests that 'Ezekiel opened the door to recognizing God's presence in his absence' by demonstrating that idols lacked divine potential and were simply material objects. According to Kutsko, this argument was advanced using the *kābôd* tradition that provided 'a metaphor of God's presence without jeopardizing the vigor of his theodicy'.

your milk' (v. 4).<sup>118</sup> Support for this observation is found by referring to the fuller exposition of these motifs found in Ezek. 20.

Thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob—making myself known to them in the land of Egypt—I swore to them, saying, I am Yahweh your God. On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands.' (Ezek. 20:5, 6)

Concerning the repetition 'I swore to them, saying, I am Yahweh your God', Zimmerli observes that 'Yahweh's oath promises a concrete history of merciful guidance',<sup>119</sup> that leads to glorious abundance. Indeed, it is a life of merciful guidance (cf. 11:20; 36:27) and glorious abundance (36:29, 30) associated with his presence that Yahweh offers his people now if they would only return to him (18:32; cf. 33:11).

However, while Yahweh states his commitment, Ezekiel has been called to remind the people of their responsibility to this relationship. The people were to lead disciplined lives of holiness and loyal worship as an expression of gratitude for their deliverance by Yahweh and the covenantal relationship he instituted with them.<sup>120</sup> Failure to observe the terms of the covenant carried the consequence of divinely ordained curses. Hence, the reference to fruit associated with these curses (Deut. 28:33) may be in the background here.<sup>121</sup> Alternatively, perhaps an allusion to the devastation caused by the

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<sup>118</sup> Having made this observation independently, I discovered that Lee (2016: 68) perceives the same striking resemblance.

<sup>119</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 11.

<sup>120</sup> Block 2014: 36.

<sup>121</sup> In addition, milk was a staple food of nomadic herdsmen. In the Egyptian 'Tale of Sinuhe', the nomads supplied the hero with 'milk in every (kind of) cooking' (*ANET* 1950: 20). Cf. Peterson 2012.

plagues of judgement associated with the exodus tradition is in view.<sup>122</sup> Either way, the Ammonite resources are now consumed in an invasion by people of the east who ‘possess’ in Ammon what Israel was to enjoy in the Promised Land.<sup>123</sup> The Hebrew term *מורשה* ‘possession’<sup>124</sup> mentioned at the beginning of the verse and its connotations of the Promised Land may well be designed to sow the seeds of covenantal recollection and responsibility for Ezekiel’s audience:<sup>125</sup> ‘I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; I will give it to you for a possession. I am Yahweh’ (Exod. 6:8 P). The conquest narratives also speak of possession of the land, where a relationship between possessing the land and rest is perceptible: ‘And now Yahweh your God has given rest to your kindred, as he promised them; therefore, turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies’ (Josh. 22:4).<sup>126</sup>

The notion of rest is also perceptible here (v. 5), as Rabbah, the pride and joy of Ammon, experiences the wrathful judgement of Yahweh. In the same way that Israel was removed from her land, so here, cultic principles are evident as the capital city is removed and the land is restored to camel pasture.<sup>127</sup> Perhaps the scene is intended to stimulate the exiles’ sense of responsibility to Yahweh and the covenant. In the same way that the temple in Jerusalem, the pride of their power (Ezek. 24:21), was judged by

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<sup>122</sup> Exod. 10:1 (J); cf. Ps. 78:46; 105:34; Rev. 16:8.

<sup>123</sup> Lee (2016: 64-67) observes that the link between Ammon (and Moab) and the Promised Land is akin to the conquest tradition found in Deut. 2-3.

<sup>124</sup> From the root *ירש* ‘to possess’ (*DCH* 1998: 304); see following note.

<sup>125</sup> This observation was also made independently of Lee (2016: 64-67). I came to similar conclusions some time before Lee’s work was published. Her work does, however, add credence to my own.

<sup>126</sup> It should be noted that in this instance the Hebrew word *אחזה* ‘possession’ is witnessed, whereas in Ezek. 35:15 *נהלה* ‘possession’ is found. However, cf. Deut. 3:20 where a relationship between possessing (*ירש*) the land and rest is found. See also Lev. 20:24 where the land of promise flowing with milk and honey is given by Yahweh to the people to possess (*ירש*).

<sup>127</sup> Joyce (2007: 172) notes that Rabbah was later named Philadelphia.

Yahweh, so Rabbah, the pride of Ammon's power, is subjugated by Yahweh's divine wrath. Perhaps now Ezekiel's audience might see, in the fault of Ammon, their own shortcomings and so begin to appreciate the process of their own experience of removal and exile. Either way, the bucolic scene is extended with the announcement that a similar fate awaits the whole of Ammon. The nation may have escaped the attention of Nebuchadrezzar (Ezek. 21:25-27 [20-22]), but now, Yahweh will make it a fold for flocks.<sup>128</sup> Not only is this prospect the height of humiliation for Ammon, it introduces the theme of removal and restoration into the OAN that meanders through the book of *Ezekiel* and which, I contend, is integral to the function of the OAN as a 'theological bridge'. The destruction and removal of the nations in these oracles does not make for easy reading in the twenty-first century; however, not only is the thought world of these oracles poles apart from our own, but it is also important to bear in mind that these oracles are employed in *Ezekiel* for rhetorical effect. This presentation continues as the chaotic capital, the seat of Ammonite contempt, is replaced with an image of pastoral serenity (v. 5) in which the land appears to be given the opportunity to experience a Sabbath of rest.<sup>129</sup> The scene is one that conjures up imagery of the security that the covenantal relationship with Yahweh as shepherd evokes.<sup>130</sup> Although applied to Ammon, the exiles may well be inclined to regret as they contemplate the peace and security they have forfeited. However, despite the people's failure to maintain their part of the covenantal agreement, Yahweh 'with surprising grace' defends his own as these themes of desolation now become part of Ammon's experience.<sup>131</sup> No doubt the prophet is intent on comforting the exiles, and perhaps the shared experience of devastation

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<sup>128</sup> Notes Zimmerli (1983: 13), the consequence of this invasion is intensified by two parallel double sentences: Ammon will become the domain of livestock and foreigners' tents and the Ammonite capital and pride will be decimated by this incursion.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Lev. 25:4; 26:34.

<sup>130</sup> E.g. Ps. 23.

<sup>131</sup> Allen 1990: 67.

*Ezekiel* depicts is part of that attempt. Or perhaps the scene of devastation that the prophet paints instils hope for the exiles who might appreciate the relationship between removal and restoration, and so be encouraged by the possibility offered by *Ezekiel's* colourful oratory. Perhaps more importantly, the exiles might be sufficiently heartened to reassess their view of Yahweh and readjust their response to him accordingly. The recognition formula that follows does seem to point in that direction.

In view of the foregoing discussion, Callender's comment is apposite here: 'In the context of Ezekiel's use of the recognition formula, Yahweh's name participates in the same semantic field as the notion of covenant. Both express the effective presence of the deity in the life of the community.'<sup>132</sup> Such an emphasis vindicates Yahweh's actions and affirms his covenantal faithfulness and justice, all of which comes in the shape of the recognition formula. As to the knowledge connoted by the recognition formula, Zimmerli observes that it does not involve the transmission of doctrine; rather, in its original sense it stands in the sphere of proof-signs.<sup>133</sup> Thus recognition is not the product of human will, but it is determined by an external sign that 'is always associated with an act of which Yahweh is the subject'.<sup>134</sup> Knowledge is 'prompted by that sign and is possible only as its consequence'.<sup>135</sup>

The basic recognition formula found in v. 5 is typical in many ways.<sup>136</sup> It is addressed to a foreign nation who, it is anticipated, will gain knowledge of Yahweh (the entity addressed in the oracle is not always the same as that which gains the knowledge spoken of in the

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<sup>132</sup> Callender 2015: 77.

<sup>133</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 79.

<sup>134</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 85.

<sup>135</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 79.

<sup>136</sup> Category A2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

formula).<sup>137</sup> In addition, the nature of the sign or 'proof' of Yahweh is his wrathful judgement on Ammon seen in the invasion by the people of the east. Inconsistencies in person (which are not unique) are also evident. The indictment 'because you...', second person feminine singular address (v. 3), becomes second person masculine plural, 'then you shall know...'. This narrative practice is not however restricted to *Ezekiel*. For instance, even though the prophet directs his words to the king in 1 Kings 20:13, 28, the second person masculine singular address of the recognition formula in v. 13 changes to second person masculine plural address in the recognition formula of v. 28. For Zimmerli 'this shows that the prophetic announcement does not limit the circle of those to whom the manifestation is to be made to the persons directly addressed'.<sup>138</sup> In a similar vein, Clements observes that the existence of these oracles precludes the possibility that the prophet's task was perceived solely in relation to Israel. They also demonstrate an understanding of Yahweh that was not limited to being their national God.<sup>139</sup>

A second oracle marked by another messenger formula (v. 6) is addressed to Ammon. This prophetic rhetoric highlights the importance given to the divine word that follows. Despite what might be considered harrowing content to our contemporary ears, the exiles can be comforted that Yahweh is sufficiently concerned about his reputation and that of his people to speak into their circumstance. This time the direct address is masculine singular, perhaps referencing the king, while the indictment is couched in more general terms. This is a supplementary message which reinforces the first (vv. 2-5). On this occasion, Ammon's indictment is for clapping and stamping, this being an

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<sup>137</sup> E.g. Ezek. 36:23.

<sup>138</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 106) notes that the way the proof-saying is expanded in *Ezekiel* amply shows this.

<sup>139</sup> Clements 1975: 64.

expressive gesture of triumph.<sup>140</sup> Generally it is the palm of the hand, כַּף, that is clapped, but in this instance it is the יָד, 'hand' that is struck.<sup>141</sup> It is unusual to find the verb מָחָה 'clap' used in a derisory context; elsewhere (Isa. 55:12; Ps. 98:8) it is used as an expression of joy.<sup>142</sup> The tenor of the gesture is not doubted, however; here it is confirmed by the use of שָׂאֵץ 'contempt', a term that is characteristic of *Ezekiel*.<sup>143</sup> Also, from the same semantic domain, the verb שָׁטַף 'to despise' only appears in *Ezekiel*, used to describe the primary indictment of all Israel's neighbours in the oracle against Sidon.<sup>144</sup> Olley suggests that the phrase 'contempt in your soul' (LXX ἐκ ψυχῆς) heightens intentionality and expresses willingness.<sup>145</sup> That sentiment is exaggerated here where hands, feet and inner self reflect complete opposition against the land of Israel.<sup>146</sup>

The significance of the land for Israel is in keeping with the perspective of the ancient Near East. Any sense of security that the inhabitants had was based on the belief in the inviolability of the relationship between their national deity, the land and the people of that nation.<sup>147</sup> The expression אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל 'land of Israel' (v. 6) appears seventeen times in *Ezekiel* yet is found nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>148</sup> For *Ezekiel* the phrase means more than geographical or political identification; it recalls the beloved land of

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<sup>140</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 184.

<sup>141</sup> Ezek. 6:11; 21:19 (14), 22 (17); 22:13; 2 Kings 11:12.

<sup>142</sup> See translation note v. 6.

<sup>143</sup> Ezek. 25:6, 15; 36:5. cf. Bodi 1991: 69-81.

<sup>144</sup> Ezek. 28:24, 26; cf. 16:57.

<sup>145</sup> Olley 2009: 409. Cf. 1 Macc. 8:27; Isa 58:10.

<sup>146</sup> Allen 1990: 67.

<sup>147</sup> Block 2000: 20; Block 1997: 7.

<sup>148</sup> Ezek. 7:2; 11:17; 12:19, 22; 13:9; 18:2; 20:38, 42; 21:7, 8 (2, 3); 25:3, 6; 33:24; 36:6; 37:12; 38:18, 19.

promise that Yahweh gives to Israel.<sup>149</sup> At this national level, the land is representative of the people's well-being and so the expression carries particular poignancy in the context of exile.<sup>150</sup> No doubt the pathos evoked by the phrase is designed to accentuate the relief experienced by *Ezekiel's* exilic audience as reprisals for these crimes of derogatory speech (v. 3) and insulting gestures (v. 6) against Yahweh<sup>151</sup> are proclaimed to be total annihilation for the people of Ammon.<sup>152</sup>

Having clapped their hands, the instrument of Ammon's destruction is the outstretched hand of Yahweh, which gives them as plunder to the nations (v. 7).<sup>153</sup> According to Zimmerli, references to Yahweh's "outstretched hand" clearly go back to the oldest credo-like formulations of Israel's exodus from Egypt.<sup>154</sup> The most important element in these statements of self-revelation is the historical activity of Yahweh directed towards Israel.<sup>155</sup>

I am Yahweh, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am Yahweh your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. (Exod. 6:6-7 P)

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<sup>149</sup> Cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:40. Block (1997: 248) indicates that compared with ארץ, 'land', ארמה 'land' is a less formal term for national territory.

<sup>150</sup> Block 1997: 248.

<sup>151</sup> This combination of crimes is portrayed against Israel in Ezek. 6:11.

<sup>152</sup> Allen 1990: 67.

<sup>153</sup> Greenberg 1997: 519.

<sup>154</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 294. Exod. 3:20; 7:19 (P); 8:5 (P); 9:22; 10:12; 14:16 (P); cf. Ezek. 14:13; 20:33f.

<sup>155</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 82) observes an original setting of theophanic speech in the preliminary self-introduction of Yahweh.

The imagery of Yahweh's outstretched hands and arms recalls Ezekiel's own action (Ezek. 4:7).<sup>156</sup> However, whereas Ezekiel's sign-act merely points to the impending activity of Yahweh, when the phrase is used of Yahweh himself, it is in the interest of highlighting his vindicating power to redeem and liberate.<sup>157</sup>

The general indictment in this oracle is coupled with the judgement which is also expressed by the general term of plunder.<sup>158</sup> Yahweh's sanctuary had been profaned by enemy incursion (25:3; 7:21, 22), and death was the usual penalty (Lev. 30:3; Ezek. 5:11). Yahweh responds to profanation of this kind with his holy wrath directed to those responsible.<sup>159</sup> Although it is acknowledged that the people of Ammon are not directly responsible, their culpability is implicit. Certainly, the judgement meted out suggests this to be the case. Ezekiel announces the inevitable punitive vindication of Yahweh.<sup>160</sup> The consequence of this type of desecration is variously described by the terms מוֹת 'die' (Exod. 28:43; Lev. 10:6) or כָּרַת 'be cut off' (Exod. 12:15; Lev. 7:20). Thus, we frequently find כָּרַת in *Ezekiel*.<sup>161</sup> The terms אָבַד 'perish'<sup>162</sup> and שָׁמַד 'destroy'<sup>163</sup> also appear with some regularity and serve to underline the threat of total annihilation. This inherent

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<sup>156</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 165.

<sup>157</sup> Exod. 6:6 (P); Ezek. 20:33, 34; Isa. 52:10.

<sup>158</sup> See translation notes v. 7. The idea of becoming plunder is frequently found in *Ezekiel* (Ezek. 25:7; 26:5, 26:12, 29:19). Clearly the prospect of being plunder for the nations was an unattractive one, partly, perhaps, because of its association with things devoted to destruction (Josh. 7:13).

<sup>159</sup> Muilenburg (1962: 618) regards Yahweh's wrath as a holy manifestation. Cf. Wright 2008: 245; H. P. Müller 1997: 1103-18; P. P. Jenson 1992; Harrison 1982: 725-29.

<sup>160</sup> Mendenhall (1973: 99) observes that the siege of Jerusalem and the Babylonian attack is associated with the wrath and vengeance of Yahweh. Later, other armies act in the agency of Yahweh, punishing foreign nations (e.g. Ezek. 29:20). On the character of Yahweh in *Ezekiel*, see Odendaal 1999; cf. Sweeney 2013: 21; Barton 2007: 150-51; Barton 2014: 245-72.

<sup>161</sup> Ezek. 25:7, 13, 16; 29:8; 30:15; 35:7.

<sup>162</sup> Ezek. 25:7; 26:17; cf. Lev 26:38; Deut. 28:22.

<sup>163</sup> Ezek. 25:7; 32:12.

danger of holiness might account for the fear of Yahweh's presence (Gen. 28:17; Num. 17:28 [13]),<sup>164</sup> recollection of which could be integral to *Ezekiel's* rhetorical agenda.

The combined effect of being cut off, perishing and destruction, ensures a comprehensive annihilation from which there is no hope of reprieve. This is Yahweh's response to the contemptuous words and gestures that Ammon directed to the land of Israel. It is the consequence of Yahweh's direct involvement, expressed in the act of his outstretched arm that vindicates his power to deliver his people.<sup>165</sup> Notes Evans, 'Yahweh's actions are directed to a single goal: that he be known in his power and holiness as the covenant God of Israel'.<sup>166</sup> A corollary effect is observed by Clements: 'by a kind of reversal of function, the threats against the enemy constitute an assurance for the prophet's hearers'.<sup>167</sup> Galambush offers support, commenting that the OAN are 'a standard prophetic device for announcing salvation to Israel'.<sup>168</sup> Chae is bolder still: 'The macro structure of the book of *Ezekiel* reveals that the entire OAN block functions as salvation oracles... In this macro structure the OAN block builds a bridge for the shift from the judgement on Israel to its restoration. The collapse of the foreign nations brings forth the restoration of Israel. The OANs were actually positive oracles to the ears of the major audience, the people of Israel'.<sup>169</sup> Not everyone agrees, though. Writing about

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<sup>164</sup> Barton 2014: 246.

<sup>165</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 14) observes a more pronounced theological expression in this oracle, Yahweh's initiative and action intensifying the threat for Ammon.

<sup>166</sup> Evans 2006: 322.

<sup>167</sup> Clements 1975: 62.

<sup>168</sup> Galambush 1992: 145; Galambush 2001: 551; Joyce 2007: 171. Gosse (1986: 561) observes that the mood changes from doom to hope after the fall of Jerusalem. Similarly, Davis (1999: 227) highlights the 'pivotal function' that the OAN serve in *Ezekiel*, 'a function to which their present placement contributes'. She further notes that these oracles 'mark the transition out of Israel's own idolatrous past into a possible future'.

<sup>169</sup> Chae 2015: 165; cf. Ganzel 2010: 199-200. Renz (1999: 94) observes that these oracles are important since they underline the authority and meaning of both the oracles of judgement and those

Strong's emphasis on the nations' acknowledgment of Yahweh in his actions on behalf of Israel, Evans finds it 'difficult to see...how the punishment of Ammon serves the interests of Israel or promotes Israel's restoration as a testimony to God's power'.<sup>170</sup> Lee, however, is more specific when she comments that the ultimate aim of the oracle is not of any material benefit for Israel, but is simply stated in the recognition formula<sup>171</sup> which asserts it is Ammon that will acknowledge Yahweh as a consequence of his activity.<sup>172</sup> Indeed, I would agree that this basic recognition formula (cast in the second person masculine singular as with the indictment)<sup>173</sup> does not speak of any material benefit; however, I contend that the recognition formula highlights these events as being a sign that points to Yahweh, thus assuring the exiles (the prophet's primary audience) of his presence in the world of the nations.

#### **4.2.3 Summary**

In these oracles against Ammon, I showed that by using evocative imagery, *Ezekiel* recalls the promises of Yahweh while at the same time reminding the people of their responsibility to act in accordance with the terms of the covenant instituted at Sinai. I suggested that in the reference to foreigners pitching their tents, Yahweh's presence in the wilderness tabernacle is recalled, and the echoes of plenty associated with the land of promise all contribute to the plaintive ambiance. I proposed, however, that a positive response to this awareness is encouraged by the hint that in time all may be well. This

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of salvation. On the related topic of wrath and mercy, Spieckermann (2008: 10) writes: 'Contrary to the common opinion of the Old Testament portraying a God of wrath, the formula of grace inevitably leads to the conclusion that – within the Old Testament – substantially more importance was attached to comprehending God's nature of grace and mercy while acknowledging his wrath only in plain dissymmetry compared with his grace'.

<sup>170</sup> Evans 2006: 127.

<sup>171</sup> Lee 2016: 56.

<sup>172</sup> Lee 2016: 57.

<sup>173</sup> Category A1, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

possibility is suggested by the pastoral scene that ensues as Rabbah is removed, so enabling the land to rest. I argued that this image, underlined by the recognition formula, invites the people to readjust their perspective of Yahweh, thus supporting my thesis. The callous response to Israel's misfortune is reiterated in a second oracle in which Ammon ridicules the covenant between Yahweh and his people. However, the allusion to the redemption of Israel from Egypt by the might of Yahweh's outstretched arm offers a note of reassurance to Ezekiel's audience. Thus, it would seem, a picture is developing in which the exiles are being encouraged to see that Yahweh's acts and their experience of removal from the land are just. These observations support my thesis that the recognition formula is fundamentally a statement of Yahweh's vindication.

### 4.3 Ezek. 25:8-11: Oracle against Moab

#### 4.3.1 Translation

8 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh: "Because Moab and Seir<sup>174</sup> said 'Behold, the house of Judah<sup>175</sup> is like all the nations',

9 therefore, behold, I will open the flank<sup>176</sup> of Moab from the cities<sup>177</sup> at its extremity, the splendour<sup>178</sup> of the country, Beth-jeshimoth,<sup>179</sup> Baal-meon and Kiriathaim.<sup>180</sup>

10 I will give it as a possession along with the people of Ammon to the people of the east so that the people of Ammon shall not be remembered among the nations.<sup>181</sup>

11 And I will execute judgements upon Moab and they<sup>182</sup> shall know that I am Yahweh."

#### 4.3.2 Exegesis

The first thing to be seen here is that the direct style of address that appears in the Ammon oracle is not imitated in the oracle against Moab. In biblical tradition, the Moabites descended in a parallel line with the Ammonites from Lot (Gen. 19:37). Their

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<sup>174</sup> '...and Seir' is absent from LXX.

<sup>175</sup> LXX Ἰσραηλ καὶ Ἰουδα, 'Israel and Judah'.

<sup>176</sup> MT כַּתֵּף 'flank'. *DCH* (1998: 476) indicates that כַּתֵּף is used in a variety of contexts: 'wall' of tabernacle (Ex. 27:14) or temple (Ezek. 47:1); 'shoulder piece' of ephod (Ex. 28:7); 'crosspiece' at bottom of laver (1 Kings 7:30).

<sup>177</sup> MT 'from the cities, from its cities'. This duplication is absent from LXX and is followed here.

<sup>178</sup> *DCH* (2010: 70) glosses צָבַי as 'glory', 'beauty', 'pride'; *HALOT* 1996: 998, 'splendour'.

<sup>179</sup> Only Beth-jeshimoth is rendered as a proper name in LXX: οἶκον Ἀσιμουθ.

<sup>180</sup> LXX ἐπάνω πηγῆς has read בעל מעין 'Baal-Meon' as מעל מעין 'above the spring' (Zimmerli 1983: 9).

<sup>181</sup> LXX does not have בגוים 'among the nations'; *BHS* suggests reading בעמים 'among the peoples'.

<sup>182</sup> ש 2 pl.

territory comprised the highland region from the Arnon River, east of the Dead Sea to the north and from the Wadi Zeroed to the south.<sup>183</sup> The relationship between Israel and Moab had always been unsettled. On the arrival of Israel in Canaan, Eglon of Moab had temporary dominance (Judg. 3:12-20). However, during the reign of David, Moab was forced to pay tribute to him (2 Sam. 8:2). A resurgence in Moabite power, immortalised in the Mesha Inscription,<sup>184</sup> saw them regaining control of the land of Medeba, north of the Arnon valley. An unsuccessful alliance with Ammon and Edom against Judah (2 Chron. 20:1-30) came after this. The Moabites made incursions into Israel when Elisha died (2 Kings 13:20). However, along with the neighbouring nations they became Assyrian vassals under Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.<sup>185</sup> According to Josephus (*Ant.* 13.13.5), Moab was conquered by Babylon in 581 BCE (cf. Jer. 48).

The designation 'Moab and Seir' (v. 8) is unusual for a number of reasons: firstly, the other oracles in this chapter are addressed to individual nations, and secondly, it is Edom and Seir that are synonymous, not Moab and Seir (Gen. 32:3; 36:8-9; Ezek. 35:15). The place name Seir originally referred to the wooded highlands southeast of Judah before it became associated with Edom to the south of Moab.<sup>186</sup> Edom has not escaped *Ezekiel's* attention, though; the nation is addressed in the following oracle (25:12-14; cf. 35:15).<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Van Zyl (1960: 46-49) indicates that the Dead Sea provided a boundary to the west and the eastern boundary was marked by scantier pasture that gradually changed to desert.

<sup>184</sup> *ANET* 1950: 320-21; cf. 2 Kings 3. The Mesha inscription contains a reference to the wrath of Chemosh, the Moabite god, at his own land. This is the closest parallel to the notion of the wrath of Yahweh in the Old Testament (Kratz 2008: 92).

<sup>185</sup> *ANET* 1950: 282, 87, 91, 94, 98, 301.

<sup>186</sup> Knauf 2008a: 1072.

<sup>187</sup> Greenberg 1997: 520.

Since I have already shown that themes which appear in the exodus narratives are paralleled in the thought of *Ezekiel*,<sup>188</sup> the possibility exists that the prophet Ezekiel's national sense of identity is also associated with these traditions:

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. (Exod. 19:4-6)<sup>189</sup>

The covenant spoken of in this passage, in what is alleged to be Yahwist material,<sup>190</sup> indicates the nature of the special relationship that these traditions purported to exist between the people of Israel and their deity Yahweh. The emphasis of the covenant is on the relationship between Yahweh and Israel rather than contractual obligations. Thus, despite being referred to by its political designation 'the house of Judah' (Ezek. 25:8),<sup>191</sup> we find that here in *Ezekiel*, the alleged charge of Moab that Israel is no different from her neighbours is deemed to be unacceptable.<sup>192</sup> Since, however, a desire to be like the nations has been expressed by Israel (20:32), it is conceivable that the prophet is projecting the people's guilt in this regard onto Moab. Be that as it may, the accusation contravenes Yahweh's word. By denying Israel's unique status, Moab delivers a strike against Yahweh himself. Accordingly, the essence of Moab's offence

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<sup>188</sup> E.g. Ezek. 20:6.

<sup>189</sup> These verses, considered as an ancient liturgical credo of Israel's election (Wildberger 1960: 14-16; Muilenburg 1959: 347-65), summarise the historical context and theological motifs of the Sinai event (D. C. van Zyl 1992: 264-71; Nicholson 1973: 61-84). This is rehearsed in Ezek. 20, which witnesses language that is similar to that found in Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic literature, e.g. 'treasured possession' Deut. 7:6; 14:2 (Wells 2000: 33).

<sup>190</sup> S. R. Driver 1911: 170.

<sup>191</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 8, 15.

<sup>192</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 15.

has been to dismiss Yahweh's gracious activity that Israelite tradition believed was directed to them as his 'treasured possession'. Indeed, for the people of Israel, it is Yahweh's attentiveness that provides the grounds for their distinction: 'For what other great nation has a God so near to it as Yahweh our God is whenever we call to him?' (Deut. 4:7). Similarly, 'Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another nation on earth whose God went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for himself...?' (2 Sam. 7:23). Hence, Moab's indirect denial of Israel's position is tantamount to implicit blasphemy that discredits Yahweh and insults his authority.<sup>193</sup> Consequently, as Strong observes, *Ezekiel* declares that Yahweh will restore Israel to the land once he has removed the nations. In this way, Yahweh's activity bears witness to his presence in the world and affirms Israel's election.<sup>194</sup> The implication of Moab's denunciation, which effectively rejects Israel's claim to be chosen by Yahweh, is that Yahweh is like every other god.<sup>195</sup> *Ezekiel's* powerful rhetoric that may have aimed to reignite the exiles' sense of identity with Yahweh by depicting Moab's response to Israel's misfortune, clearly provoked a deep sense of moral outrage that did not go unnoticed, and which cried out for vindication.<sup>196</sup> Thus, Moab's derisory comment infers that Israel has not been set apart as a holy nation by Yahweh, but is no different from all other nations. Not only does this presume that a covenantal relationship with Yahweh holds no unique status, but it also suggests that Yahweh is not incomparable.<sup>197</sup> *Ezekiel* vehemently contradicts this position and takes both the king of Tyre and Pharaoh to task on precisely this point.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Greenberg 1997: 520.

<sup>194</sup> Strong 1993: 44.

<sup>195</sup> Olley 2009: 414.

<sup>196</sup> Clements 1975: 63.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Isa 40:18.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Ezek. 28:2-19; 31:2-18.

*Ezekiel* evidently believes this falsehood requires Yahweh's judgement as well as the vindication of his authority and reputation.<sup>199</sup> The punishment of Moab involves opening her western front (the one opposite Judah) and destroying her cities there. The Hebrew term כַּתֵּף 'flank' is used here (v. 9) to describe a slope up to a ridge which may even have been visible in the region. It is worth remarking in passing that here too<sup>200</sup> *Ezekiel's* vocabulary hints at the sacred. By using the word כַּתֵּף, instead of using the equally appropriate term שֹׁכֵם to describe the slope, *Ezekiel* employs language used to describe the desert tabernacle and Jerusalem temple;<sup>201</sup> indeed, the term is even used to describe the eschatological temple in chs. 40-48.<sup>202</sup> Another Hebrew word, פָּתַח 'open', that *Ezekiel* utilises (v. 9), calls to mind the idea of city gates being opened.<sup>203</sup> This unusual expression,<sup>204</sup> פָּתַח אֶת כַּתֵּף 'open the flank', may be a desire for play on words, the combination being an inverted assonantal sequence that denotes the destruction of key Moabite cities.<sup>205</sup>

The towns mentioned here (v. 9) were the most important Moabite cities and are representative of Moabite defence against western aggression.<sup>206</sup> They lie to the north of the Arnon River, recognised by Israel as Moab's boundary in the north (Num. 21:13), and in the west near the Jordan valley.<sup>207</sup> These towns may well have been in Judah's

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<sup>199</sup> Bidlack (2000: 149) observes that an overarching concern for the divine reputation comes to the fore in chapter 25.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. מִקְדָּשׁ 'sanctuary' 25:3 p. 95.

<sup>201</sup> Exod. 27:14; 1 Kings 6:8. *DCH* 1998: 476. See also translation notes v. 9.

<sup>202</sup> Ezek. 40:18; 41:26; 47:1.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Ezek. 26:2.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Greenberg (1997: 520): 'an obscure expression'.

<sup>205</sup> Block 1998: 21; Zimmerli 1983: 15; cf. 'I will cut off the Cherethites' in v. 16.

<sup>206</sup> Allen 1990: 68.

<sup>207</sup> Greenberg 1997: 521.

field of vision;<sup>208</sup> Beth-jeshimoth lies in the Shittim valley north of the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan (Num. 33:49; Josh. 12:3; 13:20).<sup>209</sup> Baal-meon is listed as belonging to the tribe of Reuben (Num. 32:38) but originally belonged to Moab.<sup>210</sup> It lies thirteen miles to the south-east of Beth-jeshimoth. Kiriathaim was also assigned to the tribe of Reuben (Num. 32:37; Josh. 13:19). Although its location remains unconfirmed, it was known by Eusebius to be ten miles west of Madaba.<sup>211</sup>

*Ezekiel's* terminology further suggests that the promises of Yahweh are never far from his mind when conveying the divine message to the exiles. The word זָבַי 'splendour', 'glory', 'beauty', 'pride' used to depict the 'pride and joy' of Moab,<sup>212</sup> is also used by the prophet to describe the beautiful land that flows with milk and honey (Ezek. 20:6, 15; cf. 25:4),<sup>213</sup> although it was Jeremiah who first coined this usage (Jer. 3:19). Isaiah described Yahweh as זָבַי (Isa. 4:2) and under the influence of Daniel it became an apocalyptic code word for the Promised Land (Dan. 8:9; 11:16, 41, 45).<sup>214</sup> By applying the evocative term to the extremities of Moab, borders that Israel once possessed,<sup>215</sup> *Ezekiel* could remind the people of their own homeland and the promises of Yahweh, while showing them that the nations were not immune to Yahweh's judgement. Perhaps now the exiles would appreciate that not only was Yahweh's treatment of the nations justly apt, so was his treatment of them. By highlighting the blasphemy of Moab, *Ezekiel*

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<sup>208</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 16.

<sup>209</sup> Romero 2008: 669.

<sup>210</sup> Picirillo 2008: 552. The Moabite Stone (ca. 830 BCE) refers to Mesha having built a reservoir for Baal-meon, which suggests a reversion to Moabite control (cf. *ANET* 1950: 320, line 9).

<sup>211</sup> Eusebius 2003: 64, 145; Zimmerli 1983: 16.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. the Jerusalem temple (Ezek. 24:21).

<sup>213</sup> *Ezekiel* also uses the term to describe the 'beautiful ornament' that became 'the stumbling block of their iniquity' (Ezek. 7:19, 20).

<sup>214</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 408.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. Num. 21:21-31; Deut. 2:26-37; Josh. 12:3.

invites the exiles to respond to Yahweh by reminding them of their own failed commitment to the covenant, thus illustrating their error and pointing to the impending vindication of Yahweh's justice. While this might not be immediately obvious, it is important to appreciate the extent of Ezekiel's agenda; as Barton observes, 'it is the function of the prophet to ensure that people have no excuse for misinterpreting [Yahweh's] actions as unjust or capricious'.<sup>216</sup>

The middle part of the oracle displays the by now familiar pronouncement that Yahweh will 'give (נָתַן) as a possession...' — a phrase that, as we have seen, is reminiscent of conquest terminology.<sup>217</sup> As Yahweh will open the western flank of Moab (v. 10), the east will be overrun by nomadic tribes, a threat which is explicitly associated with Ammon.<sup>218</sup> The reference to Ammon is surprising considering the full treatment it has already received. Scholars suggest it might be a redactional summary of Ezek. 25:1-11.<sup>219</sup> The threat of being remembered no more often supplements the hostility associated with 'being cut off' (25:7).<sup>220</sup> This did not mean the danger of being forgotten, but the complete destruction of the population so that there could be no one who could be called an Ammonite.<sup>221</sup> Thus the punishment<sup>222</sup> is a bleak prospect for Ammon and Moab, and reflects the future that lies in store for Israel if they continue to rebel against

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<sup>216</sup> Barton 1979: 13.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. p. 103.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Amos 1:13; Zeph. 2:8.

<sup>219</sup> Joyce 2007: 172. Zimmerli (1983: 14) suggests that since the same agents of destruction are mentioned here, vv. 8-11 are to be identified as a continuation of the original Ammon oracle (25:2-5) with vv. 6-7 being seen as a later addition.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Jer. 11:19; Zech. 13:2; Ps. 83:5 (4).

<sup>221</sup> Lang 1979: 40.

<sup>222</sup> Moab's punishment of being remembered no more, includes Ammon (cf. Ezek. 21:37 [32]). The verb is feminine—'she will not be remembered'—which may refer to Rabbah.

Yahweh (3:20; 18:24).<sup>223</sup> This potential future presents a stark contrast to the possibilities that Yahweh has offered his own if they do return to him: 'None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them; for the righteousness that they have done they shall live' (18:22; cf. 33:16).

Allen notes that once again the punishment fits the crime: 'national downgrading (25:8) becomes national destruction (25:10)'.<sup>224</sup> However, as Greenberg observes, 'highlighting the motive of divine self-interest is the nature of the punishment'.<sup>225</sup> Or as Lee puts it, the aim of the judgement in this oracle is to focus attention on Yahweh.<sup>226</sup> Thus the retribution meted out to Moab (and Ammon) is not only equitable, since their response warrants the judgement, but it also vindicates Yahweh's justice as all nations, including his own people, are treated with the same powerfully even hand.

As well as this instance (v. 11), *Ezekiel* employs the term שפטים 'judgements' in a characteristic way that is reflected elsewhere only in the exodus narratives.<sup>227</sup> Perhaps the most significant of these for present purposes is that found in the self-introduction of Yahweh to the Israelites: 'I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty (שפטים) judgements' (Exod. 6:6 P).<sup>228</sup> Similarly, the notion of redemption for Israel in the שפטים of foreign nations, is evident in the use of the term in the tenth plague, when every firstborn will be struck down and the gods of Egypt will experience the שפטים of Yahweh (Exod. 12:12 P).

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<sup>223</sup> Greenberg 1997: 521.

<sup>224</sup> Allen 1990: 67. 'It is total annihilation which includes the population' (Lang 1979: 40).

<sup>225</sup> Greenberg 1997: 526.

<sup>226</sup> Lee 2016: 58.

<sup>227</sup> Ezek. 5:10, 15; 11:9; 14:21; 16:41; 28:22, 26; 30:14, 19.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Exod. 7:4 (P); Num. 33:4.

While one might not agree with Evans, who claims that Ezekiel made a special study of Exodus 6,<sup>229</sup> it seems likely that the prophet is drawing on this rich tradition of Yahweh's merciful deliverance of Israel in order to remind his audience of the power of Yahweh and to reassure them of his faithfulness. Once again, the motif of Yahweh's redemption of his people from their bondage in Egypt, seems to be in the background as Yahweh, emphasised by the recognition formula (v. 11),<sup>230</sup> reveals himself in the judgement of Moab, so that 'they shall know that I am Yahweh'. Just as we have already seen in 1 Kings 20,<sup>231</sup> where knowledge would come from an objective sign (the defeat of the Syrians) thus demonstrating that Yahweh was not a 'god of the hills' as the Syrians thought (1 Kings 20:28), so too in the obliteration of Moab. In both contexts the sign (Yahweh's activity) would vindicate Yahweh in the eyes of the nations and simultaneously in the eyes of the Israelites.<sup>232</sup> As Block comments: Yahweh 'is indeed concerned that the entire world recognizes his person and his presence in their affairs, but his agenda is always focused on Israel'.<sup>233</sup> Even though Yahweh has expelled Israel from the land, the prophet makes it abundantly clear that no other nation will take up residency there, thus preparing the way for the oracle which lies at the heart of the unit (28:25-26), that speaks of the nation's restoration to the land.<sup>234</sup>

#### **4.3.3 Summary**

The insulting response to their neighbour's misfortune is the primary allegation against the people of Ammon; Moab's accusation that Judah is like all the nations strikes at the

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<sup>229</sup> Evans 2006: 180.

<sup>230</sup> Category A3, Table 1, p. Appendix p. 329.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. p. 56.

<sup>232</sup> Carley 1975: 38.

<sup>233</sup> Block 2014: 30.

<sup>234</sup> Renz 1999: 94.

heart of the exiles' perceived identity as a unique people chosen by Yahweh. However, this affront echoes Israel's own thoughts (cf. Ezek. 20:32), and may have been designed by the prophet (who must ensure the people have no excuse for misinterpreting Yahweh's actions) to cause moral outrage and reignite the exiles' sense of identity with Yahweh. If so, it paves the way for the language and imagery that is reminiscent of the exiles' homeland and history of deliverance by Yahweh and the covenant he instituted with them. Hence, the judgements announced by Ezekiel that are underlined by the recognition formula highlight Yahweh's divine self-interest and provide further evidence for the exiles that, contrary to appearances, Yahweh's agenda is always focused on Israel. Moreover, these oracles suggest that Yahweh is sufficiently powerful to vindicate his authority and reputation, thus advancing my argument here.

#### 4.4 Ezek. 25:12-14: Oracle against Edom

##### 4.4.1 Translation

12 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>235</sup> "Because Edom acted with maleficent vengeance<sup>236</sup> against the house of Judah, and grievously incurred guilt<sup>237</sup> by taking revenge on them,<sup>238</sup>

13 therefore", thus says the Lord Yahweh,<sup>239</sup> "I will stretch out my hand against Edom, and I will cut off man and beast from her and I will make her desolate from Teman to Dedan<sup>240</sup> and they shall fall by the sword.

14 I will lay my vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath; and they shall know my vengeance", declares the Lord Yahweh'.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>236</sup> MT בנקם נקם; S deletes נקם.

<sup>237</sup> MT ויאשמו אשום, lit., 'and they have become guilty becoming guilty'. The infin. abs. following the finite verb can sometimes intensify the idea of the verb (GKC 1910: §113r). As here it highlights the extent of Edomite guilt incurred. On אשם, see Excursus: The *asham* p. 127.

<sup>238</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 9) describes a hypotactic understanding of the nearer circumstance of guilt implied by the consecutive (*niph.*) perfect (וינקמו). He further notes that LXX καὶ ἐξεδίκησαν δίκην 'and avenged justice' points to וינקמו.

<sup>239</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>240</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 10) notes that LXX has misunderstood MT דדן 'Dedan' for נדר 'escape': ἐκ Θαυμαν διωκόμενοι 'those pursued from Teman'.

<sup>241</sup> LXX κύριος.

## 4.4.2 Exegesis

### 4.4.2.1 Ezek. 25:12

As noted above, the oracles against Ammon and Moab are clearly linked. So too here are the oracles against Edom and Philistia, which follows (25:15-17).<sup>242</sup> Edom's reaction to the fall of Jerusalem is evident elsewhere in the OT,<sup>243</sup> and it is particularly reflected in the strong language used in the judgement against Edom in 25:12-14.

According to biblical tradition, Israel was closely related to Edom. It was believed that Edom's ancestor Esau was the brother of Israel's forefather Jacob.<sup>244</sup> A note of condemnation is present in the Genesis narratives that describe Esau trading his birthright (Gen. 25:34; 26:35). The idea of enmity is also evident (27:41). Despite this, the Israelites are encouraged to maintain amicable relations with Edom (Deut. 2:4-5; 23:7). Unfortunately, this was not reciprocated (Num. 20:20-21). The relationship between the two nations was mixed during the monarchy.<sup>245</sup> Edom was considered an enemy during the time of Saul and David (1 Sam. 14:47; 2 Sam. 8:14). However, Judah and Edom fought together against Moab (2 Kings 3:9). Alliances of this nature did not last, though; Edom revolted against Judah (2 Kings 8:20) and from time to time defeated them in battle (2 Kings 16:6; 2 Chron. 28:17).

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<sup>242</sup> According to Zimmerli (1983: 16), the similarity extends to both form and content.

<sup>243</sup> E.g. Ps. 137:7; Lam. 4:21, 22; Joel 4 (3):19; Obad. 11-14.

<sup>244</sup> The metaphor of brother that is applied to Edom and Israel/Judah is discussed along with its theological implications by O'Brien (2016: 123). She highlights the betrayal of that relationship that the biblical accounts present (e.g., Psalm 137:7; Isa. 34:5-8; 63:1-4; Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 25:12-13; 35:5-6, 15; Joel 4 [3]:19) and its consequence of widespread Judean enmity against Edom. O'Brien concludes that the method of ideological critique insists that the label of brother must be earned (p. 135).

<sup>245</sup> Bartlett 1972.

The name Edom derives from a Semitic word meaning 'red' (Gen. 25:25, 30)<sup>246</sup> and originally designated the area distinguished by red soil.<sup>247</sup> The region of Mt. Seir was recognised by the Israelites to be Edom's 'possession' (Deut. 2:5). Lying to the south-east of the Dead Sea, the northern border was the valley of Zeroed next to Moab. Their territory stretched down to the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea port city of Elath. This gave Edom control over the southern part of the King's Highway, the Transjordan's primary trade route.<sup>248</sup> David secured this route (2 Sam. 8:13), after which Edom made several attempts to regain its control.<sup>249</sup> While Edom plotted against Nebuchadrezzar (Jer. 27:3), the hostility between the two nations reached its zenith at the fall of Jerusalem (Ezek. 25:12; 35:5f; cf. Ps. 137:7; Obad. 11, 13).<sup>250</sup> However, since no evidence exists that Edom played a major role in the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>251</sup> some have suggested that Edom may be representative of the nations.<sup>252</sup> For example, Mailland describes Edom as the principal enemy, the 'type' of adversary nation.<sup>253</sup> Cresson posits two opposing views with regard to Israel and the nations. In one the nations must be destroyed when Israel is restored, in the other the nations are converted. In the first, Edom represents the nations, initially as Israel's harmful neighbour; however, later Edom is considered to be symbolic of the nations.<sup>254</sup> While comparing the oracles against Edom in Ezek. 25 with 35, Woudstra considers Edom's

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<sup>246</sup> Akkadian *adamātu* 'dark red soil' and *adamu* 'red blood' and Aramaic אַדָּם, as of blood.

<sup>247</sup> HALOT 1994: 12.

<sup>248</sup> See Bartlett 2008: 287-95 for an historical survey.

<sup>249</sup> 1 Kings 11:1; 22:47, 48; 2 Kings 3; 8:22; 16:6.

<sup>250</sup> See Bartlett 1982.

<sup>251</sup> Ben Zvi 1996: 236; cf. Assis 2006: 3.

<sup>252</sup> Ben Zvi 1996: 258. Although this suggestion is the outcome of a study in Obadiah, it may be equally valid here.

<sup>253</sup> Mailland 1956.

<sup>254</sup> Cresson 1963; cf. Simian 1974.

representative role.<sup>255</sup> However, Müller goes one step further by advocating that Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon *all* function as being a typical enemy of Yahweh.<sup>256</sup>

In Genesis, it is Jacob who wronged his brother, the conflict being resolved by Esau's forgiveness, while in the prophetic literature, Edom's destruction is key to Israel's restoration. Dicou argues that, despite these differences, the two sets of texts share the same theological background.<sup>257</sup> Just as Edom is Israel's adversary and represents the nations in the prophetic books, so too, argues Dicou, in Genesis. Dicou concludes that Ezek. 35-36 is closest in terms of content and theme to Genesis. He also indicates that the idea of Edom as a type, representing the nations, first appears in Ezek. 35-36.<sup>258</sup> In a slightly different vein, Woudstra observes that while it is here that the representative role of Edom is most apparent, in Ezek. 25 Edom shares this role with other foreign nations. In Ezek. 35-36 the judgement against Edom is presented in relation to the future restoration of Israel, yet both Ezek. 25 and 35-36 serve as a prelude to Israel's restoration.<sup>259</sup>

The striking nature of the term נקם 'vengeance' is emphasised by its five occurrences in this verse (v. 12).<sup>260</sup> This theme is also reflected in LXX where the only use of δίκη

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<sup>255</sup> According to Woudstra (1968), both prepare the way for the texts that promise salvation for Israel.

<sup>256</sup> I. Müller 1970.

<sup>257</sup> Dicou 1994: 16.

<sup>258</sup> Dicou 1994: 199.

<sup>259</sup> That Edom is viewed as a representative of the nations is borne out by comparing Ezek. 36:5 with vv. 6, 7, 15; cf. Obad. 15 (Woudstra 1968: 29).

<sup>260</sup> Greenberg 1997: 526; Zimmerli 1983: 16; Block 1998: 23.

‘justice’<sup>261</sup> in *Ezekiel* is found.<sup>262</sup> No doubt the indictment against Edom of taking revenge is judged by Yahweh because vengeance belongs to him (Deut. 32:35, 41).<sup>263</sup> The distinctive expression that describes the grievous incurrance of sin (וַיִּאָשְׁמוּ אִשָּׁוּם)<sup>264</sup> is a typically Semitic cognate phrase that is discussed further in the excursus below. Although the exact crime is not specified indeed, Lee regards the indictment as being ‘rather bland’<sup>265</sup>—Block maintains that it ‘undoubtedly relates’ to the abandonment of Israel by their brother Edom at their moment of crisis (Ps. 137:7).<sup>266</sup> In the following phrase ‘by taking revenge on them’ (v. 12), Greenberg suggests that ‘the avenging was not the consequence of incurring guilt,<sup>267</sup> but its specification’.<sup>268</sup> The notion of guilt expressed by the Hebrew term אָשָׁם is worthy of fuller discussion found in the excursus below.

#### 4.4.2.2 Excursus: The *asham*

In his book *Cult and Conscience*, Milgrom discusses the אָשָׁם and the priestly doctrine of repentance, stating that there are two exclusively expiatory sacrifices: the הַטְּאֵת and

<sup>261</sup> Lust et al. 1992; BDAG 2001: 250. δίκη may also be translated as ‘nothing short of what is fit’, or ‘righteous judgement’ (LSJ 1996: 430).

<sup>262</sup> LXX ἐξεδίκησαν δίκην, lit. ‘they avenged justice’. Cf. Lev. 26:25 where ‘avenging the cause of the covenant’ is an action of God.

<sup>263</sup> See further v. 14.

<sup>264</sup> *DCH* (1993: 414) notes that the term אָשָׁם is found especially in respect of infringements of holiness (e.g. Lev. 4:13). See also Excursus: The *asham* p. 127.

<sup>265</sup> Lee 2016: 58.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Lam. 4:21-22; Obad. vv. 12-15.

<sup>267</sup> I.e. ‘sin’.

<sup>268</sup> Greenberg (1997: 522) observes an unexpected perfect verb here rather than an imperfect consecutive.

the אָשַׁם.<sup>269</sup> The root אָשַׁם has not been identified prior to Hebrew texts and nearly half of all occurrences in that corpus appear in the Priestly document of the Pentateuch.<sup>270</sup> It is, however, absent from the legal sections of Exodus and Deuteronomy; but while it is also conspicuous in the prophets,<sup>271</sup> it is rare in the wisdom literature and the historical books. According to Knierim: 'The word has a theological character insofar as human liability is the expression, cause, or result of divine judgement or activity and is related to this divine involvement as a human situation or resolution'.<sup>272</sup> It is a trait that is particularly evident when Yahweh's holiness has been infringed.<sup>273</sup> This important theological emphasis, says Knierim, is inherent in the view that human liability and guilt wholly involves God. Accordingly, any attempt to resolve guilt signifies acknowledgement of liability towards God.<sup>274</sup> When this liability was found in the context of inadvertent sin (Lev. 5:17), expiation was feasible. However, in cases of deliberate sin, there could be no sacrificial expiation (Num. 15:30, 31). So, while the setting is usually cultic, the term carries an ethical implication: the consequence of sin is the acquisition of guilt. According to Milgrom, the concept of repentance was introduced to circumvent this problem; he writes: 'Confession is the legal device fashioned by the Priestly legislators to convert deliberate sin into inadvertence, thereby qualifying them for sacrificial expiation'.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Milgrom (1976: 1) notes that the word אָשַׁם belongs to the category of the holy and the profane (cf. Milgrom 1976: 1-4), which the הִטָּאֵה does not. He believes it to be the key term in both expiatory sacrifices (Milgrom 1976: 1).

<sup>270</sup> Eight of which are in Ezek. (6:6; 22:4; 25:12 x 2; 40:39; 42:13; 44:29; 46:20).

<sup>271</sup> Hosea (x 5); Jeremiah (x 3), Amos, Hab., Deut-Isa., Zech., Joel, Isa. 24 (all x 1).

<sup>272</sup> Knierim 1997: 194.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. *DCH* 1993: 414.

<sup>274</sup> Knierim 1997: 194.

<sup>275</sup> Milgrom 1976: 119.

The usual way of expiating guilt was by restitution of a specified value, either cash plus twenty percent (Lev. 5:16), or an animal of stated worth was sacrificed (Num. 5:8; Lev. 14:13; cf. Ezek. 40:39) by the priest after the sin had been acknowledged (Hos. 5:15). However, whereas during the other expiatory offering—the *חטאת*—blood was applied to the altar, in the *אשם* sacrifice, this practice was not followed since in these instances guilt was not expiated at the altar, but by compensation to the injured party (1 Sam. 6:3). This idea is perhaps most developed in the offering of the suffering servant as a substitute for the people in compensation for their sins (Isa. 53:10). Milgrom indicates that ‘the context of the *asham* is a legal situation: damage has been done and restitution ordered’.<sup>276</sup> In other words, the *אשם* sacrifice compensates damages.<sup>277</sup> The aim throughout of ‘bearing the punishment’ (Lev. 5:17), or guilt (Hos. 10:2), was ‘atonement and forgiveness’.<sup>278</sup>

The word is found in a variety of contexts. In Ezek. 6:6, *אשם* ‘guilt’ is the consequence of punishment; in Ezek. 22:4, idolatry causes *אשם*; and in Ezek. 25:12, guilt is acknowledged before the punishment is meted out. However, in Psalm 34:22-23 (21-22), *אשם* is the punishment, although in this instance it is immediately contrasted with redemption. So, while the emphasis varies, the connotation of the term seems to be one that describes alienation from God and its attendant consequences.<sup>279</sup> Evidence that application of the term evolves, is seen in the requirement of *אשם* compensation for sancta desecration that undergoes a prophetic development in Jeremiah: ‘Israel was holy to Yahweh, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty (*אשם*);

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<sup>276</sup> Milgrom 1976: 14.

<sup>277</sup> Milgrom 1976: 14.

<sup>278</sup> Livingston 1980: 78.

<sup>279</sup> Livingston 1980: 79.

disaster came upon them, says Yahweh' (Jer. 2:3). Here, Israel's enemies are guilty of desecrating the sancta (eating sacred food), thus punishment by Yahweh is inevitable. Milgrom argues that Jeremiah applies the law of trespass upon sancta metaphorically to Israel's enemies.<sup>280</sup> In so doing, Jeremiah derives the notion that all of Israel constitutes a sanctum.<sup>281</sup> According to Milgrom, Jeremiah's comment is dependent on 'D's doctrine of the ethnic sanctity of Israel'.<sup>282</sup> D regards Israel as a holy people (Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9) whereas P embraces the notion of national sanctity. Although in P the state of holiness exists for the priests (Lev. 21:6) and Nazirites (Num. 6:5), the people are called to become holy. For them, holiness is a dynamic possibility: 'sanctify yourselves and be holy' (Lev. 11:44). However, as Milgrom points out, this is 'an ideal not a status'.<sup>283</sup> Even so, Jeremiah applies this idea and the teaching that sancta trespass deserves divine judgement metaphorically to Israel's enemies.<sup>284</sup>

It is here, I submit, that points of contact with this verse (Ezek. 25:12) may be discerned. I have discussed the exile in terms of the people's rebellion that has alienated them from Yahweh, and suggested that the thrust of *Ezekiel's* message to the exiles is one that points to the presence of Yahweh among them. However, since the absence of the temple dictated that the other expiatory offering (the *תִּזְבֹּחַת דָּם*, which required blood to be applied on the altar) was unsuitable for resolving their rebellion against Yahweh, the possibility exists that *Ezekiel* employs the term *אַשָׁמ*, that portrays alienation from Yahweh and its attendant consequences, to describe the desecration committed to Yahweh's sancta, which in this instance is the house of Judah. The guilt that Edom has

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<sup>280</sup> Milgrom 1976: 70.

<sup>281</sup> Milgrom 1976: 71.

<sup>282</sup> Milgrom 1976: 72.

<sup>283</sup> Milgrom (1976: 72) observes this is also found in JE (Exod. 19:6).

<sup>284</sup> Milgrom 1976: 73.

incurred demands restitution and compensation which Yahweh administers with poetic justice by the hand of the injured party, 'my people Israel' who have been desecrated (v. 14). In addition to this, another layer of possibility exists. Not only has Edom desecrated Yahweh's holy parameters, but according to *Ezekiel*, the house of Judah has also incurred אָשָׁם (Ezek. 22:4). Judah's אָשָׁם, incurred by bloodshed and idolatry, is also a grievous offence not only against their own people (bloodshed), but also against Yahweh (idolatry). This combination strikes at the heart of their identity (cf. 25:8) and drove Yahweh from his sanctuary (8:6; 10:18). Might one also perceive here a further development and prophetic application of אָשָׁם? Is the significance of this poetic justice (which sees Yahweh's punishment of Edom at the hands of 'my people Israel') found, as Yahweh's anger and wrath (v. 14) is compensated for by Edom in restitution for their guilt *and* the guilt of Israel? Might implicit judgement of *Israel* be in the background as suggested by *Ezekiel's* use of אָשָׁם, which according to this reading then has the potential to remind the exiles of their own culpability before Yahweh? If this is indeed conceivable, by placing the OAN at this point in the narrative, immediately after the announcement of the destruction of the temple (24:21) and immediately before the acknowledgement of Israel's sin (33:10), *Ezekiel* could be attempting to illustrate the principles of expiation metaphorically as a theological ruse in order to make way for the oracles of restoration that follow the OAN. If the deliberate sin of Israel can only be expiated by acknowledgement of their trespass (illustrated by Edom as the foreign nations' representative) and their prospective restitution is found in Edom's rhetorical demise on the authority of Yahweh for the purpose of Israel's atonement and forgiveness, and if this idea was successfully deployed by *Ezekiel* in the interests of Israel's return to Yahweh, it could be suggested that the nations, typified by Edom, technically expiated, albeit metaphorically, the guilt of Israel. Support for this proposal might be found in the notion that Egypt is given to Babylon as payment for working for

Yahweh (Ezek. 29:20). The idea is also reflected in Isaiah: 'For I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you' (Isaiah 43:3). These ruminations might go some way to informing this study's conclusions regarding the nature of the OAN as a theological bridge that spans the chasm between the oracles of judgement against Israel and those that speak of restoration for Israel and, in so doing, shed some light on the relationship between judgement of the nations and the restoration of Israel.

#### 4.4.2.3 Ezek. 25:13-14

Returning to the exegesis, an announcement proclaims that Yahweh will stretch out his hand in judgement against Edom as a consequence of their error (v. 13). I have already shown that whenever the image of Yahweh's hand being stretched out is evoked,<sup>285</sup> the old credo formulations are in the background.<sup>286</sup> The motif is one that speaks of Yahweh vindicating himself through powerful acts, often on behalf of Israel in the sight of the nations. For instance: 'If a prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, Yahweh, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel' (Ezek. 14:9).<sup>287</sup> However, judgement of this kind is not restricted to the nations; Yahweh is just as likely to administer it to his own (Ezek. 6:14; 16:26). In addition to this, Yahweh also stretches out his hand against the land (Ezek. 14:13).

Whereas Ammon will כרת 'be cut off' from the peoples (v. 7), Edom will be deprived of people and animals (v. 13). This distinction suggests a threat of greater totality, particularly when combined with Yahweh's outstretched hand. The consequent

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<sup>285</sup> See exegesis 25:7.

<sup>286</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 294.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Job 1:12.

desolation confirms this. Here too, the reprisals aimed at Edom reflect the punishment that Yahweh has inflicted on Israel which may be related to my proposal that the prophet projects the guilt of Israel onto the nations, or it might be a rhetorical ploy used in the interests of Yahweh's vindication, or both.<sup>288</sup>

The motif of desolation is one that runs through *Ezekiel*.<sup>289</sup> Here (v. 13) there appears to be a correlation between the retribution directed to Edom and that which Yahweh delivered to Jerusalem (5:13, 14).<sup>290</sup> It is by the prophetic word that Ezekiel reveals the mystery of Yahweh's person, as Zimmerli observes: 'the wrath that vents itself in fury for his rights not only against all the nations, but also—and most severely—against his own house'.<sup>291</sup> In other words, *Ezekiel* is underlining the view that Yahweh is not capricious, nor is his judgement undeserved, but rather his constancy is evident in the same way that he deals with the nations and with Israel.

In the biblical narrative, Teman was a grandson of Esau and firstborn of Eliphaz (Gen. 36:9-11), the most prominent tribe of Edom. The term is also a topographical designation for 'south' (e.g. Exod. 26:18) from the root תָּמַן with a ת prefix.<sup>292</sup> As a place name, Teman either refers to a part of Edom or is synonymous with Edom.<sup>293</sup> In the book of Genesis, Dedan is described as the brother of Sheba who is descended from Ham (Gen. 10:7) and from Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:3). As a toponym, Dedan is linked to Edom (Jer. 49:8) and also to an important commercial settlement located at one of the major

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<sup>288</sup> Ezek. 5:12; 6:11, 12; 11:10; 17:21; 23:25; 24:21.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Ezek. 5:14; 26:20; 29:9, 10; 33:24, 27; 35:4; 36:4, 10, 33; 38:8, 12.

<sup>290</sup> This correlation is explored further in relation to the articles by Gosse, cf. p. 136.

<sup>291</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 94.

<sup>292</sup> *DCH* 2011: 629.

<sup>293</sup> Knauf 2008b: 347.

oases in north-west Arabia.<sup>294</sup> Knauf indicates that the phrase ‘from Teman to Dedan’ means from the northern to southern borders of Edom.<sup>295</sup> Allen on the other hand suggests that the phrase does not signify a north-south inclusiveness (as in ‘from Dan to Beer-sheba’) since Teman refers to the southern territory of Edom which is where Dedan is also thought, by some, to be located.<sup>296</sup> Greenberg mediates with his observation that these places have not been certainly located,<sup>297</sup> while Block plausibly suggests that *Ezekiel’s* phrase functions merismically for all Edom beyond even its borders.<sup>298</sup>

Elsewhere in *Ezekiel*, it seems that these are borders that Edom wants to extend. What is more, Edom’s desire to possess the land of Yahweh’s promise is more than territorial gain (Ezek. 35). I have previously described the significant relationship between the covenant and the land,<sup>299</sup> as well as the crucial notion of Yahweh’s presence and the land (Ezek. 35:10). This means that Edom’s aspirations for the land of Israel were tantamount to denying the special relationship between Yahweh and his people (cf. Lev. 25:23; Deut. 32:8).<sup>300</sup> It also shows that while the Promised Land is significant,<sup>301</sup> it is only so in relation to Yahweh’s presence. Thus, one may deduce that it is the presence of Yahweh that is truly significant; for the priestly prophet, paradise is not so much a place, as it is the presence and personhood of Yahweh. It is an observation that adds weight to the present thesis.

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<sup>294</sup> D. F. Graf 2008: 121.

<sup>295</sup> Knauf 2008b: 347.

<sup>296</sup> Allen 1990: 68; cf. de Vaux 1969: 383-84.

<sup>297</sup> Greenberg 1997: 522.

<sup>298</sup> Block 1998: 24; cf. Joyce 2007: 173.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Ezek. 25:3 exegesis p. 96.

<sup>300</sup> Woudstra 1968: 30.

<sup>301</sup> Assis (2006: 12) argues that Edom’s aspirations to occupy parts of the land of Israel (Ezek. 35) may have been interpreted by the Judeans as a desire to restore the election and birth right to Esau.

Once again, in *Ezekiel's* oracles the punishment fits the crime. Edomite vengeance provokes divine vengeance,<sup>302</sup> during which the entire land will be laid waste and its population of both humans and animals decimated by the sword (v. 13).

The metaphorical use of נָתַן as Yahweh 'lays' (or 'gives') his vengeance (25:14; cf. 25:17) is highlighted by Zimmerli, who suggests that this may also be related to the old speech tradition of 1 Kings 20.<sup>303</sup> Even if this is not the case, the vindication of Yahweh in the context of his holy war is once more behind the נָתַן of Yahweh's vengeance on Edom (v. 14).<sup>304</sup> Poetic justice is to the fore,<sup>305</sup> in which the victims of Edomite vengeance become Yahweh's agents as he metes out divine justice by the hand of his people.<sup>306</sup> Zimmerli observes that this message of the nation's destruction should bring hope to the exiles. While Yahweh has judged his own (chs. 1-24) his 'judgement of his people is meant to testify to his holy mercy'.<sup>307</sup> Yahweh's intervention in human experience enables witness of divine justice and truth,<sup>308</sup> thus allowing Yahweh to 'assert himself in self-vindication, after violation of his sovereignty'.<sup>309</sup> What is more, defence of 'my people Israel' shows an intention to inspire hope for the future.<sup>310</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>302</sup> Allen 1990: 68.

<sup>303</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 109.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. Zimmerli 1982: 102, 108 and see Ammon oracle discussion.

<sup>305</sup> The principle of *lex talionis* (cf. p. 6), which foresees Edom being punished with the same severity that Edom inflicted against 'Jacob', is also found in Obadiah (Obad. 10, 15), although in that prophecy the accusations of arrogance and pride and the part it played in the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah are directed to Edom (Na'aman 2016: 17).

<sup>306</sup> Block 1998: 24; Joyce 2007: 173.

<sup>307</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 19.

<sup>308</sup> Allen 1990: 70.

<sup>309</sup> Allen 1990: 68.

<sup>310</sup> Block 1998: 28.

the expression ('my people') appears in the context of covenantal restoration elsewhere in *Ezekiel*.<sup>311</sup> Although Lee contends that commentators are too quick to seize upon this phrase as an indication that retribution against Edom means restoration for Israel,<sup>312</sup> bearing in mind the use of the phrase elsewhere in *Ezekiel*, it seems quite likely that in those instances as here, in the midst of Yahweh's wrathful judgement of Edom, this intriguing reference to Israel as 'my people' points to promising times ahead and hints at a vocational dimension to their relationship, so providing hope for those to whom the oracle was delivered.<sup>313</sup>

Alternatively, it might also suggest another possibility. Dicou points out that in three separate articles, Gosse shows that divine judgement announced against Israel is transferred to Edom and the nations.<sup>314</sup> If one reads the OAN with the conclusion of Gosse's survey in mind, then a most intriguing possibility is presented. I have, after all, already observed that there appears to be a correlation between the retribution directed to Edom and that which Yahweh delivered to Jerusalem.<sup>315</sup> What is more, I have also remarked that Moab's assertion that the house of Judah is like the other nations (Ezek. 25:8) reflects the desire expressed by the house of Israel to be like the nations (20:32).<sup>316</sup> I suggested that the prophet might be projecting the guilt incurred by Israel's aspiration

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<sup>311</sup> Ezek. 13:23; 13:9, 10, 18, 19, 21; 14:8, 9; 34:30; 39:7.

<sup>312</sup> Lee 2016: 60.

<sup>313</sup> Block 1998: 25. Block (1998: 24) notes that Yahweh's defence of his people recalls Ps. 94:1; Jer. 50:15, 28; Deut. 32:35.

<sup>314</sup> Dicou 1994: 15; Gosse 1989; Gosse 1990b; Gosse 1990a.

<sup>315</sup> See p. 133. I have also noted a similarity (p. 115) between the sentiments expressed by Israel (20:32) and those of Moab (25:8).

<sup>316</sup> It is apposite to recall at this juncture that Jerusalem, Judah and the land of Israel are understood by *Ezekiel* as concentric circles (see p. 97). This understanding is also evident in 25:12 where the house of Judah is the object of Edomite derision which Yahweh vindicates by the hand of 'my people Israel' (v. 14).

onto Moab. The conclusions of Gosse seem to support my proposal. Indeed, read this way, rather than perceiving implicit judgement against Israel in the OAN, the judgement that Israel duly deserved could be understood as being projected onto the nations. Admittedly, this is a subtle difference, but one that is significant for my purpose. If in the phrase ‘by the hand of my people’ the prophet was using the judgement of the nations, represented here by Edom (25:14), as a way of illustrating the errors of the exiles’ ways and the divine justice they merited, then *Ezekiel* might be implying that by their own actions, Israel had brought well-deserved judgement upon their own heads. This would effectively vindicate Yahweh’s activity while illuminating a fresh perspective on the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy, so adding considerable support to my thesis.

As I have shown, the notion of Yahweh’s anger and wrath is a recurrent theme in *Ezekiel*. In this regard, Muilenburg’s comment is important: ‘It is clear that in all the passages where Yahweh’s wrath is mentioned we have to do with a holy manifestation, even when the word “holy” is not mentioned’.<sup>317</sup> Thus *Ezekiel’s* preoccupation with Yahweh’s holiness is evident in the presentation of Yahweh being provoked to anger by the abominations committed by the people (Ezek. 8:17; 16:26).<sup>318</sup> *Ezekiel* also depicts the wrath of Yahweh symbolically as a ‘cup’ (23:32-34), although this is a common trope in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, Psalm 75:8 speaks of Yahweh holding a cup of wine that he will pour out on the wicked and in Jeremiah 25:15 the prophet takes the cup of the wine of wrath from Yahweh’s hand. Equally important in *Ezekiel*, though, is the idea that Yahweh’s wrath can be satisfied (Ezek. 16:42), and that his anger can be spent (Ezek. 5:13).<sup>319</sup> The cup is not constantly refilled; thus, the audience sees that divine wrath is not endless and indiscriminate, but is specifically directed at sin in the interests

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<sup>317</sup> Muilenburg 1962: 618.

<sup>318</sup> Kohn 2002: 87.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. p. 70.

of divine justice. Once sin has been dealt with and divine justice has been satisfied, divine mercy can be extended to the sinner. Thus, in this oracle, if read with the idea that the prophet is projecting Israel's guilt onto Edom, the reader might find him contending that in the destruction of Edom, Israel's penalty for sin is paid and Yahweh's wrath is satisfied. Accordingly, divine justice is appeased and divine mercy is extended to the sinner (in this case, Israel), in what could be described as an elegant and poetically just illustration that vindicates the interests of Yahweh.

Although some scholars describe a transformation of the recognition formula ('they shall know my vengeance') that may indicate a later hand,<sup>320</sup> in this thesis it has been classified as a related phrase on the grounds that the usual direct reference to the recognition of אֲנִי יְהוָה 'I am Yahweh' is replaced by a reference to the sign of his activity, namely his vengeance, in the judgement of Edom (v. 14).<sup>321</sup> In spite of this formality, it is the theme of Yahweh's vengeance that is pertinent here. The feminine noun נִקְמָה 'vengeance' witnessed here is identical in meaning to the masculine noun נִקְמָה.<sup>322</sup>

Although the root נִקַּם only appears seventy times in the Hebrew Bible, 'it expresses a truth that is theologically important, but greatly misunderstood'.<sup>323</sup> According to the prophets, the day of Yahweh's vengeance was a time when Yahweh would set the record straight (Jer. 46:10; Isa. 61:2). As Smick observes, 'God cannot be true to his character of holiness and justice if he allows sin and rebellion to go unpunished'.<sup>324</sup> Yahweh's vengeance is taken either by championing his own (Ps. 94), or by punishing those who have broken their covenant with him (Lev. 26:24-25). While people can be a

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<sup>320</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 18.

<sup>321</sup> Category A5, Table 2, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>322</sup> *DCH* 2001: 752.

<sup>323</sup> Smick 1980: 599.

<sup>324</sup> Smick 1980: 599.

secondary cause of divine vengeance (Ezek. 25:14), usually Yahweh is the source, with people being warned not to take vengeance on their own behalf (Lev 19:18; Deut. 32:35). Importantly, though, as Smick observes, the wrathful vengeance of Yahweh must always be considered with reference to his merciful purposes.<sup>325</sup> The idea of divine vengeance ought to be appreciated, says Smick, in the context of the holiness and justice of Yahweh, and its attendant consequences for people. While the notion of revenge is challenging to equate with an ethical perspective (in the hands of God or humanity), when balanced by mercy, it is evidently a requirement in redemptive history.<sup>326</sup> Moreover, writing about the recognition formula (v. 14), Woudstra observes that the purpose of Edom's punishment is expressed 'in what may be regarded as Ezekiel's most characteristic phrase'. Recognition of Yahweh by Edom is effected by his judgement on the foreign nations and by his saving activity on Israel's behalf. Consequently, Woudstra maintains that here, 'the saving aspect of this central phrase in the book of *Ezekiel* is not entirely absent'.<sup>327</sup> In a slightly different vein, Lee suggests that this recognition formula (v. 14) differs from the rest in Ezek. 25 in that Yahweh's vengeance is merged with himself. Consequently, Edom's knowledge of Yahweh is acquired exclusively through their experience of his vengeance. It is awareness of this that vindicates his power in their eyes.<sup>328</sup> Thus, divine retribution (cf. Jer. 46:10; Ps. 79:10), in which Yahweh gains vindication for himself,<sup>329</sup> is once more evident as the exercise of human revenge (cf. Jer. 20:10) on the part of Edom is repaid by Yahweh, to whom vengeance properly belongs (Deut. 32:35).

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<sup>325</sup> Smick 1980: 599.

<sup>326</sup> Smick 1980: 599.

<sup>327</sup> Woudstra 1968: 34.

<sup>328</sup> Lee 2016: 61.

<sup>329</sup> *DCH* (2001: 752) notes that the *niph.* of אָנַח 'to avenge' connotes this meaning.

The phrase **נִאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה** 'declares the Lord Yahweh' (v. 14)<sup>330</sup> is known as the prophetic utterance<sup>331</sup> or signatory formula.<sup>332</sup> Found at the end of a speech unit or major section within a speech unit, the formula identifies the preceding speech as being from Yahweh.<sup>333</sup> Categorised as a prophetic idiom,<sup>334</sup> an original setting may be found in Num. 24:3, 15, which emphasises the speaker, and so any response ought to be directed to that speaker. According to Vetter, the transformation of this visionary formula into a Yahweh proclamation formula is not found prior to Amos,<sup>335</sup> who seems to have employed the expression to underline that it is God speaking.<sup>336</sup>

A quarter of all biblical occurrences of the prophetic utterance formula appear in *Ezekiel*.<sup>337</sup> This amount is slightly more than the number of times that the recognition formula is witnessed in *Ezekiel*, although the prophetic utterance formula is witnessed thirteen times in the OAN,<sup>338</sup> compared with the eighteen appearances of the recognition formula in those chapters.<sup>339</sup> A quarter of all occurrences in *Ezekiel* are found at the end

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<sup>330</sup> Vetter (1997: 692) indicates that the etymology of **נִאֵם** 'utterance' is uncertain, although most scholars relate the term to *Arab. n'm* 'to whisper'.

<sup>331</sup> Hals 1989: 361.

<sup>332</sup> Block 1997: 33.

<sup>333</sup> Hals 1989: 361. Block (1997: 34) contends that the long form of the divine name with the addition of **אֲדֹנָי** 'Lord' highlights the subservient role of the prophet who speaks with the authority of Yahweh, while Greenberg (1983: 65) suggests that the frequency with which the double name occurs emphasises the subjected state of the people, who have rebelled against the Lordship of Yahweh, who in turn demands their recognition.

<sup>334</sup> Procksch 1964b: 94. The LXX equivalent of **נִאֵם (אֲדֹנָי) יְהוָה** is usually λέγει κύριος.

<sup>335</sup> Vetter (1997: 694) notes that the phrase **נִאֵם יְהוָה** replaced the messenger formula in Amos which was considered a weaker conclusion.

<sup>336</sup> Vetter 1997: 694.

<sup>337</sup> I.e. 85 times out of 365 in the HB (175 times in Jeremiah). Cf. Baumgärtel 1961.

<sup>338</sup> Ezek. 25:14; 26:5, 14, 21; 28:10; 29:20; 30:6; 31:18; 32:8, 14, 16, 31, 32.

<sup>339</sup> Ezek. 25:5, 7, 11, 17; 26:6; 28:22, 23, 24, 26; 29:6, 9, 16, 21; 30:8, 19, 25, 26; 32:15.

of an oracle that begins with the messenger formula. The rhetorical significance of this formula may be discerned in the inordinate occurrences of the expression in *Ezekiel* (and Jeremiah) which reflect the prophet's polemic against false prophets (Ezek. 13:16; 14:14; cf. Jer. 23:3, 4).<sup>340</sup> Wherever the formula is used, it 'functions as a kind of verbal signature' analogous to a seal of authority on a written document.<sup>341</sup> This 'verbal signature' underlines the divine authorship of the prophetic utterance.<sup>342</sup> Here (v. 14), when combined with this related version of the recognition formula, the expression declares Yahweh's intention; his judgement by the hand of Israel will bring about recognition of Yahweh—divine cause and divine effect.<sup>343</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Summary

In this oracle, the theme of revenge and retribution takes centre stage as Yahweh executes justice against Edom for their grievous incurrance of sin. In an excursus I discussed the *asham* sacrifice and considered the possibility that, in the use of that term, the prophet might be portraying the exiles' alienation from Yahweh caused by their rebellion while at the same time attempting to resolve the cultic requirements. I suggested that the prophet could be reminding the people of their own culpability in the interests of inspiring their return to Yahweh; and as a rhetorical ruse, the connotations of the *asham* could allow the people's deliberate rebellion to be expiated by the nations who are represented by Edom. I suggested that the combination of divine wrath and mercy expressed in the judgement of Edom by the hand of 'my people' Israel helped the audience appreciate that wrath is a holy manifestation of Yahweh that is directed at sin

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<sup>340</sup> In Jeremiah יהוה נאם is usually found, yet this form only appears in *Ezekiel* at Ezek. 16:58 and 37:14. On the phrase in Jeremiah, see Rendtorff 1954.

<sup>341</sup> Block 1997: 33; cf. Greenberg 1983: 64.

<sup>342</sup> Greenberg 1983: 114.

<sup>343</sup> Block (1998: 24) observes that Edom's future transcends specific historical events.

in the interests of divine justice. Once divine wrath has been satisfied, divine mercy appears on the horizon. However, if understood, as I contend, that the exiles' guilt is being projected onto the nations, then irony may be detected in the use of 'my people' whose involvement effectively (albeit rhetorically) brings judgement upon their own heads in what was described as an elegant and poetically just illustration that vindicates Yahweh.

## 4.5 Ezek. 25:15-17: Oracle against Philistia

### 4.5.1 Translation

15 'Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>344</sup> "Because the Philistines exacted merciless vengeance<sup>345</sup> with a contemptuous heart<sup>346</sup> to destroy in everlasting enmity,<sup>347</sup>

16 therefore", thus says the Lord Yahweh,<sup>348</sup> "behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines and I will cut off the Cherethites<sup>349</sup> and I will destroy the remnant of the seashore.

17 And I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful chastisements;<sup>350</sup> and they shall know that I am Yahweh when I lay my vengeance on them."

### 4.5.2 Exegesis

I have already mentioned the similarities between the oracle against Edom and this oracle against Philistia; indeed the nature of the resemblance is such that Zimmerli refers to the pair as 'a consciously formed double oracle'.<sup>351</sup> Certainly the indictment against the Philistines of an everlasting enmity of vengeful spite reflects the charge

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<sup>344</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>345</sup> MT בנקמה וינקמו נקם, lit. 'have acted with vengeance and taken vengeance with vengeance'. For *niph.* of נקם, cf. v. 12; Judg. 16:28.

<sup>346</sup> MT בשאט בנפש, lit. 'with scorn in the soul'; cf. v.6.

<sup>347</sup> MT איבת עולם 'everlasting enmity'. LXX ἕως αἰῶνος 'forever', but cf. Ezek. 35:5.

<sup>348</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>349</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 10) notes that the word play את כרתים 'I will cut off the Cherethites' is reflected in ⚭ (*Bomberg edition of Jacob ben Haiim, Venice 1524/5*) *et interficiam interfectores* 'and destroy the murderers'. LXX Κρητάς 'inhabitant of the island of Crete'. BDAG 2001: 56. Cf. *Anth. Pal.*, 7, 275: Κρητες ὄπου ψεῦστα καὶ Διὸς ἔστι τάφος 'Where the Cretans are liars and Zeus has a tomb among them'.

<sup>350</sup> MT בתוכחות חמה 'with wrathful chastisements' absent from LXX.

<sup>351</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 18.

against the Edomites (v. 12). However, the characterisation of a 'contemptuous heart' also provides a link to the oracle against Ammon (v. 6).

Philistia is the region of Palestine that was occupied by the Philistines, whose country of origin is unknown. They are usually regarded as being among the Sea Peoples who came to Canaan via the Aegean (cf. 1 Sam. 30:14; Zeph. 2:5) in the second millennium BCE. It is thought they came partly by sea from Crete<sup>352</sup> and Cyprus,<sup>353</sup> destroying the Mycenaeans and Minoans, and partly overland via Anatolia, plundering Ugarit and the Hittite empire. Their aim was to settle in Egypt,<sup>354</sup> however, Rameses III defeated them in about 1190.<sup>355</sup>

In Israelite tradition, the Philistines are identified as arriving from Caphtor (Amos 9:7). According to the Table of Nations, however, their lineage descends from Ham (Gen. 10:14). An early migration to Crete (traditionally thought to be Caphtor) may account for their Aegean heritage.<sup>356</sup> The Philistine presence spoken of at the time of the patriarchs was such that by the time of the exodus, the Israelites were unable to dislodge them during the conquest (Josh. 13:2-3). The boundaries of their land are defined in Josh. 13:2-3 as the Wadi el-Arish to the South, the region of Ekron in the north, Judah to the east and the Mediterranean to the West. Saul was defeated by the Philistines (1 Sam. 31), but having been subdued by David (2 Sam. 5:25), their five-city state (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath and Ekron)<sup>357</sup> failed to fully recover. Along with the rest of the Levant, the Philistines were defeated by the Assyrians.<sup>358</sup> However, as Assyrian rule

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<sup>352</sup> I.e. 'Caphtor' (Amos 9:7).

<sup>353</sup> I.e. 'Kittim' (Num. 24:24).

<sup>354</sup> Katzenstein 2008a: 326.

<sup>355</sup> Katzenstein 2008a; cf. Deut. 2:23.

<sup>356</sup> See Rendsburg 1987: 89-96.

<sup>357</sup> Dothan 2008: 329.

<sup>358</sup> See Tadmor 1966.

declined, Egypt assumed authority over the Philistine confederation.<sup>359</sup> Philistine forces probably joined in Zedekiah's revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. Pharaoh Hophra, who had persuaded Zedekiah to rebel, came to his aid but retreated in the face of the Babylonian army (cf. Jer. 37:7). After the Persians subdued Philistia (539 BCE), the language and culture of the Philistines disappeared.<sup>360</sup> Once Alexander had conquered the Levant, the only trace of the Philistines was the name Palestine.<sup>361</sup>

Having acted with merciless vengeance, the Philistines are guilty, along with the Edomites, of contravening Yahweh's sovereignty to mete out divine justice. The repetition of 'vengeance' in this phrase (v. 15)<sup>362</sup> expresses the extreme degree to which the Philistines behaved. Having noted the five occurrences of the root נָקַם in the oracle against Edom, Greenberg also highlights the four occasions the root is attested in the oracle against Philistia and, says Greenberg, it is this which emphasises the basic motif of vengeance for vengeance (i.e. talion).<sup>363</sup> While not being explicit, the inference is that Judah has been victimised.<sup>364</sup>

Of the ten appearances of the noun מִשְׁחִית 'destruction' in the Hebrew Bible, four of them are found in *Ezekiel*.<sup>365</sup> Two of these appear in the context of Yahweh's judgement against Israel which are balanced by threats of destruction directed to the nations, once against the Ammonites and here against the Philistines (v. 15). Even in the use of this

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<sup>359</sup> Katzenstein 2008a: 328.

<sup>360</sup> Katzenstein 2008a: 328.

<sup>361</sup> Katzenstein 2008a: 328.

<sup>362</sup> See translation notes.

<sup>363</sup> Greenberg 1997: 526.

<sup>364</sup> The NIV identifies Judah, although in MT the object of Philistia's vengeance is not specified.

<sup>365</sup> Ezek. 5:16; 9:6; 21:36 (31); 25:15. Elsewhere Exod. 12:13; Prov. 18:9; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Chron. 20:33; 22:4; Dan. 10:8.

term, *Ezekiel* seems to be taking great pains to demonstrate that Yahweh's action is justly deserved and delivered with an even hand. There also exists the possibility that *Ezekiel* once again is drawing on the exodus traditions. Zimmerli has emphasised the relationship between the early credos of the exodus tradition and the 'I am Yahweh' formula,<sup>366</sup> as well as showing that material preceding the recognition formula serves as a sign that 'proves' the activity of Yahweh.<sup>367</sup> It is consequently of some interest to note another appearance of the noun מִשְׁחִיתָה 'destruction' found in the Passover narrative:

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy (מִשְׁחִיתָה) you when I strike the land of Egypt. (Exod. 12:13 P)

Perhaps here, as elsewhere (cf. Ezek. 20:6), *Ezekiel* is drawing on the tradition in which Yahweh so dramatically delivered Israel from 'the nations'. Another intriguing term that *Ezekiel* employs in this verse is the word אִיְבָה 'enmity', which only appears four times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>368</sup> Two of these appear in concurrent verses (Num. 35:21, 22), where vengeance for the murder of one who has been struck in enmity is taken by the avenger of blood who puts the murderer to death. This remarkable affinity of thought is witnessed in the *Ezekiel* verse (v. 15) where Judah (implied) has been struck to destruction by Philistia in everlasting enmity. In response to this, Yahweh, as Judah's avenger of blood, summarily destroys the Philistines (v. 17).<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 294.

<sup>367</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 38.

<sup>368</sup> Gen. 3:15; Num. 35:21, 22. Also Ezra 3:3 if emended and 1QJub<sup>b</sup>. 35:9; 1QS4:17.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Ps. 9: 13 (12). If it is possible to discern this layer of meaning in Ezek. 25:15, then the appearance of the word in Genesis is also germane. God (יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים) curses the serpent and says: 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel' (Gen. 3:15). The interpretation of this in Christian tradition (Rom. 16:20) is perhaps equally apposite.

This judgement, introduced by a messenger formula (v. 16), will once again be administered by Yahweh's outstretched arm. The Hebrew word נָטָה 'stretch out' appears in *Ezekiel* twelve times.<sup>370</sup> All these, with one exception,<sup>371</sup> describe the strong hand or arm of Yahweh being stretched out in judgement and power. Six are found in the judgement of Israel by Yahweh (Ezek. 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 20:33, 34), one of which (16:27) references the Philistines who were ashamed of Israel's debauched behaviour. The other five appear in oracles of judgement directed to foreign nations (25:7, 13, 16; 30:25; 35:3).<sup>372</sup> Here again we find in *Ezekiel* a sense of balance between Yahweh's wrathful (20:33, 34), and hence holy,<sup>373</sup> judgement of Israel on the one hand, and on the equally stretched out other, that of the foreign nations.

The phrase וְהִכַּרְתִּי אֶת כִּרְתִּים 'and I will cut off the Cherethites', 'introduces the antagonists by a new name'.<sup>374</sup> Although 'the word Cherethite is sometimes used as a synonym for Philistines (Ezek. 25:16; Zeph. 2:5)',<sup>375</sup> the Cherethites were probably Cretan mercenaries.<sup>376</sup> Ehrlich notes that the exact nature of the relationship between

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<sup>370</sup> Ezek. 1:22; 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 20:33, 34; 25:7, 13, 16; 30:25; 35:3.

<sup>371</sup> The only other occurrence of נָטָה in *Ezekiel* describes the crystal firmament that is 'stretched out' above the divine throne-chariot (1:22). However, the word is also found in a variety of other contexts; it is used to describe the pitching of tents (Gen. 12:8; 26:25; 2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chron. 15:1). נָטָה can also mean 'incline'. Not only do people stretch out their tents (Gen. 33:19), but the Psalmist speaks of hearts being inclined (נָטָה) to perform God's statutes (Ps. 119:112). However, נָטָה can also mean deviation from that course (Gen. 38:16; cf. Num. 20:17).

<sup>372</sup> When Yahweh is responsible for the 'stretching out', it seems to invite human response (Ezek. 1:22; 30:25; Ps. 104:2; cf. Sir. 43:11-12).

<sup>373</sup> Muilenburg 1962: 618.

<sup>374</sup> Block 1998: 27.

<sup>375</sup> Klein 1983: 283.

<sup>376</sup> Greenberg 1997: 522.

the Cherethites and the Philistines is unclear. Even though the Cherethites and the Philistines are juxtaposed in Ezek. 25:16 (cf. Zeph. 2:5), it is unclear whether the Cherethites are identical with the Philistines, a sub-group or separate peoples entirely.<sup>377</sup> Either way, they have incurred Yahweh's ire and will be cut off.<sup>378</sup> The phrases 'cut off' and 'stretch out' are usually found on their own in the Hebrew Bible, but in Ezek. 14:1-11, 12-23 and in Ezek. 25 they are found together. This, suggests Lee, invites a comparison to be made between the judgement on Israel and that on the nations.<sup>379</sup> These expressions also recall the vengeance announced on Jerusalem and, based on these observations, Lee argues that Ezek. 25 implicitly affirms that Jerusalem had become polluted and impure just like the neighbouring nations.<sup>380</sup>

The notion of destroying the Philistine remnant (v. 16) seems to echo the sentiments articulated by Amos: "I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod, and the one who holds the sceptre from Ashkelon; I will turn my hand against Ekron, and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish", says the Lord Yahweh' (Amos 1:8).<sup>381</sup> In *Ezekiel*, the word אָבַד 'destroy' is usually found in the context of divine judgement against the nations.<sup>382</sup> This deployment is possibly inspired by its use in covenantal curses (Lev. 26:38; Deut. 4:26). However, *Ezekiel* also applies the word in an abstract sense when referring to hope that is אָבַד 'lost' (Ezek. 19:5; 37:11).

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<sup>377</sup> Ehrlich 2008: 899.

<sup>378</sup> Cf. Ezek. 25:7, 13.

<sup>379</sup> Lee 2016: 73-76.

<sup>380</sup> Lee 2016: 78.

<sup>381</sup> Greenberg (1997: 522) observes that a clue to the sense here is found in Amos, but also that the reference is part of a sequence of destruction and is not synonymous to that of Cherethites.

<sup>382</sup> Ezek. 25: 7, 16, 17; 28:16; 30:13; 32:13.

The word שְׂאֲרֵיית 'remnant' (v. 16) is a term normally used of those surviving calamity (5:10; 9:8; 11:13). It is also found with reference to Philistia in the prophets (Isa. 14:30; Jer. 47:4), as well as in the context of future blessing for Israel (Ezek. 36:3). Use of the term here may reflect the theological overtones associated with the Judean remnant, so reminding the exiles of their covenantal privileges—even though Yahweh will destroy the Philistine remnant, he remains faithful to his own, recollection of which may inspire the exiles to return to Yahweh. Or it may simply refer to the rest of the Philistines on the coast.<sup>383</sup> Either way, it serves to highlight the intensity of Yahweh's actions.<sup>384</sup>

The phrase בְּתוֹכָהֶן חֶמָה 'with wrathful chastisements' (v. 17) is found only here and at Ezek. 5:15 in the context of Yahweh's furious punishment of Israel. Once again *Ezekiel* emphasises Yahweh's impartial justice as the correcting discipline issued to both Israel and Philistia is spoken of in identical terms. Poetic justice<sup>385</sup> sees the offences of the Philistines returning to wreak their devastation on the entire population. The wrathful chastisements of Yahweh, who now acts out his own vengeance, ensures that the Philistines will recognise that it is Yahweh who is responsible for their annihilation. I have already mentioned that this recognition formula features in Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction*,<sup>386</sup> although it can probably be said with some confidence that its application there was not intended as an apologetic vindicating Yahweh. For all that, speaking about this verse (v. 17), Lee observes that 'divine vengeance signifies YHWH's legal right to exact retribution'.<sup>387</sup> Thus, divine justice will be recognised as Yahweh acts out what

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<sup>383</sup> Cf. NRSV.

<sup>384</sup> Block 1998: 28.

<sup>385</sup> Tuell (2009: 174) suggests that 'the fate of Edom and Philistia calls to mind a central theme of Israel's wisdom literature: that sin carries within it its own consequences' (e.g. Prov. 22:8).

<sup>386</sup> Cf. p. 35.

<sup>387</sup> Lee 2016: 72.

properly belongs to him.<sup>388</sup> This is emphasised by the oracle's *Leitmotif* of vengeance, which is clearly expressed, as Yahweh's own vengeance is shown in the developed recognition formula that effectively summarises the whole chapter. Notes Zimmerli, it is expansions such as these that describe more fully Yahweh, who reveals himself in a self-introductory way, that is confirmed by the manifestation of his actions.<sup>389</sup> This expanded recognition formula (v. 17)<sup>390</sup> includes a summary statement of the preceding description of divine action, which, according to Lee, affirms that only Yahweh has the right to vengeance.<sup>391</sup> The supplemental clause exhibits a כ plus infinitive construct development (יָהוָה בְּתַתִּי 'when I give/lay').<sup>392</sup> This adverbial modifier of אֲנִי יְהוָה 'I am Yahweh'<sup>393</sup> indicates that Yahweh's action is the basis for the targeted recognition. Zimmerli observes that this 'clearly shows the juxtaposition of human recognition to divine action'.<sup>394</sup> The recognition material (the 'sign', cf. 25:14) is almost the same as the recognition content. Zimmerli contends that the similarity between 25:14 and 17 shows that the statement of recognition of v. 14 is an abbreviation of that found in v.

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<sup>388</sup> Deut. 32:35; cf. Rom. 12:19. Zimmerli (1983: 20) notes that 'God's judgement achieves its objective only when all mocking laughter and...vindictive assistance of his holiness has come to naught. Only then can the way become clear for a genuine awareness of the holy and merciful self-revelation of God.'

<sup>389</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 110) highlights expansions such as 'your God' (20:20); 'their God' (28:26; 39:22, 28); 'holy in Israel' (39:7); Yahweh has 'spoken' (5:13; 6:10; 17:21; 37:14); 'drawn his sword' (21:10 [5]); 'poured out his wrath' (22:22); 'burned' (21:4 [20:48]); 'made low' (17:24); 'raised high' (17:24); 'rebuilt and replanted' (36:36); Yahweh also 'sanctifies Israel' (37:28; 20:12). These expansions also contribute to an understanding of the recognition formula's use (Zimmerli 1983: 109).

<sup>390</sup> Category B2, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>391</sup> Lee 2016: 77.

<sup>392</sup> For a similar expansion, cf. Ezek. 6:13; 12:15; 15:7; 20:42, 44; 28:22; 30:8, 25; 33:29; 34:27; 36:23; 37:13, 28; 39:28.

<sup>393</sup> Vervenne 1997: 478.

<sup>394</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 38.

17.<sup>395</sup> Thus for both cases, says Zimmerli, “[t]o recognise Yahweh means quite literally to recognise his vengeful activity. To recognise Yahweh means to recognise his work.”<sup>396</sup> The two are virtually indistinguishable. For *Ezekiel* then, it seems that the recognition formula underlines the prophet’s conviction that the sign inevitably points to the referent. A brief interlude is called for here.

The realms of symbolic systems have been the subject of much discussion. For instance, Goodman and Newcomb observe that a work of art is part of a symbolic system under which view ‘reference’ is the broadest of the fundamental terms used.<sup>397</sup> The term ‘reference’ includes ‘denotation’ and ‘exemplification’, the distinction between which lies in the *direction* of reference. This idea is developed by Treitler who uses an extreme but simple example to illustrate this principle.<sup>398</sup> A neon billboard advertising a movie at the cinema utilises its text as a sign for the film. The normal flow of reference will be from sign to signified, neon billboard to movie. Once the performance is over, it is the movie that is recalled and reflected upon. It would be unusual for that flow of reference to be reversed with the focus of reflection being the neon billboard. Treitler observes that ‘the sign is transparent to the signified. It is totally absorbed in its signifying function.’ This is the process of ‘denotation’.<sup>399</sup> Exemplification, on the other hand, can be illustrated by considering a trumpet fanfare, which may have been composed and performed to signify the arrival of the monarch at her Diamond Jubilee. Subsequent reflection on the

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<sup>395</sup> Zimmerli (1982: 145) similarly argues that the phrase ‘and all the nations shall see my judgement that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them’ (Ezek. 39:21) could be considered an abbreviation of ‘all the nations shall see that I am Yahweh, I have executed judgement and laid my hand on them’.

<sup>396</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 145; cf. p. 70.

<sup>397</sup> Goodman 1976: 45-52; Newcomb 1984: 623. The view held in this thesis is that *Ezekiel* has been artfully constructed, thus allowing it to be identified it as a ‘work of art’.

<sup>398</sup> Treitler 2011: 11.

<sup>399</sup> Treitler 2011: 11.

Jubilee might well include an appreciation of the fanfare, which, for some, may *exemplify* their image of monarchy, thus enabling the reference between sign and signified to flow in both directions.

According to this understanding of signs and their referents, one finds that in *Ezekiel* the exiles were guilty of confusing the direction of reference. The temple had become the delight of their eyes and the pride of their power (Ezek. 24:21), rather than allowing the temple, as a sign of Yahweh's presence, to *denote* and point them to the referent. They had spent time reflecting on the neon billboard, rather than the film. However, for Ezekiel, the sign always points to the referent and for the priestly prophet, the referent is always Yahweh. What is more, it seems that, in *Ezekiel*, the sign *exemplifies* the character of Yahweh. For example, in the relevant verse (v. 17), reference between the sign and signified flows in both directions; to recognise Yahweh's vengeful activity (the 'sign') is to recognise Yahweh, and to recognise Yahweh is to recognise his activity. Thus, the recognition formula and its expansions appear to emphasise this important principle. The recognition formula is clearly important, not least due to the frequency of its repetition; however, if the recognition formula does highlight this relationship between the sign (the activity of Yahweh) and the signified (Yahweh), then this suggestion could shed light on the reason the formula appears with such regularity in *Ezekiel*. Perhaps Ezekiel's understanding of the value of this principle is based on the understanding of the urgency of his mission to the exiles whose experience has called them to question the presence of Yahweh. Thus, the principles of denotation and exemplification are important because, should at some point in the future (or indeed the present) the referent or signified (i.e. Yahweh) elude the people or not be immediately obvious, recollection of the signs that are attached to the recognition formula should still have the

capacity to exemplify the signified.<sup>400</sup> To return to my earlier illustration, this principle works in the same way that future renditions of the fanfare are not reliant on the presence of the Queen to *exemplify* an image of monarchy. Or put in the context of exile and *Ezekiel's* OAN, even in their despondency, the nature of Yahweh's, for example, vengeful activity, ought to reassure the exiles of Yahweh's presence in their experience. In other words, when applied to the activity of Yahweh, once the direction of reference is understood, recognition of the sign ought to be sufficiently reassuring. The referent, even if veiled, or apparently absent, should always be recalled. Thus, I contend that, in the OAN, the sign is not transparent to the referent, but that the activity of Yahweh, underlined by the recognition formula, exemplifies his character and vindicates his presence.

#### **4.5.3 Summary**

While Yahweh's mercy is discernible in the agency of Israel to perpetrate the destruction of Edom, the merciless vengeance of the Philistines attracts the wrath of Yahweh, whose sovereignty to mete out justice has been contravened. Consequently, as Judah's avenger of blood, Yahweh administers his own brand of merciless vengeance by his very own hand against Philistia and all her inhabitants. The intensity of this response witnesses Yahweh asserting himself in self-vindication as he intervenes in human experience. I observed that several phrases evoke the covenantal privilege and responsibility of the exiles and that it is Yahweh's action that is the basis for his recognition. In this regard, I discussed the principles of denotation and exemplification, noting the importance of the direction of reference between sign and signified, something, I suggested, the exiles had failed to appreciate. I proposed that, rather than

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<sup>400</sup> Hence we find Zimmerli (1982: 69) saying '[T]he recounting of Yahweh's deeds will also always demonstrate the hidden tendency to awaken recognition'.

the sign being transparent to the signified, so that it is absorbed in its signifying function, in *Ezekiel's* OAN, Yahweh's activity (the sign) exemplifies his character. Thus, in this oracle, it is his vengeance, emphasized in the recognition formula, that illustrates his character and vindicates his justice. I further submitted that this principle was important to grasp because, like the fanfare exemplifying the monarch in the absence of the Queen, the value of the sign is the referent to which it points, which in *Ezekiel* is invariably Yahweh.

## 4.6 Ezek. 26:1-6: Oracle against Tyre

### 4.6.1 Translation

1 In<sup>401</sup> the eleventh<sup>402</sup> year, on the first of the month, the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

2 ‘Son of Man, because Tyre<sup>403</sup> said concerning Jerusalem, “Aha, the gateway<sup>404</sup> of the peoples<sup>405</sup> is broken, she has swung open<sup>406</sup> to me; I shall be filled,<sup>407</sup> now she is laid waste”,

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<sup>401</sup> Masora margin notes 26:1 as the midpoint of the book.

<sup>402</sup> The month has been dropped possibly by haplography. Many emend ‘eleventh’ to ‘twelfth’ year, but cf. e.g. 40:49 and exegesis. Van Dijk (1968: 3) suggests that *Ezekiel’s* use may reflect an archaic style.

<sup>403</sup> LXX represents MT צַר (צוֹר) ‘Tyre’ as Σορ in 26:2, 3, 4, 7, 15; 27:2, 3 (x 2), 8, 32. However, in 28:2, 12; 29:18 (x 2), 20, the name is written as Τύρος.

<sup>404</sup> The plural דלתות ‘doors, gates’ (*DCH* 1995: 442) is odd as the subject of the singular verb נשברה ‘broken’. LXX ἀπόλωλεν τὰ ἔθνη ‘the nations are destroyed’ sheds no light here. Altering דלתות to the singular דלת would make grammatical sense of the verb. However, דלתות refers to the double doors/gates of the city (cf. 41:23). דלתות ‘gateway’ (so NRSV) is to be preferred then. Allen (1990: 70) translates the idiom somewhat freely as ‘international meeting place’. *BHS* suggests reading רכלת ‘trade’ (instead of דלתות ‘gateway’).

<sup>405</sup> Van Dijk (1968: 4) posits that עמים ‘peoples’ here means ‘fortress’, ‘city’ (cf. *DCH* 2007: 449), the plural being a construction that reflects the Ugaritic practice of using a plural to denote a house or temple.

<sup>406</sup> On the form of סבב, see GKC 1910: §67. ‘Verbs ע״ע, e. g. סבב ‘to surround’. Jer. 6:12 conveys the meaning ‘to be given over to...’. ונסבו בתיהם ל. ‘and their houses shall be turned over to...’ i.e., ‘swung open’.

<sup>407</sup> According to Greenberg (1997: 530), MT’s two ‘disjointed verbs’ (אמלאה ההרבה) are expressive and effectively contrast the circumstances of the two cities.

3 therefore', thus says the Lord Yahweh,<sup>408</sup> 'behold, I am against you, O Tyre! I will bring up many nations<sup>409</sup> against you, like the sea brings up<sup>410</sup> its waves.

4 They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her<sup>411</sup> towers;<sup>412</sup> I will scrape her soil<sup>413</sup> from her and I will make her a bare<sup>414</sup> rock.

5 She shall be a place for spreading<sup>415</sup> out nets in the midst of the sea,<sup>416</sup> for I myself have spoken', declares the Lord Yahweh.<sup>417</sup> 'She shall become plunder for the nations,

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<sup>408</sup> LXX κούριος.

<sup>409</sup> For גוים רבים 'many nations', cf. Ezek. 31:6; 38:23; 39:27 and עמים רבים 'many peoples' 3:6; 27:33; 32:3, 9, 10; 38:6, 8, 15, 22.

<sup>410</sup> MT כהעלות 'like (Yahweh's) causing (the sea) to rise' is often emended to כעלות 'like (the sea's) rising'. Zimmerli (1983: 27) sees in the *hiph.* (which corresponds to the previous *hiph.* והעליתי 'and I will cause to bring up') 'a mysterious driving force which sets the sea in motion'. Additionally, the grammatical possibility exists in which לגליו 'its waves' is the object (introduced by ל as in Aramaic, cf. BDB: §3b, 511) of the subject הים 'the sea': 'like the sea's raising its waves' (Allen 1990: 72).

<sup>411</sup> LXX 2 f.s.

<sup>412</sup> At set intervals, iron age city walls had towers built into them (*ANEP* 1969: 356).

<sup>413</sup> Allen (1990: 72) translates עפר 'rubble' based on destruction of 'walls' and 'towers'. Cf. Ezek. 26:12. Also 1 Kings 20:10; Neh. 3:34; 4:4; Ps. 102:15 (14).

<sup>414</sup> From צהה 'dazzling'; cf. Ezek. 24:7, 8; 26:4, 14.

<sup>415</sup> MT משטה 'spreading' only found twice in HB, here and Ezek. 47:10. LXX ψηγμός 'drying place'.

<sup>416</sup> Cf. Akkadian phrase 'Tyre who lives on an island amidst the sea' (*ANET* 1950: 291, 95, 97).

<sup>417</sup> LXX κούριος.

6 and her daughters,<sup>418</sup> who<sup>419</sup> are on the mainland,<sup>420</sup> shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am Yahweh.’

#### 4.6.2 Exegesis

The oracles against Tyre can be divided broadly into four sections: an oracle directed to the city (26:1-21), one directed to the king of Tyre (28:1-10), a lament over Tyre (27:1-36), and a lament over the king of Tyre (28:11-19). The first main section may be further divided into four oracles (26:1-6, 7-14, 15-18, 19-21).

Scholarly discussion exists regarding the priority of the oracles in chapter 26. For instance, Wevers argues that while the first Tyrian oracle (26:1-6) is patterned after chapter 25 and begins with a date notice, this oracle is dependent on the following ‘original’ oracle (26:7-14).<sup>421</sup> However, Zimmerli,<sup>422</sup> Allen,<sup>423</sup> Garscha<sup>424</sup> and Eichrodt<sup>425</sup> maintain that 26:1-6 is original and 26:7-14 is secondary.<sup>426</sup> Allen’s statement is indicative of this view: ‘The dependence of the complex second oracle on the first appears so marked that it is difficult to understand Wevers’ contention that vv. 2-6 are secondary and based on vv. 7-14’.<sup>427</sup> Despite this discord, most recognise that the

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<sup>418</sup> MT וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ ‘and her daughters’ refers to the inhabitants of daughter towns (Allen 1990: 72). Greenberg (1997: 532) suggests the phrase implies destruction of the villages as well as the villagers. Van Dijk (1968: 12-14) translates literally (see below), influenced by the Ugaritic epic of Keret which speaks of women working in the open country being swept away by an enemy attack.

<sup>419</sup> Absent from LXX.

<sup>420</sup> MT lit. ‘in the field’, i.e. on the mainland.

<sup>421</sup> Wevers 1982: 148.

<sup>422</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 32-33.

<sup>423</sup> Allen 1990: 73-75.

<sup>424</sup> Garscha 1974: 150.

<sup>425</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 368.

<sup>426</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 40) describes these further oracles as the ‘exposition’ of 26:1-6.

<sup>427</sup> Allen 1990: 74.

transmission of these oracles has not been straightforward. Hals indicates that the overlapping patterns of organisation of the oracles against Tyre reflect their complicated development,<sup>428</sup> and Zimmerli states that the only proof oracle is found at the beginning (26:1-6) of the complex oracles against Tyre (26:1-28:19).<sup>429</sup> Further evidence of conscious arranging is evident: the oracle of judgement against Tyre (ch. 26) is followed by a lament over Tyre (ch. 27), a pattern that is also found in 28:1-19. Additionally, an oracle against the Prince of Tyre (26:1-10) is followed by a lament over the Prince of Tyre (26:11-19). Greenberg notes that each pair comprises a 'realistic' and an 'allegorical' oracle and that in both pairs Tyre's indictment is one of 'soaring ambition'.<sup>430</sup>

The conscious arrangement of the Tyrian oracles confers added significance on the first oracle in the series. This oracle (26:1-6) could be considered as a sixth in the series of chapter 25 since it contains the same structure, although the elaborate introduction hints at something more substantial to come. Following the date notice, the indictment, introduced by עַן 'because', follows in v. 2. The judgement in vv. 3-6 begins with לָכֵן 'therefore',<sup>431</sup> and includes a messenger formula. The primacy that may be attributed to this oracle by nature of its position is emphasised by the recognition formula that is uniquely attested in the series of oracles against Tyre. Consequently, since this thesis contends that the recognition formula in *Ezekiel's* OAN is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh, and this oracle is the only one in the sequence that concludes with a recognition formula, it will be the sole focus of attention here.

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<sup>428</sup> Hals 1989: 184.

<sup>429</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 25.

<sup>430</sup> Greenberg 1997: 540.

<sup>431</sup> The judgement is expanded and developed with the messenger formula being repeated in vv. 7, 15, 19.

According to Zimmerli, the basic oracle which describes the threat in general terms (26:1-6) may be attributed to the prophet Ezekiel.<sup>432</sup> However, the more specific 'exposition' (26:7-14) as well as the lament (26:15-18) and the underworld motif (26:19-21) are more likely to be the work of the Ezekiel 'school' which was apparently expanding and editing the work before the final oracle was uttered (29:17-21). On the basis that in 29:17 the routing of Tyre described in 26:12 was yet historically unfulfilled, Zimmerli posits a latest date for the completion of the final form of chapter 26 to be the first day of the first month of the twenty-seventh year (Ezek. 29:17).<sup>433</sup>

The entire collection of oracles against Tyre begins with a date notice (v. 1). However, the date in MT is problematic.<sup>434</sup> Not only is the month missing, but Tyre's exultation at Israel's expense is reported to have happened prior to the fall of Jerusalem, yet the reaction of Tyre mentioned in v. 2 presupposes that Jerusalem has already fallen. The date of Jerusalem's fall given in Ezek. 33:21 is the fifth day of the tenth month of the twelfth year, which is after the date formula given in 26:1: 'in the eleventh year on the first of the month'. Scholarship is divided when attempting to reconcile these problems. For instance, Wevers suggests that the date notice in v. 1 refers to the second oracle and so 'the argument against its correctness is irrelevant'.<sup>435</sup> However, Hals observes that even though the month is missing in this date notice (26:1), there is little reason to doubt that a time soon after the fall of Jerusalem, and the beginning of Nebuchadrezzar's siege of Tyre, provides the chronological setting for much of chapter 26.<sup>436</sup> The reference to Nebuchadrezzar's payment in 29:17-21 suggests that the

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<sup>432</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 40.

<sup>433</sup> According to Parker-Dubberstein (1956: 28) that is 26 April 571.

<sup>434</sup> Allen 1990: 71.

<sup>435</sup> Wevers 1982: 148.

<sup>436</sup> Hals 1989: 185.

editorial process of chapter 26 had been completed during the intervening sixteen years (cf. Ezek. 29:17). The animosity expressed by Tyre against Jerusalem (26:2) that reflects the hostility displayed by the nations in chapter 25, may account for the placing of the oracles in chapter 26 at this point. Hals supposes that the date of the eleventh year is soon after the fall of Jerusalem. However, he observes that the mythological background of much of the material makes the chronological issues less significant than the socio-historical ones.<sup>437</sup> Similarly, Katzenstein observes that *Ezekiel* speaks about Nebuchadrezzar's attack on Tyre as being imminent.<sup>438</sup> Consequently, Katzenstein believes these oracles are to be dated after the fall of Jerusalem (as with those in ch. 25). Tuell also notes that the date coincides with the fall of Jerusalem, in Ezekiel's eleventh year of exile, indicating that the collection is to be read in the light of that tragedy.<sup>439</sup>

Even so, some read the date with LXX, which dates the unit to the twelfth year.<sup>440</sup> Block assumes that the ordinal 'twelfth' has dropped out and that 'eleventh' has been attached to 'year' in error; this would give a reading of: 'twelfth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month'.<sup>441</sup> Block supports his translation by observing the similarity between *בְּעֶשְׂרִי עֶשְׂרֵה* 'in the eleventh' found here and *בְּשֵׁנִי עֶשְׂרֵה* 'in the twelfth' witnessed in 33:21.<sup>442</sup> However, Greenberg remarks that both terms are found in close

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<sup>437</sup> Hals 1989: 185.

<sup>438</sup> Katzenstein 1973: 322.

<sup>439</sup> Tuell 2009: 178.

<sup>440</sup> Cooke 1936: 288; Sweeney 2013: 131. Cf. Greenberg (1997: 529) for discussion. Cooke reckons that the first five oracles presuppose the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, while the first oracle against Egypt belongs to the year before. The 'appendix' (29:17-21) was added in 571 BCE (Cooke 1936: 281).

<sup>441</sup> This date (3 Feb. 585) coincides with the start of Nebuchadrezzar's siege of Tyre (Katzenstein 2008b: 690).

<sup>442</sup> Block 1998: 34, 35.

succession in 2 Kings 24:18 and 25:2; Jer. 52:1, 5. Be that as it may, Zimmerli, observing that elsewhere in *Ezekiel* באחת עשרה שנה 'in the eleventh year' (30:20; cf. 31:1) is found, suggests that an original בשתי עשרה שנה 'in the twelfth year' had been erroneously written בעשתי עשרה שנה 'in the eleventh year'. Indeed, says Zimmerli, 'the same error occurs in 40:49'.<sup>443</sup> In contrast to these views, van Dijk logically points out that the miswriting of the shorter שתי עשרה 'twelfth' for the less common and longer עשתי עשרה 'eleventh' is unlikely.<sup>444</sup>

However, to add to the confusion, as Zimmerli observes, this verse (26:1) is the first time in *Ezekiel* that the month is missing in a date sequence. Elsewhere in *Ezekiel* the month always precedes the number of the day.<sup>445</sup> Thus, says Zimmerli, the reason that LXX<sup>A</sup> attests ἐν τῷ δωδεκάτῳ ἔτει μιᾷ τοῦ μηνὸς τοῦ πρώτου 'in the twelfth year, first day of the first month', is probably a secondary attempt to fill the gap in MT.<sup>446</sup> Despite these discrepancies, though, all texts maintain the first of the month, regarding which it has been proposed that the day of the new moon may have been an auspicious day for the giving and receiving of divine oracles, and that this may suggest a cultic context for the proclamation of prophetic oracles.<sup>447</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 26; cf. Block 1998: 34, 35.

<sup>444</sup> Van Dijk 1968: 3.

<sup>445</sup> Ezek. 1:1; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; 33:21. This verse (26:1) and 40:1 are the exceptions.

<sup>446</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 26. Greenberg (1997: 530) remarks that some critics, taking into account that according to Ezek. 33:21, news of the fall did not arrive to Ezekiel until the tenth month of the twelfth year, emend the date here to 'twelfth year twelfth month'.

<sup>447</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 34.

The significance of all this for the present purpose is if MT 'eleventh' year is accepted (v. 1), the oracle has been dated before the fall of Jerusalem<sup>448</sup> as well as the Babylonian siege of Tyre which began a year later (585 BCE). That being so, it seems that here *Ezekiel* uses a form (cf. Ezek. 25) inherited from the prophetic tradition (e.g. Amos 1-2) to describe an event before it occurs. Thus, one finds that in the OAN, while the date notices give the oracles an historical context, they are not presented chronologically, but rather they have been consciously arranged thematically,<sup>449</sup> and with geographical priority in mind.<sup>450</sup> The order in which the nations are addressed (from the vantage point of Judah) is Ammon to the east, Moab in the south-east, Edom to the south, and in the west, Philistia. Tyre and Sidon are to the north.<sup>451</sup>

The designation בן אדם 'son of man' which follows (v. 2)<sup>452</sup> emphasises the prophet's identification with his audience rather than with the one who sent him.<sup>453</sup> The indictment is introduced with the customary יען 'because' that occurs eleven times in the OAN.<sup>454</sup>

Originally an island<sup>455</sup> situated twenty-five miles south of Sidon, Tyre was an important Phoenician city famous for astro-navigation and trade.<sup>456</sup> Before the time of Hiram (969-936 BCE), there were two islands, with the city on one, and a temple of Baal on the

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<sup>448</sup> The eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile was 587-586 BCE; cf. 2 Kings 25:2; Jer. 52:5. The eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign corresponds to the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's exile.

<sup>449</sup> Greenberg 1997: 540.

<sup>450</sup> Greenberg 1997: 522.

<sup>451</sup> This pattern is similar to that observed by Bentzen (1950: 85-99) in Amos 1-2 (cf. p. 23).

<sup>452</sup> Cf. 25:2; 26:2; 27:2; 28:2, 12, 21; 29:2, 18; 30:2, 21; 31:2, 14; 32:2, 18.

<sup>453</sup> Block 1997: 31.

<sup>454</sup> Of the 95 occurrences of the word in the HB, 37 of them appear in *Ezekiel*.

<sup>455</sup> Egyptian sources verify this (*ANET* 1950: 477), as do Assyrian (*ANET* 1950: 290) and classical sources (Arrian, *Hist. of Alex.* 2.18.2) as well as Ezek. 27:32.

<sup>456</sup> Anderson 1988: 750.

other;<sup>457</sup> Hiram linked them together. Traces of a breakwater 820 yards long and 9 yards thick, built by Hiram in the tenth century BCE, which can be found fifty feet below the water level, shows that the harbour was on the south side of the island.<sup>458</sup> Cuneiform records indicate that Ushu, the mainland town of Tyre, was captured by Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal.<sup>459</sup> Despite this defeat, Tyre remained well protected until Alexander built a causeway from the mainland to the island fortress in 332 BCE<sup>460</sup> using the rubble remains of Ushu once he had demolished it.<sup>461</sup>

Records show that the Phoenician city of Tyre has been occupied from the middle of the third Millennium,<sup>462</sup> and was said to accommodate more than 35,000 people.<sup>463</sup> Not only is the Bible full of references to Tyre, but the Tell el-Amarna letters from the fourteenth century mention Tyre, as does the Ugaritic Epic of Kirta.<sup>464</sup> Egypt had strong connections to Phoenicia in the sixteenth century, but by the eleventh century this had waned as Phoenicia gained independence, and Tyre's role in shipping and trade ensured their dominance. According to the biblical accounts, David and Solomon employed skilled craftsmen from Tyre (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5; 7:13-45), which bordered the Israelite kingdom (2 Sam. 24:7), and Ahab married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre (1 Kings 16:31), who introduced Phoenician religion to Israel. Melqart, an aspect of Baal, was their deity. These alliances, when combined with its wealth and pride, made Tyre a dangerous neighbour.

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<sup>457</sup> Katzenstein 2008b: 687.

<sup>458</sup> Kapelrud 1962: 721.

<sup>459</sup> *ANET* 1950: 477, 287.

<sup>460</sup> Kapelrud 1962: 721.

<sup>461</sup> Katzenstein 2008b: 687.

<sup>462</sup> Katzenstein 2008b: 687.

<sup>463</sup> Alexander sold 30,000 Tyrians to slavery, 15,000 were rescued by the Sidonians, 6,000 were killed in battle and 2,000 were crucified (Katzenstein 2008b: 690).

<sup>464</sup> EA 2015: 147, *ANET* 1950: 290.

Ships from Tyre sailed all over the Mediterranean and beyond with their merchandise of timber, wheat and oil. However, it was purple cloth, dyed from a substance extracted from the *murex* marine snail, which was considered most precious. While there was contact between Tyre and Judah (Jer. 27:3),<sup>465</sup> Tyre was jubilant when Jerusalem fell. However, Tyre's gloating at the fall of Jerusalem was short-lived (26:2), as they failed to recognise the strategy of Nebuchadrezzar, who, having destroyed Jerusalem, returned to besiege Tyre for thirteen years until it fell in 572.<sup>466</sup> This defeat marked the end of Phoenician national existence, which was further subdued by Cyrus of Persia. After the Babylonian exile, Tyre's power was exhausted. Even so, it supplied Israel with building materials once again (Ezra 3:7), and its overseas territories were taken over by Carthage<sup>467</sup> until it too was destroyed at the hands of the Romans (146 BCE).<sup>468</sup>

I have already mentioned the unusual expression 'Aha!' (v. 2) in the oracle against Ammon (25:1-7). There, as here, the exclamation expresses satisfaction at Israel's misfortune.<sup>469</sup> While the more sceptical might be tempted to suggest that the inclusion of this expression is an instance of prophetic nationalistic pride, for *Ezekiel*, as I have already shown, the concern is that 'Aha!' is an affront to Yahweh. In these oracles against Tyre, as with those against the foreign nations in Ezek. 25, it is the vindication of Yahweh's honour that *Ezekiel* is concerned for. However, while Ammon's 'Aha!'

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<sup>465</sup> Katzenstein 2008b: 690.

<sup>466</sup> Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.156. *Ezekiel* also mentions this siege (27:19) and Josephus indicates that Nebuchadrezzar took booty to Egypt, his ultimate goal (Katzenstein 2008b: 690).

<sup>467</sup> Katzenstein 2008b: 690.

<sup>468</sup> Katzenstein 2008b: 690.

<sup>469</sup> See exegesis Ezek. 25:3, p. 94.

expresses straightforward mocking contempt<sup>470</sup> at the fall of Jerusalem,<sup>471</sup> the articulation of 'Aha!' by Tyre integrates this sentiment with one of greed. Tyre, already fabulously wealthy, looks covetously to acquire the spoils of Jerusalem's demise. It seems that for Ezekiel the priest, this combination is wholly unacceptable. The contempt shown towards Jerusalem, being the cultic centre of his chosen people, is an offence to Yahweh. What is more, the covetousness of Tyre is also an offence against their fellow human beings and is tantamount to theft.<sup>472</sup> Indeed, since covetousness is a moral offence, being an attitude of the heart rather than an indictable action, the fusion of the two emotions is likely to have offended Ezekiel's priestly sensibilities. Potential offences against Yahweh are detailed in the first tablet of the Decalogue, while those against humanity appear in the second. Therefore, Tyre's exclamatory 'Aha!' may well represent for *Ezekiel* a thorough and intolerable transgression of the civil code and moral law. This is a particularly formidable illustration if we consider further the possibility that the offences that the nations are indicted for are a projection of Israel's own misdemeanours. Thus, this verse (v. 2), as Corral argues, presents a comprehensive indictment against Tyre of wanting only to enrich its own economic advantage; and since greed is a form of idolatry,<sup>473</sup> it may contribute to the cause of its inclusion here. After all, according to Corral, this not only underpins the first oracle, but is the crux of the whole Tyrian series.<sup>474</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> See exegesis and notes of Ezek. 25:2.

<sup>471</sup> Gosse 1986: 543-45.

<sup>472</sup> As anger is to murder and lust is to adultery.

<sup>473</sup> Cf. Ezek. 28:5; Mat. 6:24.

<sup>474</sup> Corral (2002: 142) indicates that Ezek. 26:1-21 comprises the first oracle. Corral (2002: 149) insists that the economic indictment in 26:2 is unquestionable and that it sets the tone for the series. According to Corral, the theme crescendos through the chapter and Tyre's oppressive trading policies were 'the ultimate motivation for Ezekiel's condemnation of the city'.

Jerusalem, which Corral maintains refers to the entire southern kingdom of Judah,<sup>475</sup> is styled the דלתות העמים 'the gateway of the peoples' (v. 2). This syntactical anomaly<sup>476</sup> could represent a title, says Zimmerli, in which the plural agreement between דלתות 'doors' and העמים 'the peoples' was conceived of as a singular name.<sup>477</sup> This figure of speech is one which is generally thought to express an appreciation of Jerusalem as a trading rival.<sup>478</sup> However, if the phrase is a title, then the expression need not necessarily refer to the opening of a trade route and Tyre's jubilation at the prospect, although Greenberg observes that there is no way of knowing whether this is an authentic citation or 'a rhetorical invention to ground the prophecy of doom'.<sup>479</sup> In a slightly different vein, Corral translates דלתות unconventionally as 'ports' (of the Mediterranean area).<sup>480</sup> A separate point is raised by Allen, who notes that the gateway of a city, where the elders sat, was the control centre for the city's affairs. Thus, the reference, says Allen, functions as a rallying point for Tyre to take over political leadership of the area.<sup>481</sup> Either way, the elation that Tyre expressed at the downfall of Jerusalem may, at least in part, be due to the competition that Jerusalem posed to Tyre for control of the eastern Mediterranean trade routes. Although Tyre had command of the shipping routes in the eastern Mediterranean and beyond, Israel straddled the land routes.<sup>482</sup> Corral maintains that this verse (v. 2) is a response to the historical situation in which the Philistine ports of Ashkelon, Gaza and Ashdod were destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar at the end of the

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<sup>475</sup> Corral 2002: 143.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. translation note.

<sup>477</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 34; cf. Greenberg 1997: 530.

<sup>478</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 34.

<sup>479</sup> Greenberg 1997: 530.

<sup>480</sup> Corral (2002: 144) cites Job 38:8-10 and Ezek. 27:3 in support of his suggestion.

<sup>481</sup> Allen 1990: 75.

<sup>482</sup> I.e. to Egypt in the south, and Asia Minor in the north-west as well as Aram and Mesopotamia in the north-east.

seventh century BCE. Corral suggests that Tyre, aware of the Neo-Babylonian policy that did not allow the resettling of sacked areas, was planning to capitalise on the trading opportunities presented by the destruction of these ports.<sup>483</sup>

Be that as it may, the sheltered and elevated central situation of Jerusalem amongst the nations did enable a degree of wealth that Tyre may have aspired to. What is more, the mention of trading wheat from Minnith with Tyre indicates Jerusalem's position as a centre of exchange (cf. Ezek. 27:3).<sup>484</sup> Thus Tyre may have viewed the removal of Jerusalem from the market place as being advantageous to their own position and revenue. Indeed, the unusual designation may reflect Tyre's perception of Jerusalem as the foremost Levantine city and principal barrier to trade route control between the Mediterranean and the Transjordan and between the Red Sea and Arabia.<sup>485</sup> As the broken gateway swings open, Tyre benefits at Jerusalem's expense. At the very least, caravans would no longer have to pay toll there.<sup>486</sup> However, while many interpret the broken gateway affording free passage, it could also be interpreted as presenting a barrier (cf. Isa. 45:2-3). The lure of coveting Jerusalem's strategic position and the potential additional wealth that Tyre may consequently engender, is likely to contribute to their proud, greedy and merciless mercantile activities that accordingly present a barrier to their humble acknowledgement of Yahweh.

It is of some interest to note in passing that *Ezekiel* uses the Hebrew term שֶׁבַר 'break' (v. 2) in several different contexts. His use of it here then may allude to those other occasions. Elsewhere in *Ezekiel*, the word appears in the phrase 'break the staff of

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<sup>483</sup> Corral 2002: 144.

<sup>484</sup> Greenberg 1997: 530.

<sup>485</sup> Block 1998: 36.

<sup>486</sup> Cooke 1936: 288.

bread' (Ezek. 4:16; 5:16; 14:13 cf. Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16); it is used to describe the Tyre shipwreck as well (Ezek. 27:26), and 'the arm of Pharaoh' is also described as being 'broken' (30:21, 22, 24). It is noticeable then that all applications of the term refer to the failure of some kind of support. The 'staff of bread' is a food supply, the ship supplied merchandise to other countries, thus supporting Tyre, and 'the arm of Pharaoh' describes his army. *Ezekiel* presents a case showing that ultimately all these supports proved to be unreliable. Thus, if the broken gates are understood to potentially present a barrier preventing Tyre's recognition of Yahweh's activity, then perhaps in the use of שִׁבְרָה, *Ezekiel* is illustrating this oracle's message for the exiles. *Ezekiel's* point seems to be that in the end, all things will fail and let them down—all, that is, except the covenantal faithfulness of Yahweh. Intriguingly, Yahweh is also described as being 'broken' by the wanton hearts of Israel (Ezek. 6:9). Despite this, *Ezekiel* describes Yahweh's appearance in Babylonia (1:28), where as a sanctuary in some measure (11:16) he meets and joins them in their mutual suffering. This is significant because, as I have suggested, the thrust of *Ezekiel's* message was to offer hope to the exiles by convincing them of Yahweh's presence with them in their time of trial. What made the suffering of exile so insufferable was not so much the pain of the experience, but the sense that Yahweh did not care. He was imagined as having forsaken the land and not seeing the calamity that had befallen the people (Ezek. 9:9). The inference of their comments was clear: Yahweh was indifferent to the sufferings of his people. However, the notion that Yahweh might too have suffered and be 'broken' by the wanton hearts of Israel tells a different story. When this revelation is considered alongside *Ezekiel's* emphasis, articulated by the recognition formula that testifies to, and vindicates, Yahweh's presence among the exiles, the erroneous perception of Yahweh's indifference is shattered. On this understanding, a contrasting balance is apparent in the use of the word relating to the dishonour of Yahweh but also to his vindication. Perhaps, then, the

seemingly innocuous word שִׁבַּר 'break' can be perceived to connote theological import that may have some relevance for my purposes.

A contrast is also discernible between the notion of Tyre being 'filled' (מִלֵּא), which speaks of an abundant overflow that points to the greed of Tyre's covetousness, and the desolation (חֲרָבָה) of Jerusalem (v. 2). The appearance of the root חֲרָב 'to be desolate' ('sword') helps to create the impression of unity in these oracles since it is also found in 26:6, 8, 11, 19, 20.<sup>487</sup>

Unity within the OAN is also evident in the use of לְכֵן 'therefore', that typically introduces the indictments of the proof-oracles found in chapter 25. Here, prefaced by the messenger formula (v. 3), Yahweh's judgement, cast in the form of the hostile orientation formula, 'I am against you',<sup>488</sup> follows. Although the allegation is directed to Tyre, it is doubtful that Ezekiel expected foreigners to hear these words or indeed any foreign king to read them. Despite being addressed to foreign nations, the intended audience of these oracles was the people of Israel.<sup>489</sup>

The imagery of incessant waves beating against the island fortress is used to depict the many nations that will be hurled against Tyre (v. 3). Although clearly appropriate as an image in this context, in the use of the Hebrew term גַּל 'wave', a faint assonantal echo might be heard of the גִּלְגָּל 'wheel work' that is also derived from the root גָּלַל 'to roll'

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<sup>487</sup> Parunak 1978: 358.

<sup>488</sup> Hals 1989: 361. Cf. 28:22; 29:3; 30:22.

<sup>489</sup> Tuell (2009: 167) observes that 28:25-26 makes this plain.

(Ezek. 10:2, 6).<sup>490</sup> Even without this allusive resonance, Yahweh will bring up over Tyre ‘many nations’ as the sea brings up its waves (v. 3). This imagery is developed in v. 19 as a parallelism between the ‘many waters’ and the ‘deep’. This suggests something more than the Mediterranean Sea, although it may also be in mind. Either way, as ‘the many nations’, it is Nebuchadrezzar and his ‘company of many people’ (v. 7) that will be brought up over Tyre as the sea brings up its waves (v. 3).<sup>491</sup> This reference to ‘many nations’ is apposite since Nebuchadrezzar would doubtless have employed units from the many nations that comprised the Babylonian empire in his army.<sup>492</sup> In this way, the arrogant greed that coveted Jerusalem’s strategic position is to be humbled by many nations. These nations, who act as Yahweh’s agents, are appropriately depicted by the ocean, whose powerful waves no longer carry the fame of Tyre abroad, but reduce it to the rock on which it stands. Even here, an undercurrent of poetic justice may be discerned. The name Tyre (צִיֹר) is the common noun for ‘rock’.<sup>493</sup> Added to the fact that Tyre, the rock, is quite literally built on a rock, the strength of its off-shore location rendered it virtually impregnable, and so the name also connotes the idea of strength metaphorically.<sup>494</sup> Newsom suggests that *Ezekiel* endeavours to refute this metaphorical claim by employing another metaphor to announce impending judgement.<sup>495</sup> The relentless impact of the ocean-driven waves (v. 3) will eventually destroy even the strongest rock. This theme is developed in the use of the phrase ‘I will make her bare’

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<sup>490</sup> DCH 1995: 347. Jeremiah also uses גֵּל to describe Jerusalem as a ‘heap’ of ruins (Jer. 9:11; cf. Babylon in 51:37). The term is also used to describe the heap of stones that witnessed to Yahweh’s power in the destruction of Achan (Josh. 7:26). See also Gen. 31:48, 52 for גֵּל as ‘heap’ (of stones) of witness.

<sup>491</sup> May 1955: 18; cf. ‘many waters’ (27:26).

<sup>492</sup> Sweeney 2013: 134.

<sup>493</sup> צִיֹר or צִיֹר.

<sup>494</sup> Cooke (1936: 289) observes that the language in vv. 2-6 is figurative, but in vv. 7-14 a definite occasion, the siege of the Babylonians, appears to be in the prophet’s mind.

<sup>495</sup> Newsom 1987: 192.

(v. 4), as the notion of erosion is described in further detail.<sup>496</sup> On this basis, Newsom suggests that the following expression 'in the midst of the sea' (v. 5) mocks the apparent security of the island.<sup>497</sup> It might be added that at the same time, this irony emphasises the vindication of Yahweh whose patience and power is in view.<sup>498</sup>

While van Dijk observes a parallelism in verse 4 between חומה 'wall' and מגדל 'tower', which is also evident in Ugaritic,<sup>499</sup> Parunak sees a semantic relationship and thus structural unity in the use of עפר 'dust', 'soil' in vv. 4, 12. According to Parunak, this is significant, since in 26:10 אבק 'dust' is used instead. What is more, עפר 'dust', also relates semantically to the idea that Tyre will become a bare rock.<sup>500</sup> One might also observe in passing that the Hebrew word סקה 'scrape' is related to סחי 'scrapings', a term used to describe the exiles (Lam. 3:45). If this was an idiom that *Ezekiel* was familiar with, then one might here too discern a hint that *Ezekiel's* rhetoric is aimed at projecting Israel's failure onto the nations. According to this reading, the reversal of Tyre's fortunes being described in such closely related terms may well have given the exiles a glimmer of hope and some insight into Yahweh's just purpose. Tyre, it seems, was not impregnable and in the same way that it was wrong for Tyre to covet the opportunities that Jerusalem's broken gateway of the peoples presented, so too was it wrong for Israel to covet the wealth (and religion) of Tyre,<sup>501</sup> which will now be destroyed. Indeed, Corral suggests that the destruction of Tyre's walls (v. 4; cf. v. 9) is a reference

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<sup>496</sup> 26:1-6 has much in common with 7-14. Compare v. 4 with vv. 9, 12, 14 and v. 5 with v. 14.

<sup>497</sup> Newsom 1987: 192.

<sup>498</sup> In this light, the 'many nations' of v. 3 are seen to be acting under the aegis of Yahweh rather than as independent powers.

<sup>499</sup> Van Dijk (1968: 1968: 12) notes that this balance shows linguistic kinship of two idioms.

<sup>500</sup> Parunak 1978: 361.

<sup>501</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 16:31.

to economic destruction.<sup>502</sup> He also finds an allusion to Tyre's past wealth in the phrase 'your mighty pillars' (v. 11), although most commentators consider it a reference to the temple of Melkart.<sup>503</sup> There is, however, an explicit reference to the wealth of Tyre in v. 12: 'they will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise'. Corral also believes that Tyre's economic presence is in view in the phrase 'Shall not the coastlands quake at the sound of your fall...' (v. 15). The Hebrew term **הַיַּיִם** 'the coastlands' designates the regions that would directly benefit from Tyre's trading success.<sup>504</sup>

The economic emphasis that Corral finds in these oracles is loosely related, by way of the independence that such mercantile security might afford, to Strong's thesis. According to Strong, since Tyre will suffer the same fate as Jerusalem, it could not be thought of as directly competing with Zion, the dwelling place of the Great King.<sup>505</sup> That Strong observes a symbolic value in the oracles against Tyre is surely right, although his proposal regarding the Zion tradition is not adopted by all. For instance, the position taken by Fohrer, who also recognises a symbolic aspect to *Ezekiel's* treatment of Tyre, is that the significance of the symbolism is found in the *hybris* of humanity.<sup>506</sup> This perspective finds its home in the mainstream of scholarly consensus; for instance, Hals observes that *hybris*, which is understood to be an expression of opposition to Yahweh's purpose, is what accounts for the prominence of the oracles against Tyre (and Egypt).<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>502</sup> Corral (2002) further attempts to support his thesis by offering an unusual translation of **חֲזוֹתֶיךָ** (v. 11) as 'your bazaars' rather than 'your streets'.

<sup>503</sup> Block 1998: 38; Greenberg 1997: 534.

<sup>504</sup> Corral 2002; cf. Block 1998. Zimmerli (1983: 40) observes Tyre's reproach for being a commercial city.

<sup>505</sup> Strong (1993: 191, 92) claims that *Ezekiel* did not view Tyre as a city with inhabitants but as a symbol of what the Zion tradition advocated for Jerusalem.

<sup>506</sup> Fohrer and Galling 1955: 148.

<sup>507</sup> Hals 1989: 185.

Even so, Cooke's observation that on patriotic and religious grounds the exiles were interested in the imminent siege of Tyre by Nebuchadrezzar is more than likely<sup>508</sup> — although it might be added that this is unsurprising, since if, as it is argued, the prophet is projecting the *hybris* of Israel onto the nations, then the exiles might have selectively cocooned themselves in a convenient state of denial, as the nature of *hybris* is such that a tendency to negligence can generally be observed in the field of accurate self-diagnosis. Despite this (or perhaps because of it), the accoutrements of Tyrian splendour will be stripped away as the jewel in the Mediterranean's trading crown is reduced to bare rock. In *Ezekiel's* presentation, the lesson is clear: Yahweh will ensure that all evidence of Tyre's existence is wiped away from the island fortress.

No longer used for habitation, this ocean outpost 'in the midst of the sea' (v. 5), once the centre of exploitation for trading nations, becomes a mundane venue for the maintenance of fishing tackle as those very nations exploit her plunder.<sup>509</sup> As the major maritime power of the ancient world, whose fame, wealth and power was the consequence of its position in the 'midst of the sea',<sup>510</sup> the imagery of Tyre's destruction by the very thing that was the source of its success is apt and poetically just.<sup>511</sup> The protection the ocean afforded is transformed into its aggressor in the hands of Yahweh, whose possession the rock of Tyre truly is.

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<sup>508</sup> Cooke 1936: 287.

<sup>509</sup> Cf. Ezek. 47:10

<sup>510</sup> Katzenstein (1973: 9) notes that ancient writings frequently refer to Tyre as being 'in the midst of the sea'. Cf. *ANET* 1950: 477, which describes Tyre as being 'richer in fish than the sands'. Parunak (1978: 361) observes that the phrase בתוך הים 'in the midst of the sea' also appears in 27:32 (cf. 26:12), while the more expressive בלב ימים 'in the heart of sea' is found in 27:4, 25, 27; 28: 2, 8.

<sup>511</sup> See Newsom (1987: 191) who considers the figurative way in which judgement upon Tyre is expressed in 26:3-5.

Zimmerli suggests that this verse (v. 5) probably ended with the emphatic declaration of Yahweh, “for I myself have spoken” declares the Lord Yahweh’. He does not, however, dismiss what follows on that basis, but rather explains that the phrase is ‘expanded in terms of a more precise actualization’.<sup>512</sup> Thus the additional verse (v. 6), that concludes with a recognition formula, provides a specific consequence.<sup>513</sup>

Tyre’s ‘daughters who are on the mainland’ (v. 6) are the villages under Tyre’s jurisdiction such as Palaetyrus, named by the Greeks because they thought it was older than Tyre.<sup>514</sup> The destruction of Tyre means that she will no longer be able to offer protection to ‘her daughters’, who are slain by the sword (הַרְבּוּ) as Jerusalem was laid waste (הַרְבּוּ).

The inconsistency in number between ‘her daughters’ (3 f.s.) and ‘they were slain’ (3 f.pl.) in v. 6 indicates a secondary hand to some scholars.<sup>515</sup> However, irregularities of this kind are found throughout the Hebrew text of *Ezekiel’s* OAN.<sup>516</sup> Despite this trait, since the recognition formula (v. 6) is also addressed to a plural subject, Strong dismisses it on the grounds that, like the daughter towns, it is secondary.<sup>517</sup> For Strong, this redaction was in the interest of reconciling *Ezekiel’s* oracles with the historic events of Nebuchadrezzar’s siege.<sup>518</sup> Even so, because the daughters of Tyre are spoken of

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<sup>512</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 35.

<sup>513</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 35; cf. Strong (1993: 185) who refers to v. 5b as an ‘explanatory gloss’.

<sup>514</sup> From *παλαιός* ‘old’, ‘ancient’ (LSJ 1996: 1290). The annals of Sennacherib speak of the village of *Ūsu*, which Oppenheim (*ANET* 1950: 287) indicates is ‘the mainland settlement of Tyre’. This lies opposite the island and is designated in Greek as *Παλαία Τύρος*.

<sup>515</sup> Strong 1993: 185. A similar inconsistency is found with Tyre as subject in v. 2 and her daughter towns in v. 6.

<sup>516</sup> E.g. Ezek. 25:3, 5.

<sup>517</sup> Strong 1993: 185; cf. Eichrodt 1970: 370; Garscha 1974: 150.

<sup>518</sup> Strong (1993: 185) notes that this was also the motive in Ezek. 29:17-21.

from the perspective of war, Strong suggests that this accounts for the presence of the recognition formula in this context, 'with which it did not fit'.<sup>519</sup> This supposition is crucial to Strong's overall argument as it effectively distinguishes the Tyrian corpus of oracles from those against Egypt in Ezek. 29-32 and against Israel's close neighbours in chapter 25 which do have the recognition formula. It is to be expected then that Strong disregards this recognition formula (26:6) and prefers not to view the oracles in chapter 25 as being related to 26:1-6. Instead he sees the Tyrian unit as a self-contained whole.<sup>520</sup>

However, although many indicate that the material in vv. 5b-6 is supplementary,<sup>521</sup> for Allen, it nevertheless 'paves the way for the recognition formula'.<sup>522</sup> What is more, its inclusion here suggests that this oracle was part of an original collection that was subsequently expanded to include the other oracles against Tyre (and Egypt).<sup>523</sup> When viewed in this way, the first Tyre oracle functions as a transition that looks back to the previous chapter with its 'because...therefore...' structure and recognition formulae,<sup>524</sup> and forward to the oracles against Sidon and Egypt. Indeed, Parunak suggests that the single occurrence of the recognition formula in the Tyre corpus may be explained by observing that the first Tyre oracle (26:1-6) follows the same pattern as the oracles in chapter 25.<sup>525</sup> Moreover, the staccato style of Ezek. 25 is also mimicked in 26:1-6;

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<sup>519</sup> Strong 1993: 186.

<sup>520</sup> Strong 1993: 180. Strong indicates that the structure, literary connections and thematic development of the corpus 'imply that these oracles were unified from their inception' (p. 184).

<sup>521</sup> For instance, Eichrodt (1970: 370), who considers 26:5b-6 to be a secondary insertion, suggests that the recognition formula can only refer to the daughter cities, and as such, it is superficial. Moreover, he says it is 'ruled out' by the concluding formula (v. 5) that precedes it.

<sup>522</sup> Allen 1990: 73.

<sup>523</sup> Tuell 2009: 169.

<sup>524</sup> Raabe 2010: 192.

<sup>525</sup> Parunak 1978: 353.

however, the gravity of Tyre's charge is evident, as this introductory oracle is amplified in those that follow.

The basic recognition formula (v. 6)<sup>526</sup> affirms that the destruction of Tyre is more than retribution. While Sweeney suggests that the recognition formula is employed to 'indicate that the realisation of these events would reveal YHWH to the people',<sup>527</sup> Zimmerli argues that the formula intends more than recognition of Yahweh as the object of that recognition. If that were the case, the phrase might be constructed with Yahweh as the object of knowledge: 'And they shall know Yahweh'. Instead, says Zimmerli, the awkward grammatical structure ('And they shall know that I am Yahweh') ensures that Yahweh himself is invariably the subject.<sup>528</sup> What seems to be important for the prophet, is that these oracles affirm that it is Yahweh who is in control of international affairs. Realisation of this might very well open a window of hope for Ezekiel's exilic audience.<sup>529</sup> Not everyone agrees, though; for Hals, the recognition formula at the end of the announcement of Tyre's fate 'could only leave Ezekiel's early disciples wondering who "they" could be'.<sup>530</sup> However, since only two of the occurrences of the recognition formulae in the OAN contain the second person 'you', the same question might be asked of all the other instances where the formula appears. Be that as it may, there is little doubt that the application of the recognition formula to the nations is not straightforward. Just what kind of knowledge is anticipated for those nations without the covenant, the Law and the prophets is unclear. There certainly does not seem to be any anticipation that these nations will respond in faith to Yahweh. If, however, the rhetorical function of

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<sup>526</sup> Category A3, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>527</sup> Sweeney 2013: 134.

<sup>528</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 84.

<sup>529</sup> Hals (1989: 190), however, claims that this was not the primary intention of these oracles.

<sup>530</sup> Hals 1989: 190.

these oracles is borne in mind, the vexing question of whether *Ezekiel* envisaged the nations coming to a saving knowledge of Yahweh can be left to one side. As Strong comments: ‘What would be the point of summoning a foreign nation to kneel in adoration to Yahweh, if they were not present to receive Ezekiel’s “altar call”?’<sup>531</sup> Instead, consideration can once again be given to the possibility that the prophet is projecting the guilt of the exiles onto the nations to reinforce his message. This could potentially have the double benefit of first encouraging the exiles to acknowledge their culpability, and then allowing the oracles to function as a ruse in which the purging of the nations could illustrate the purging of the exiles’ guilt. Read this way, the OAN might be thought of as a theological bridge that supports the cultic principle of expiation, one which *Ezekiel’s* priestly background would inform him was required before the process of restoration could begin.

Related to this premise is Strong’s observation that the oracles in Ezek. 25, and those against Egypt (29-32), were delivered in the interests of Ezekiel’s theodicy. In other words, the exile could be justified because it was part of the journey to restoration.<sup>532</sup> Indeed, Gowan rightly perceives that as an aspect of the holy war ideology, the recognition formula is closely related to ‘one of Ezekiel’s chief concerns—theodicy, the vindication of the name of Yahweh which has been profaned (36:22-23)’.<sup>533</sup> For the prophet, this was not a parochial or even a nationalistic concern, but a global one. According to Gowan, this accounts for the OAN that answer the problem created by the obvious success, wealth and power of the neighbouring nations of Israel,<sup>534</sup> by providing

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<sup>531</sup> Strong 2017: 313.

<sup>532</sup> Strong 1993: 179.

<sup>533</sup> Gowan 1964: 212. Indeed, Gowan (1964: 25) identifies an original setting for oracles against foreign nations in institution of the holy war (cf. p. 22).

<sup>534</sup> Gowan 1964: 212.

a testimony to the effect that it was Yahweh who was responsible for the fate of the nations of the world.<sup>535</sup> Says Gowan, 'the nations are accused of acts and attitudes which deny the sovereignty of Yahweh, and are punished that its truth may be demonstrated to them'.<sup>536</sup> Consequently, Gowan's observations regarding the inclusion of the recognition formula in this oracle against Tyre effectively support my thesis that the recognition formula is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh.

#### 4.6.3 Summary

Despite the likelihood that the recognition formula is secondary, I noted that this oracle may well have been part of an original collection. Its position in the corpus therefore has transitional importance and since thematic priority in the OAN has been highlighted, the inclusion of the formula here is clearly highly significant. With this in mind, I discussed the issue of theodicy as it relates to my thesis, noting that the observation of several scholars supports my main argument.

As an aside, and with reference to the Hebrew term שִׁבַּר 'break', I discussed the possibility that despite appearances to the contrary, Yahweh suffered with his people in exile and was 'broken' by their wanton hearts. I suggested that the emphasis of Yahweh's presence, articulated by the recognition formula, shatters the exiles' erroneous perception of Yahweh's indifference to their plight. I also observed in passing, that the Hebrew word סָחָה 'scrape' is related to סָחִי 'scrapings', a term used to describe the exiles. I suggested that if this was an idiom that *Ezekiel* was familiar with, then the reader might discern a hint that *Ezekiel's* rhetoric is aimed at projecting Israel's failure onto the nations. This thought was developed as I considered the rhetorical force of

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<sup>535</sup> Gowan 1964: 217.

<sup>536</sup> Gowan 1964: 217.

*Ezekiel's* OAN, and the possibility that the prophet's illustrations of the foreign nations' shortcomings could potentially encourage the exiles to acknowledge their culpability, and allow the oracles to function as a ruse in which the purging of the nations could illustrate the purging of the exiles' guilt. I discerned that here was a way in which the OAN could be thought of as a theological bridge.

However, when the discussion is reviewed, one sees that when compared to Ezek. 25, my theses are perhaps not quite so convincing in this oracle against Tyre. This may be due, at least in part, to the alleged secondary nature of the recognition formula's inclusion. Leaving the significance, or otherwise, of that to one side, *Ezekiel* seems to employ a different approach in this brief oracle. Rather than depicting imagery that alludes to the exiles' homeland as a way of reminding them of their covenantal relationship with Yahweh and his presence with them in Babylonia, the prophet comprehensively deconstructs the unassailable image of Tyre as the dominant world superpower. Tyre, whose wealth, reputation and security were built on its position in the midst of the sea, is, with divine and poetic justice, destroyed by the one thing upon which its reputation was built. Thus, the possibility of Tyre being a temptation to snare the attention of the exiles is removed once and for all. *Ezekiel's* message to the exiles is clear: it is Yahweh who has the authority and power to reduce even the mighty Tyre to a bare rock; it is imperative therefore that the exiles acknowledge Yahweh now, lest they, like Tyre, be cast adrift in the midst of the mighty ocean.

## 4.7 Ezek. 28:20-26: Oracle against Sidon

### 4.7.1 Translation

20 And the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

21 ‘Son of Man, set your face<sup>537</sup> towards Sidon, and prophesy against her,

22 and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh.<sup>538</sup> “Behold, I am against you,<sup>539</sup> Sidon, and I will show myself glorious<sup>540</sup> in your midst.<sup>541</sup> And they<sup>542</sup> shall know that I am Yahweh when I execute judgements in her,<sup>543</sup> and manifest my holiness in her.<sup>544</sup>

23 For I will send pestilence into her,<sup>545</sup> and bloodshed<sup>546</sup> into her streets; and the slain shall fall<sup>547</sup> in her<sup>548</sup> midst, by the sword that is against her<sup>549</sup> from all around. And they shall know that I am Yahweh.

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<sup>537</sup> Cf. Ezek. 25:2.

<sup>538</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>539</sup> Cf. 26:3.

<sup>540</sup> Or ‘to glorify myself’ (*niph.* of כָּבַד); cf. Ezek. 39:13.

<sup>541</sup> בְּתוֹכְךָ ‘in the midst of you’ and בְּךָ ‘in you’ are used interchangeably in *Ezekiel*, e.g. 22:6-9 (Greenberg 1997: 594).

<sup>542</sup> LXX 2nd pers. (cf. Ezek. 5:12-17), but Greenberg (1997: 594) observes that MT’s 2nd pers. address to the ‘fictive audience (Sidon)’ changes to the ‘real audience (the exiles)’.

<sup>543</sup> P.c. Mss., LXX 2nd pers.

<sup>544</sup> 2 Mss, LXX 2nd pers.

<sup>545</sup> MT וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בָּהּ ‘For I will send into her’ unattested in LXX.

<sup>546</sup> Cf. Ezek. 5:17; 14:19; 35:6; 38:22.

<sup>547</sup> MT חָלַל וְנִפְלַל orthographic error for חָלַל וְנִפְלָל prompted by following חָלַל ‘slain’ (Allen 1990: 97).

<sup>548</sup> LXX 2nd pers.

<sup>549</sup> MT בְּחַרְבֵי עָלֶיהָ ‘by the sword that is against her’. Greenberg (1997: 595) notes that the temporal force of the verb-less phrase is found elsewhere in the more familiar ‘when I am in distress’ (Ps. 18:7 [6]). LXX 2nd pers.

24 No longer shall there be a pricking<sup>550</sup> briar<sup>551</sup> or piercing thorn<sup>552</sup> for the house<sup>553</sup> of Israel from all their neighbours who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh.”<sup>554</sup>

25 Thus says the Lord Yahweh.<sup>555</sup> “When I gather the house<sup>556</sup> of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, I will manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations,<sup>557</sup> and they shall settle on their land which I gave to my servant Jacob.”<sup>558</sup>

26 And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely,<sup>559</sup> when I execute judgements on all their neighbours who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am Yahweh their God.”<sup>560</sup>

#### 4.7.2 Exegesis

As I have noted, the corpus of oracles against Tyre contains only one recognition formula. However, ‘the chief concern of the oracle’<sup>561</sup> against Sidon is emphasised by

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<sup>550</sup> MT מִמַּאִיר ‘pricking’ is used in Lev. 13:51, 52; 14:44 of malignant (i.e. lepromatous as opposed to tuberculoid) leprosy.

<sup>551</sup> MT סִלְוִן ‘briar’ only here and Ezek. 2:6.

<sup>552</sup> For MT קוֹץ ‘thorn’, cf. Gen. 3:18; Isa. 32:13; Hos. 10:8. Also קוֹצֵי הַמִּדְבָּר ‘thorns of the desert’ (Judg. 8:7, 16), a phrase that describes a searing punishment.

<sup>553</sup> ט ‘sons of Israel’. LXX omits ‘house of’.

<sup>554</sup> P<sup>c</sup>. Mss. אֲדֹנָי absent. LXX κύριος.

<sup>555</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>556</sup> MT בֵּית ‘house’ missing from LXX.

<sup>557</sup> LXX τῶν λαῶν καὶ τῶν ἔθνων ‘the people and the nations’.

<sup>558</sup> Cf. Ezek. 37:25. All Jacob’s sons shared in the heritage of the Promised Land (cf. Gen. 28:14; Isa. 58:14).

<sup>559</sup> Cf. Ezek. 34:25, 28. An expression of reward for those obedient to the Law (Lev. 25:18).

<sup>560</sup> LXX adds καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων αὐτῶν ‘and the God of their fathers’.

<sup>561</sup> Greenberg 1997: 596; cf. Block 1998: 121; Zimmerli 1983: 99; Joyce 2007: 180.

the frequency with which the recognition formula is used;<sup>562</sup> these verses (28:20-26) contain the highest concentration of recognition formulae in the OAN and the book (28:22, 23, 24, 26). The oracle against Sidon (28:20-23) marks the halfway point in *Ezekiel's* OAN and it is followed by words of hope for Israel (28:24-26).<sup>563</sup> Sidon is the sixth foreign nation to be addressed as part of the prophet's oracles; the remaining oracles (Ezek. 29-32) are directed against Egypt.

A similarity can be observed between the oracles in chapter 25 and the oracle against Sidon. The phrase *שׂים פְּנֶיךָ* 'set your face' begins both oracles (Ezek. 25:2; 28:21), thus forming an *inclusio* to the oracles against Tyre.<sup>564</sup> In addition, the use of *שׂאֵץ* 'contempt' (28:24, 26) echoes 25:6, 15.<sup>565</sup> Signs of pairing are also evident in the use of the challenge to a duel formula found in the oracle against Sidon (28:22) and in the oracles against Tyre (26:3). Moreover, the use of *יֹשֵׁב* 'sit', 'dwell' (28:25, 26; cf. 28:2) and *חָלַל* 'slain' (28:23; cf. 28:8) further sets this oracle in the context of the oracles against Tyre, thus allowing the oracle against Sidon to 'function as a literary finale'.<sup>566</sup>

Commentators have described the oracle against Sidon as 'colourless' including only stereotypical formulaic language; consequently, the unit 'is almost universally considered secondary'.<sup>567</sup> Hals, whose opinion is representative of this scholarly stance,

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<sup>562</sup> This is confirmed by the titles given by various commentators. E.g. 'Yahweh's theological goal' (Block 1998: 123); 'Sidon's fate and Judah's fortune' (Allen 1990: 97); 'Sidon's gloom; God's vindication' (Greenberg 1997: 594).

<sup>563</sup> Strictly speaking, the oracle against Sidon contains three oracles: 28:2-23, 24, 25-26 (see further exegesis). However, following scholarly convention, in this thesis, these oracles are referred to collectively as the oracle against Sidon.

<sup>564</sup> Parunak 1978.

<sup>565</sup> Greenberg 1997: 596.

<sup>566</sup> Allen 1990: 98.

<sup>567</sup> Gowan 1964: 62.

says, '[T]he prophecy itself is only a foil for the interpretative appendices'.<sup>568</sup> Hals believes the unit was only added when Ezek. 25-28 was being completed.<sup>569</sup> The similarity between Ezek. 28:20-26 and Ezek. 38-39, along with the theme of security that comes with the fulfilment of the land promise in Ezek. 34, suggests to Hals that this unit (28:20-26) was included at the same time these other chapters were finished, which may also have coincided with the completion of the entire book.<sup>570</sup> Despite the likelihood that this is a later addition, Zimmerli explains that the figurative language found here (28:20-26) is characteristic of *Ezekiel*,<sup>571</sup> and that the oracle originally belongs with the expansions in 25:6-7, 15-17.<sup>572</sup> Importantly, though, Zimmerli suggests that if the oracle is regarded as being the prophet's words, and there 'are no compelling reasons for excluding this possibility', then here the hand of the prophet is seen 'participating in the collecting of the foreign oracles into a larger complex'.<sup>573</sup>

The oracle against Sidon is introduced in a 'typical way'<sup>574</sup> by a prophetic word formula (v. 20),<sup>575</sup> which emphasises its divine radix. Atypically, however, the lack of local colouring differentiates it from other oracles in *Ezekiel's* OAN.<sup>576</sup> Addressed as בן אדם (v. 21), the prophet delivers Yahweh's message with a characteristic sign-act performance which on this occasion involves 'setting his face' (v. 21).<sup>577</sup> Friebe

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<sup>568</sup> I.e. Ezek. 28:24-26.

<sup>569</sup> Hals 1989: 202.

<sup>570</sup> Hals 1989: 203.

<sup>571</sup> E.g. the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness (Ezek. 28:22, 25; cf. 20:41; 36:23; 38:16, 23; 39:27).

<sup>572</sup> See Greenberg (1997: 597-99) for a survey of the criteria that leading critics employ to determine primary and secondary material in *Ezekiel's* OAN.

<sup>573</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 99; cf. Block 1998: 123.

<sup>574</sup> R. W. Jenson 2009: 223.

<sup>575</sup> Hals 1989: 362.

<sup>576</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 99; cf. Block 1998: 121; Hölscher 1924: 143 refers to it as 'the emptiest piece in the entire book'.

<sup>577</sup> Cf. Ezek. 25:2.

remarks that this idiom usually carried a negative connotation, and ‘was the divine reaction to sin...with the subsequent divine action being the execution of judgement’.<sup>578</sup> Thus the oracle is prefaced by an instruction ‘to confront Sidon rhetorically’.<sup>579</sup>

In the earlier periods of Phoenician history, Sidon was the country’s most important city and administrative centre, hence the common designation employed in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>580</sup> and by Homer,<sup>581</sup> of the Phoenicians as ‘Sidonians’. According to Strabo (16.2.22), the Greek geographer, Sidon is one of the oldest Phoenician cities.<sup>582</sup> Situated about twenty-five miles north of Tyre on the eastern Mediterranean seaboard, Sidon, a prominent city from a very early period, is paired with Tyre in the Epic of Kirta (KTU 1.14.IV.35, 39).<sup>583</sup> An early fourteenth-century Hittite incantation mentions Sidon ahead of Tyre in a list of cities and regions,<sup>584</sup> and Sidon frequently appears as one of the leaders of cities against Egypt in the Tell el-Amarna letters.<sup>585</sup> Pharaoh Thutmose IV visited Sidon,<sup>586</sup> and an Egyptian papyrus dating from the thirteenth century mentions Sidon in a list after Byblos but before Tyre. In the eleventh century, an Egyptian official

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<sup>578</sup> Friebe 1999: 209-10. Cf. Zimmerli (1983: 182), who observes the proximity to the sign-acts (cf. Ezek. 3:22-5:4), which ‘establish a reminder of the character of the word as event’. Zimmerli points to the Balaam narrative (Num. 22:41; 23:13: 24:2) for support.

<sup>579</sup> Allen 1990: 98.

<sup>580</sup> Deut. 3:9; Josh. 13:4, 6; Judg. 3:3; 10:12; 18:7; 1 Kings 5:20; 11:1, 5; 16:31; 2 Kings 23:13; Ezek. 32:30; Ezra 3:7; 1 Chron. 22:4.

<sup>581</sup> *Iliad* 6.290, 291; 23.743-44; *Odyssey* 4.83-85, 618; 13.270.

<sup>582</sup> Schmitz 1992: 17.

<sup>583</sup> Schmitz (1992: 17) indicates that the earliest text is from 1345 BCE and the piece is likely to have been composed many centuries before that.

<sup>584</sup> *ANET* 1950: 352.

<sup>585</sup> Schmitz 1992: 17.

<sup>586</sup> EA 85.70; Katzenstein 1973: 26.

from Karnak reported that fifty Phoenician ships, which harboured in Sidon, traded with Egypt.<sup>587</sup>

During the Assyrian era, Sidon suffered from its vulnerable coastal location and was defeated in 701 BCE by Sennacherib,<sup>588</sup> whereas Tyre's island location protected it. Sidon was conquered once again by Esarhaddon in 677 BCE.<sup>589</sup> Little is known about Sidon during the Egyptian and Babylonian campaigns to control Palestine and Syria; however, collaboration with the Persians through the provision of a Mediterranean fleet enabled the city's on-going success until it was destroyed again in 351 BCE. Submission to Alexander in 333 BCE sanctioned their continued political presence.<sup>590</sup>

Denunciations against Sidon occur in conjunction with imprecations against Tyre elsewhere in the prophetic OAN,<sup>591</sup> so the placement of this oracle immediately after those against Tyre is in line with that tradition. Jeremiah calls for the kings of Sidon (along with other kings) to drink the wine from the cup of wrath (Jer. 25:15, 22) and Sidon is designated the firstborn of Canaan (Gen. 10:15; 1 Chron. 1:13).<sup>592</sup> Solomon is said to have followed Astarte the goddess of the Sidonians (1 Kings 11:5; cf. 2 Kings 23:13), and Sidon was a participant in Zedekiah's group (along with Edom, Moab, Ammon and Tyre), who met in Jerusalem to plot a revolt against Babylonia in 594 BCE (Jer. 27:3).<sup>593</sup> Since in *Ezekiel's* thought Babylonia functioned in Yahweh's agency,

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<sup>587</sup> ANET 1950: 27a.

<sup>588</sup> ANET 1950: 288.

<sup>589</sup> Schmitz 1992: 17.

<sup>590</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 97; Blenkinsopp 1990: 125.

<sup>591</sup> Isa. 23:2, 4, 12; Jer. 47:4.

<sup>592</sup> Cf. the role of Sidon as the 'mother of Tyre', which is recalled on coins of Sidon from the Seleucid period (Schmitz 1992: 17).

<sup>593</sup> The king of Sidon is mentioned in a list of Nebuchadrezzar's captured kings (ANET 1950: 288).

Sidon's involvement in this revolt would have been sufficient warrant for its inclusion in this corpus of oracles against foreign nations.

Following the standard introduction, a messenger formula heralds the proclamation against Sidon (v. 22). However, a notable departure from the conventional form of OAN in *Ezekiel* (or elsewhere) is the absence of indictment against Sidon.<sup>594</sup> While Sidon is often paired with Tyre in oracles against foreign nations, several commentators suggest that *Ezekiel's* Sidon oracle may simply be a random choice to raise the complement of nations addressed to seven.<sup>595</sup> That seven nations are addressed might be due, at least in part, to the sacred connotations of the number in Hebrew thought.<sup>596</sup> Indeed, many biblical accounts feature the number seven. For instance, having protected Cain with a mark (Gen. 4:15), Yahweh announces that anyone attempting to harm Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.<sup>597</sup> In another example, seven plagues are described as taking place before the exodus from Egypt (Ps. 105:28-36)<sup>598</sup> and, perhaps most significantly here, seven nations are identified for removal in the conquest tradition (Deut. 7:1). Perhaps the sacred connotation of the number seven means that, in the mind of the prophet, seven nations are required to purge the guilt of the exiles that I argue is projected onto them. Moreover, the oracle of restoration which follows (28:25-26) is the seventh oracle in the series against Israel's Palestinian neighbours (25:1-28:26), and these are balanced by seven oracles addressed to Egypt (Ezek. 29-32). Even if the number seven hypothesis is left aside, the inclusion of the oracle and Yahweh's actions

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<sup>594</sup> R. W. Jenson 2009: 223.

<sup>595</sup> Block 1998: 121; cf. Eichrodt 1970: 396; Hals 1989: 178.

<sup>596</sup> E.g. Gen. 2:3.

<sup>597</sup> For Yahweh's vengeance, cf. Ezek. 25:14 exegesis.

<sup>598</sup> A similar idea may be discerned in the book of Revelation's seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 16:1).

against Sidon clearly ‘represent punitive actions, provoked by Sidonian guilt’.<sup>599</sup> Indeed, the phrase ‘execute judgements’ (v. 22) implies that Yahweh’s response is the consequence of some punishable offence on the part of Sidon.<sup>600</sup> What is more, Yahweh’s judgement may be the consequence of Sidon’s contempt for Israel (cf. v. 24). In addition, the ancient reader is quite likely to have assumed the sins of Sidon to be the same as its sister city, Tyre.<sup>601</sup> Odell conjectures that given the immediate context of the unrighteous Tyrian ruler (28:1-19), Yahweh’s judgements are ‘more likely intended as compelling contrast to the vagaries of human rule’.<sup>602</sup> Not only are Yahweh’s judgements just (unlike those of the primal being in the Tyrian oracle), but they also reflect Yahweh’s concern for his people who have been treated with contempt (v. 24). For Block, though, the lack of indictment may be due to the oracle’s ‘paradigmatic function at the end of the series’.<sup>603</sup> This function is most apparent if the oracle is read as a summary of the message of the previous oracles which reveal *Ezekiel’s* understanding of Yahweh and the way in which he interacts with human history.<sup>604</sup> This is important for my thesis, since, if read this way, the focus is not on judgement, but on Yahweh’s glorification and vindication (cf. v. 22).

However, an additional perspective may be discerned. If, as Sweeney maintains, ‘the proper function of the temple liturgy is to symbolize and establish the holiness of the temple and to sanctify the relationship between Israel and YHWH’,<sup>605</sup> then Geyer’s

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<sup>599</sup> Block (1998: 124) bases his assessment on the content of the OAN in 25:1-26:6 and the statement in 28:24 referring to the contempt with which Israel’s neighbours have subjected them. Cf. Greenberg 1997: 596.

<sup>600</sup> Darr 2001: 1397.

<sup>601</sup> Darr 2001: 1356.

<sup>602</sup> Odell 2005: 365.

<sup>603</sup> Block 1998: 124.

<sup>604</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 396.

<sup>605</sup> Sweeney 2013: 10.

proposal is most intriguing. Observing that a lack of indictment is an element of laments, Geyer argues that laments,<sup>606</sup> which form part of the structure in the OAN, 'are a description of a process and the process is one aimed at the purification of the holy place'.<sup>607</sup> I have previously discussed this process of purification with reference to the removal of the Israelites from the land they had profaned, and I have suggested that the indictment of the nations might be a rhetorical way of illustrating the crimes of Israel by projecting them onto the nations. I have also considered the possibility that, should this prophetic ploy be successful and the exiles acknowledge their liability, then the removal of the nations could potentially expiate (rhetorically speaking) the guilt of the exiles, enabling the process of restoration to advance. With this in mind, the following comment is supportively pertinent: the OAN, says Geyer, 'belong to the sphere of worship making a theological (mythological) statement not a political one'.<sup>608</sup> Moreover, the notion that Israelite *hybris* is projected onto the nations might find support in Geyer's observation regarding the incorporation of myths in the OAN. Geyer argues that 'the only indictment the oracles contain is the charge of hubris',<sup>609</sup> and that 'hubris is the cardinal offence in mythological traditions'.<sup>610</sup> Indeed, as I have noted, even when other allegations are articulated, the notion of *hybris* is never far below the surface in *Ezekiel*. Doubtless this is because, as Gowan observes, the Hebrew view of humanity is 'profoundly humanistic', enthusiastic about the people God has made and the gifts God has given them. However, it is also 'profoundly theistic', since the Israelites were convinced that

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<sup>606</sup> Geyer 2004: 179; cf. Hayes 1968: 92; Petter 2009. See also Westermann (1984: 257), who observes that the curse form does not contain indictment either. Cf. Peterson 2012.

<sup>607</sup> Geyer 2004: 179.

<sup>608</sup> Geyer 2004: 179, cf. p. 28.

<sup>609</sup> Ezek. 25: 3, 8; 26:2; 27:3; 28:2; 29:9; 30:6; 31:10; 32:2.

<sup>610</sup> Geyer 2004: 179. E.g. Gen. 3; 11. Cf. Durlleser 2006: 145-239.

humanity could not replace the God who created them.<sup>611</sup> Thus, any attempt to usurp this God has, at its core, the sin of *hybris*.

With this backdrop in view, Yahweh's position, announced by Ezekiel, is predictable: 'I am against you, Sidon' (v. 22; cf. 25:2; 26:3). While for Allen this expression gives the impression of reaching the end of the series,<sup>612</sup> for Jenson the phrase amounts to something like 'a challenge to single combat', the consequence of which is the acquisition of glory for Yahweh.<sup>613</sup> The phrase also emphasises, as Block observes, that based on the form of address, the actual oracle against Sidon is confined to this one part of the verse (v. 22a), whereas the remainder of this and the following verse reflect 'the prophet's primary concern with his rhetorical audience'.<sup>614</sup>

Having arrived on a mercy mission to the exiles riding the throne-chariot (Ezek. 1:28), this is the first reference to Yahweh's glory (28:22) since the glory is said to have departed from the Jerusalem temple (10:18-19). Here, glory is acquired by Yahweh himself. Rather than the passive sense that is usually associated with the *niph.* of כָּבַד 'glory' (v. 22),<sup>615</sup> a reflexive sense may be perceived when it refers to God (cf. Ezek. 39:13).<sup>616</sup> This reflexive meaning is illuminated by the account of Yahweh's destruction of the Egyptians at the Reed Sea, so that he could glorify himself (Exod. 14:4, 17, 18 P). Significantly, both there as here (Ezek. 28:22), a recognition formula follows. Zimmerli writes that the demonstration of Yahweh's glory is 'a process of revelation in

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<sup>611</sup> Gowan 1975: 91.

<sup>612</sup> Allen 1990: 99.

<sup>613</sup> R. W. Jenson 2009: 224; cf. Hals (1989: 359) 'challenge to a duel formula'.

<sup>614</sup> Block 1998: 122. I.e. that they shall know that he is Yahweh.

<sup>615</sup> I.e. 'be glorified'.

<sup>616</sup> Westermann 1997: 595.

which Yahweh manifests himself to the world',<sup>617</sup> while for Reventlow, 'the glorification of [Yahweh's] name is the real goal of all his activity'.<sup>618</sup> Importantly though, as Darr, whose comment adds weight to my thesis, observes, 'God's self-glorification will result in the Sidonians' acknowledgement of the unparalleled power of Israel's God'.<sup>619</sup> In other words, Yahweh will vindicate himself.

The developed recognition formula (v. 22)<sup>620</sup> that ends what Hals refers to as 'a rather clumsy' two-part proof-saying<sup>621</sup> is expanded in such a sophisticated way that it too ends with a recognition formula (in v. 23). These comprise half of the recognition formulae in this unit (cf. vv. 24, 26). The initial recognition formula (v. 22) is expanded firstly with a ב plus infinitive construct development that is descriptive of a specific divine action (בעשותי 'when I execute'). This is followed by an additional clause in which a consecutive perfect (*niph.*) ונקדשתי 'I will manifest my holiness' is added to the infinitive phrase. What follows (v. 23) further expands the initial recognition formula by articulating a second judgement that is completed by another recognition formula.<sup>622</sup>

Returning to v. 22, the unusual pairing of the self-glorification of Yahweh and the manifestation of his holiness is a combination that is also found immediately after the death of Aaron's presumptuous sons, Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:3). There the proof of Yahweh's holiness was a dangerous fire; a similar idea is found here since it seems that it is the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness that will burn up all resistance.<sup>623</sup> Not only

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<sup>617</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 98.

<sup>618</sup> Reventlow 1962b: 136.

<sup>619</sup> Darr 2001: 1397.

<sup>620</sup> Category B2, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>621</sup> Hals 1989: 202.

<sup>622</sup> For a similar phenomenon, cf. Ezek. 6:13-14; 12:15-16; 30:25-26; 34:27-30; 37:13-14.

<sup>623</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 98.

that, but in *Ezekiel's* use of קדש 'holy', 'a strongly theocentric focus' is found.<sup>624</sup> That Yahweh is the subject highlights this focus that denotes the self-representation of divine holiness.<sup>625</sup> Indeed, the verb is usually witnessed with a reflexive sense: 'I will manifest my holiness', or 'I will sanctify myself', or 'I will vindicate my holiness'.<sup>626</sup> The sense here, though, is not the acquisition of holiness, but the 'essence of divine holiness'.<sup>627</sup> That the verb קדש is invariably found in conjunction with the recognition formula supports this view. Moreover, in this association, the vindication of Yahweh's power is usually prominent.<sup>628</sup>

However, in this verse (v. 22), the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness is made manifest בה 'in her' (i.e. in Sidon). Similarly, and related to this, is Yahweh's announcement of his intention to execute judgements *in* Sidon (v. 22). While recognising with Odell that since no reason is given for Yahweh's judgement on Sidon, 'any explanation of its inclusion remains conjectural',<sup>629</sup> there may, however, be room for speculation here. Mindful of the emphasis in the OAN on the indictment of *hybris* against the foreign nations, the Sidon oracle could be read as an object lesson for Israel.<sup>630</sup> In this reading, the people are confronted by their own conceit as they face the challenge of acknowledging that, now departed from the Jerusalem temple, Yahweh's glory and holiness is being manifested not in Israel, but in *Sidon*. What is more, as if rubbing salt on Israel's wounded pride, the divine presence is manifested on three occasions in

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<sup>624</sup> Joyce 1989: 104.

<sup>625</sup> Procksch 1964a: 90.

<sup>626</sup> Ezek. 20:41; 28:22, 25; 36:23b; 38:16; 39:27 (all *niph.*), but see also 38:23 (*htp.*), 36:23a (*pi.*).

<sup>627</sup> Procksch 1964a: 90.

<sup>628</sup> Joyce 1989: 104.

<sup>629</sup> Odell 2005: 365.

<sup>630</sup> Compare Nathan's parable in 2 Sam. 12; Barton 1980: 3.

Sidon, the epitome of all that is profane, whose goddess Astarte had beguiled the temple builder Solomon (1 Kings 11:5).<sup>631</sup>

Alternatively, the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness 'in' Sidon could be rendered as 'through' Sidon.<sup>632</sup> This interpretation would be no less challenging for Israel. According to this view, Sidon would be seen as an agent of Yahweh.<sup>633</sup> A further intriguing reading is suggested by the possible allusion to Sidon as firstborn of Canaan (Gen. 10:15). This evokes further memories of the exodus event and the judgement against the firstborn of Pharaoh, condemned for oppressing Israel, the firstborn of Yahweh (Exod. 4:22-23).<sup>634</sup> When these observations are considered alongside a particular comment from Hayes— 'The judgement of these nations is a necessary prelude to the restoration of Israel'<sup>635</sup>— then perhaps it is here that the prophet's rhetorical purpose might be perceived.<sup>636</sup> If this is the case, then the claim of Klein to have found 'a theological key' to *Ezekiel's* OAN in 28:22 is noteworthy. Klein argues that 'an attempt to vindicate Yahweh...is the central theological theme that unites Ezekiel's treatment of the nations in his oracles against foreign nations'.<sup>637</sup> It is a comment that adds considerable weight to my thesis, although I would add, it is the recognition formula that specifically focuses this attempt.

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<sup>631</sup> Day 2000: 128-32.

<sup>632</sup> *DCH* 2010: 190.

<sup>633</sup> Cf. Ezek. 29:20; 38:16.

<sup>634</sup> In *Ezekiel*, the term used for 'judgements' is שפטים (cf. 25:11 exegesis), which are understood to be a manifestation of his holiness and power—although Kohn (2002: 44) notes that only P (when referring to the Plagues of Egypt) and *Ezekiel* use this term to portray Yahweh acting in this manner.

<sup>635</sup> Hayes 1964: 260.

<sup>636</sup> Given that the oracle against Sidon was probably delivered to the exiles, the judgement presumably served a rhetorical rather than predictive purpose. Moreover, support for this idea may be seen in Ezek. 33:14-16 where, despite being judged, for those who repent, the death sentence is mercifully suspended.

<sup>637</sup> Klein 1988: 130. The word 'vindication' is often used by NRSV to translate the Hebrew term נדקה 'righteousness' (e.g. Ps. 98:2; 24:5; 35:27; Isa. 54:17; Jer. 51:10) and משפט 'judgement' (Ps. 17:2).

The language used to describe the judgement of pestilence, bloodshed and the sword that follows (v. 23), is standardised, and is reminiscent of the stereotypical formulae found to depict the plagues.<sup>638</sup> It is used elsewhere in relation to Jerusalem's fall (5:12; 6:12; 14:12-23), which Allen supposes might imply reprisal of some sort.<sup>639</sup> It might however, be a conscious strategy employed by the prophet to associate Sidon's punishment with that of Israel as a way of implicitly judging the people—although, as contended in this thesis, perhaps the idea is to project Israel's guilt onto Sidon as a way of illustrating their own shortcomings. Either way, as Block observes, the list emphasises Yahweh's direct involvement with no mention of human agency. Those witnessing this event will consequently attribute this event to Yahweh and acknowledge his sovereignty in history.<sup>640</sup> With this in mind, perhaps the judgement of bloodshed in Canaan's firstborn son Sidon (Gen. 10:15) alludes to the blood that marked the lintels of Yahweh's firstborn son Israel (Exod. 4:22; 12:7, 23). The blood of the Passover lamb was a sign, the sprinkling of which carried with it the idea of sanctification for service, an idea that might support the reading of Sidon as Yahweh's agent. Alternatively, it could act as a reminder of the exiles' own responsibility in this area. Be that as it may, the recognition formula that follows, which is the only basic formula in this unit,<sup>641</sup> might be thought, as I have noted, to be the conclusion to the previous formula's extensive development.

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Cf. Bellinger 2013. Haik (1980: 29-30) indicates that 'righteousness' is the means by which God proves himself holy (by doing what is right). According to Haik, the parallel term 'justice' helps clarify what 'righteousness' signifies.

<sup>638</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 98.

<sup>639</sup> Allen 1990: 99.

<sup>640</sup> Block 1998: 125.

<sup>641</sup> Category A3, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

A change occurs at v. 24. Indeed, Gowan claims that the content of the following verses (vv. 24-26) is unlike anything else in the OAN, having 'little evident relation to their context'.<sup>642</sup> Despite this observation, the structure of vv. 23 and 24 connects the two verses, and despite the additional messenger formula (v. 25), the content of verses 24, 25-26 links them together,<sup>643</sup> thus creating the impression of a unit. The fact that these verses are so different in content to those around them emphasises their uniqueness. The compilers of the book clearly recognised their significance, which, as Block seems to say, is more than skin deep. Observing the curiosity that vv. 24-26 focus on Israel for the first time since Ezek. 24, and that these verses divide the OAN into two halves, Block intimates that those responsible for the versification of the text appear to have recognised this symmetry, as the number of verses on either side of vv. 24-26 is ninety-seven.<sup>644</sup>

Although these oracles are understood to be rhetorical, at this point, as Zimmerli observes, the oracle is no longer addressed to Sidon, and the content 'looks back to the whole series' of OAN in Ezek. 25-28.<sup>645</sup> This verse (v. 24) summarises and concludes what has gone before. It contains an 'exact contrast'<sup>646</sup> to the indictments found in 25:3, 8; 26:2; cf. 25:15; 29:6. This contrast is so marked that Block describes verse 24 as a 'gospel' for Israel, since it announces the end of what they have endured.<sup>647</sup> This, and the following verses (vv. 25-26), comprise one of only two direct references to restoration for Israel in the OAN.<sup>648</sup> Zimmerli observes that the 'direction God's face is

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<sup>642</sup> Gowan (1964: 63) qualifies his statement by observing that hints of restoration may be perceived in 25:14 and 29:21.

<sup>643</sup> Hals 1989: 202.

<sup>644</sup> Block (1998: 123) also notes that the two halves are almost identical in size, the former consisting of about 1,200 words and the latter about 1,480 words.

<sup>645</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 98; cf. Wevers 1982: 158.

<sup>646</sup> Gowan 1964: 63.

<sup>647</sup> Block 1998: 126.

<sup>648</sup> The other is Ezek. 29:21. According to Joyce (2007: 180), both appear to be secondary.

actually turned in this judging activity of his' may be seen here: 'the divine judgement on Israel's neighbours is illuminated in this oracle exclusively from the point of view of help for Israel'.<sup>649</sup> This suggests that the nations have indeed been *Ezekiel's* rhetorical means towards Yahweh's ends. Speaking of the briar and thorn imagery (v. 24), Zimmerli notes that 'Ezekiel uses a technical term of priestly-medical diagnosis'.<sup>650</sup> Perhaps only now that the source of Israel's discomfort has been identified as 'contempt', and the prospect of its removal is imminent, can the nation begin to convalesce.<sup>651</sup>

The recognition formula that follows (v. 24) is one of five instances that have the nominal expansion, יהוה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל 'the Lord Yahweh'.<sup>652</sup> It is in this verse that the judgement on Israel's neighbours is explicitly presented as being exclusively for the benefit of Israel.<sup>653</sup> Now that the neighbouring nations have been judged, Israel can rest in peace.<sup>654</sup> Importantly, though, these announced benefits for the people of Israel are underlined by their ultimate purpose: recognition and acknowledgement of Yahweh's involvement in the affairs of humanity.

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<sup>649</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 99.

<sup>650</sup> Cf. Lev. 13:53; 14:44. Zimmerli 1983: 99. Cf. Joyce 2007: 180; Greenberg 1997: 595. Interestingly, the Vulgate renders 'painful briar' as a 'bitter offence, stumbling block' (*offendiculum amaritudinis*). Cf. 'barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides', expressions used to describe those gentiles remaining in Israel (Num. 33:55).

<sup>651</sup> Only in *Ezekiel* is the root 'to despise' (שׁוֹט) used as the noun 'contempt'. Cf. 28:26.

<sup>652</sup> Category S3, Table 1, Appendix p. 329. Cf. Ezek. 13:9; 23:49; 24:24 (cf. p. 74); 29:16. Elsewhere, יהוה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם 'Yahweh your God' is witnessed (20:5, 7, 19). In all other instances of the recognition formula, only יהוה is attested. Zimmerli 1983: 256.

<sup>653</sup> Block 1998: 126.

<sup>654</sup> Wevers 1982: 159.

Of the final verses (vv. 25-26), Zimmerli remarks that combinations of words and phrases from other verses make it clear that this is an addition, probably belonging to a very late phase in the formation of the book;<sup>655</sup> even so, he continues, they 'are not to be considered an independent oracle'.<sup>656</sup> Beginning with a fresh messenger formula that identifies the following as an oracle from Yahweh,<sup>657</sup> it looks forward to a time when the people will be restored to the land (Ezek. 33-39). The action is, as Odell observes, expressed by consecutive perfect verbs that are bookended by two  $\square$  plus infinitive construct temporal clauses: 'when I gather' (v. 25), which indicates the time this will all happen, and 'when I execute judgements' (v. 26), which happens to the nations either after Israel is restored or at the same time.

I have already shown that Yahweh's wrathful execution of judgements may be understood as a manifestation of his holiness and presence in human experience.<sup>658</sup> However, not only can Yahweh's presence be perceived in his wrathful activity, but in *Ezekiel*, Yahweh's presence is also emphasised by his acts of mercy. And the way *Ezekiel* portrays the divine presence being made manifest in this verse (v. 25) is remarkable. Yahweh is depicted using the very same people who profaned his name (36:20) and crushed him by their wanton hearts (6:9), as vehicles for his holiness. This Yahweh will do when he gathers the house of Israel to the land from the countries in which they have been scattered (28:25).<sup>659</sup> But of course, the people could not be gathered if they had not been scattered. Thus, I contend that it is the gathering that makes sense of the scattering, and it is the scattering that gives the gathering meaning.

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<sup>655</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 100) notes a close analogy in form and content with the closing verses of ch. 39.

<sup>656</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 100. Cf. Wevers 1982: 159; Joyce 2007: 180; Allen 1990: 99.

<sup>657</sup> Sweeney 2013: 142.

<sup>658</sup> Cf. 25:14 exegesis, p.137.

<sup>659</sup> Cf. Ezek. 11:17; 20:41; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:27.

It is an observation that clearly illuminates the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy and adds considerable credibility to my thesis. This observation is significant since, as Zimmerli observes, *Ezekiel* does not describe Yahweh's character in doctrinal speech, but only in sequential narrative does it express what it has to say about Yahweh.<sup>660</sup> Zimmerli writes further: 'No single passage attempts to uncover a doctrinally determinable overall concept for [Yahweh's] contrasting action in judgement and beneficence (for example, Yahweh's "holiness"), a concept that might reflect equally both the element of Yahweh's judgement and that of his mercy to Israel'.<sup>661</sup> Even so, for Zimmerli, the unity of both kinds of divine action is only discernible in the recognition formula,<sup>662</sup> a view that supplies much support for my thesis.

In *Ezekiel*, Yahweh's holiness is always made manifest in the context of Israel's restoration,<sup>663</sup> and this instance (v. 25) is no exception. Here, Yahweh will manifest his holiness in the people; it will be a public display 'in the sight of the nations' (v. 25),<sup>664</sup> that emphasises Yahweh's presence among them. I have spoken of the blessing of rest associated with the promise of Yahweh's presence in the land;<sup>665</sup> and I have also discussed the significance of signs in *Ezekiel*, and observed that for the prophet, the sign always points to the referent, who is invariably Yahweh.<sup>666</sup> Perhaps here, though, a further sacramental nuance to this idea might be detected. While recognising that often the term 'glory' is used for a manifestation of holiness that is 'visible and accessible

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<sup>660</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 96.

<sup>661</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 96.

<sup>662</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 96.

<sup>663</sup> 20:41; 36:23; 38:16; 39:27.

<sup>664</sup> Cf. Ezek. 5:8; 20:9,14, 22, 41; 22:16; 28:25; 39:27.

<sup>665</sup> Cf. 25:3 exegesis.

<sup>666</sup> Cf. 25:17 exegesis.

to the senses',<sup>667</sup> the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness through his people in the sight of the nations does seem to be, in this case, very similar to this definition of 'glory'. Indeed, one could argue that the assurance of Yahweh's presence among the people, described in relation to the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness, points towards the definition of a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given...as a means whereby we receive the same [i.e. the grace signified], and a pledge to assure us thereof'.<sup>668</sup> In this verse (v. 25), the outward and visible sign could be perceived as the manifestation of holiness, with the inward and spiritual grace being discerned as the blessing of rest (realised in the removal of briars and thorns) associated with the gift of life that Yahweh invites his people to receive when they return to him. This sign has a two-way direction of reference that functions as a pledge exemplifying Yahweh's on-going presence which is not restricted to the temple or the land.<sup>669</sup> Perhaps this accounts for the emphasis on the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness in this 'typical' oracle. Moreover, since, as Kohn observes, 'a by-product of Yahweh's manifest holiness' is restoration,<sup>670</sup> the sign could offer hope for the future as well as reassurance in the present.

For all that, it should be borne in mind that the people had failed to appreciate the temple as a sign of Yahweh's presence among them,<sup>671</sup> and Yahweh had already manifested his holiness in Sidon. It seems that no experience is meaningless, though; perhaps after all this, the prophet's rhetoric will encourage the people to sit up and take note now the

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<sup>667</sup> Wells 2000: 161; cf. Gammie 1989: 195; Muilenburg 1962: 622.

<sup>668</sup> *BCP* 1969: 356. According to Procter and Frere (1902: 600), this phrase is generally attributed to Bishop John Overall, written when he was dean of St Paul's (1602-1614). However, it was largely derived from Alexander Nowell (1853: 205), who was the previous dean (1560-1602).

<sup>669</sup> Cf. the idea of denotation and exemplification (Ezek. 25:17 exegesis p. 151).

<sup>670</sup> Kohn 2002: 37.

<sup>671</sup> Cf. Ezek. 24:21.

prospect of Yahweh manifesting his holiness in *them* looms on the horizon. No doubt those who included this later addition anticipated that acknowledgement of these developments would inspire a worshipful response that testified to a recognition of Yahweh's presence and effectively vindicated him in the process. If this expectation was realised, then the announcement itself would have been constructive; ultimately, however, the text indicates that it is through the merciful restoration of Israel that Yahweh's holiness will be revealed and vindicated.<sup>672</sup> This display of Yahweh's holiness in the sight of the nations is interpreted as a fulfilment of his promise of the land made to the patriarchs, who are represented by Jacob.<sup>673</sup>

Covenantal overtones may be heard in the reference to Jacob's land (v. 25).<sup>674</sup> The revelation of Yahweh to Jacob and the commitment he made is described by *Ezekiel*: 'On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob—making myself known to them' (20:5a). The covenant is underlined by the following: 'I swore to them, saying, I am Yahweh your God' (20:5b). Having depicted the covenant as an overtone, perhaps this metaphor can be developed by describing, as a barely audible harmonic reverberating like a prophetic echo, the notion of expiation. I have suggested the possibility that the expiation of the exiles' guilt was a significant aspect of concern for the prophet-priest whose mission is in the interests of covenantal reconciliation; it seems, however, that this interest was shared by Isaiah: 'Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated' (Isa. 27:9).<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Greenberg 1997: 595. Cf. Zimmerli 1983: 100; Bidlack 2000: 277; Block 1998: 128.

<sup>673</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 397.

<sup>674</sup> Cf. Ezek. 37:25. For the promise to Jacob, see also Gen. 28:13-15 (J); 35:12 (P), Ps. 105:10; cf. 1 Chron. 16:17, 18.

<sup>675</sup> This idea is developed in the thought of Paul, who relates the idea of covenant to expiation (Rom. 11:27).

The revelation of Yahweh to Jacob and Yahweh's subsequent self-revelation to Israel is described by Zimmerli, who writes that those who witness the revelation are called 'into a movement of recognition that is not a state of enraptured vision, but rather is life, activity, and movement towards a goal'.<sup>676</sup> Indeed, I have been highlighting my view that, for *Ezekiel*, this goal is a recognition of Yahweh's active presence that inspires the people's return to him where life in abundance may be experienced. But while the process of recognition is experienced through events of judgement and salvation, the aim is that Yahweh will be recognised in his name. According to Zimmerli: 'Recognition of Yahweh thus occurs "from knowing to knowing"'.<sup>677</sup> In other words, recognition invites a response, as my third thesis proposes. One might paraphrase Zimmerli's pithy phrase along lines such as these: knowing Yahweh is not just a matter of acknowledging who he is, it is much more dynamic; it means to have complete confidence in Yahweh and to trust him unreservedly. The person who knows Yahweh knows his presence and his power. Recognition is not merely a one-off acknowledgement of Yahweh, but a lifestyle of awareness that recognises Yahweh's holy presence in both the scattering and the gathering. As such, there is a rational dimension to knowing Yahweh that involves exerting mind over matter, for on it a holy lifestyle depends. Then whatever the current circumstance, to know Yahweh is to identify with him and his activity.

From knowing to knowing is the lifeblood of restoration; it ensures its permanence and lies at the heart of any response to Yahweh's invitation to know him. Indeed, Block indicates that repatriation to the land of 'my servant Jacob' announces the restoration of a broken relationship,<sup>678</sup> a comment that might be perceived as being related to the earlier thought concerning the expiation of Jacob's guilt and its attendant potential for

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<sup>676</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 10.

<sup>677</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 10.

<sup>678</sup> Block 1998: 127.

reconciliation.<sup>679</sup> Be that as it may, Odell is on the mark when she observes that the reference to Jacob ‘reinforces the sense that *Ezekiel* imagines the restoration along the lines of the first conquest,<sup>680</sup> and that this summary statement declares that ‘Yahweh will be vindicated in the sight of the nations’.<sup>681</sup> By restoring Israel, Yahweh vindicates himself and his sovereignty to Israel, since he is clearly in control, and to the nations to whom he seemed ineffectual and powerless.<sup>682</sup>

The idea of restoration as part of a bigger picture is appreciated by Odell, who suggests that these verses (vv. 25-26) may be understood as marking the beginning of Yahweh’s work of restoring Israel.<sup>683</sup> Indeed, Joyce observes that these final verses seem to be a summary systematising the theology of *Ezekiel*.<sup>684</sup> The consequence of restoration is emphasised in the double use of *לִבְטַח וַיִּשְׁבוּ* ‘dwell securely’ or ‘live in safety’ (v. 26).<sup>685</sup> It is, as I have observed, life that *Ezekiel* perceives Yahweh is calling his people to (18:23, 32; 33:11), and this vocation is depicted by *Ezekiel* as being one of peaceful security, characterised as building houses and planting vineyards. This idiom, which may not be a typical expression of *Ezekiel*, indicates a state of permanency to their residency in the land.<sup>686</sup> Indeed, such a vocation witnesses to the power of Yahweh and his faithfulness to the covenant. Moreover, if one follows Joyce’s lead for a moment,

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<sup>679</sup> Reference to Jacob often appears as a designation for Israel in restoration oracles (Isa. 44:1; 45:4; Jer. 30:10; 46:27-28).

<sup>680</sup> Odell 2005: 366.

<sup>681</sup> Odell 2005: 365.

<sup>682</sup> Gowan 1964: 217.

<sup>683</sup> Odell 2005: 365.

<sup>684</sup> Cf. Ezek. 39:21-39. Joyce 2007: 180. Much of the language found here also appears in Ezek. 34-37. E.g. ‘I gather the house of Israel’; ‘I will manifest my holiness’; ‘they will settle on their own land’.

<sup>685</sup> So NRSV.

<sup>686</sup> Cf. Isa. 65:21; Jer. 29:5, 28; cf. Amos 5:11. Zimmerli (1983: 100) indicates that ‘vineyards’ occurs nowhere else in *Ezekiel* and ‘to plant’ only in 36:36. Cf. Wevers 1982: 159.

accepting these verses as reflecting the prophet's theology,<sup>687</sup> then it might be perceived that these privileged peaceful lives, characterised by an awareness of knowing Yahweh's presence, carry with them an ethical responsibility to convey these principles to those who lack such an awareness. By restoring his people to the land, Yahweh's activity is vindicated; in turn, these restored lives of witness to that fact, become ones of worship that testify to Yahweh's presence in a way that also vindicates his activity. In this way, Yahweh's vindication could potentially become self-perpetuating. For all that, while the promise that Israel would dwell securely in the land is a recurrent theme in *Ezekiel*,<sup>688</sup> this peaceful agrarian existence is the consequence of Yahweh's judgements upon the neighbours who have treated his own with contempt (v. 26). Indeed, as has been seen, divine justice is the basis upon which Israel's security lies.

The identity of the subject of ידע 'know' in this recognition formula (v. 26) is ambiguous. It could conceivably mean the neighbours who have treated Israel with contempt or, as is more likely in light of the nominal expansion, 'their God', it could refer to Israel once they have been restored and are dwelling in security.<sup>689</sup> Hence, it is one of the few instances when it is said that Israel will know that I am Yahweh when Yahweh judges the nations.<sup>690</sup> This is important for my thesis, since here, the direct relationship between the judgement of the nations and the restoration of the people to Yahweh that I have suggested exists in the OAN, is explicitly articulated.

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<sup>687</sup> Joyce 2007: 180.

<sup>688</sup> Ezek. 34:28; 38:11, 14; 39:26; cf. Lev. 25:19; Jer. 23:6; 32:37; 33:16.

<sup>689</sup> Accordingly, I have categorized it this way. See Category S3, Table 1, Appendix p. 329. However, Joyce (1989: 90, 91) categorises this verse twice on the grounds that Israel shall know that 'I am Yahweh' when he both punishes the nations and delivers Israel.

<sup>690</sup> Cf. Ezek. 39:22.

In the nominal expansion 'their God', a covenant allusion is indicated, the fuller phrase being 'you shall be my people and I will be your God' (36:28). This formula sums up God's intentions for his people, the purpose of his wrathful and merciful acts being to elicit a human response. And as has been seen in *Ezekiel*, Yahweh invites his people to return to him so that they might live. The life that is envisioned for Yahweh's people is one of covenantal relationship because, as Ezekiel's priestly background would doubtless inform him, it is only in relationship with Yahweh as their God, that the people will live secure and peaceful lives, ones that are characterised by the prophet as building houses and planting vineyards (28:26).

Zimmerli contends that the recognition formula indicates that what seems to be independent human action (settling on the land, building and planting) arising from Yahweh's feats is actually subordinated to divine action, since it is the recognition formula that follows the human endeavour.<sup>691</sup> This observation allows Zimmerli to state categorically that the recognition formula 'never appears in an isolated position...and is always preceded by a statement concerning a divine act'.<sup>692</sup> Thus knowledge or recognition of Yahweh in *Ezekiel* invariably occurs when confronted by an event in which an act of Yahweh is witnessed.<sup>693</sup> In this way, the recognition formula re-affirms that the judgement is the intervening work of Yahweh and that while the nations will know the power of Yahweh and the consequences of opposing him,<sup>694</sup> Israel will know Yahweh

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<sup>691</sup> Cf. e.g. Ezek. 6:8-10; 12:16; 14:21-23. Zimmerli 1982: 35.

<sup>692</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 35.

<sup>693</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 36.

<sup>694</sup> Block (1998: 139) observes that the knowledge which the nations will gain of Yahweh is an acknowledgment of Yahweh's supremacy.

and relate to him as their covenantal God (v. 26).<sup>695</sup> Thus I contend that my first and third theses are ably supported here.

The relationship between the covenant, the recognition formula and the presence of Yahweh is, as I have intimated, important. Indeed, it has been identified by Callender, who asserts that ‘the self-manifestation of Yahweh is closely tied to the imagery of covenant’.<sup>696</sup> Callender even suggests that ‘the literary background of the recognition formula lies in covenant language’.<sup>697</sup> Be that as it may, the nominally expanded recognition formula<sup>698</sup> is a salient reminder that the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people is an ever-present current flowing through *Ezekiel*.

Observing a ‘pastoral role’ to the oracle, Allen notes that ‘the coming vindication of Yahweh is found both in the destruction of Sidon and in the rehabilitation of the covenant people... Such welcome reorientation, incredible as it seemed...was to be a sacramental sign pointing the Judeans beyond themselves to the praiseworthy reality of their covenant God’.<sup>699</sup> Allen’s observation encourages the prospect to develop his thought. Perhaps the rhetorical purpose of the oracle is to invite Israel to confront their pride by acknowledging that Yahweh has manifested his holy presence in profane Sidon, the archetypal thorn in the nation’s side. Paradoxically, by recognising this, the precise point of the people’s discomfort becomes the remedy which promotes their recovery. In

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<sup>695</sup> Tuell 2009: 190. It is possible that the subject ‘they’ of יִרְעוּ are all those who witness these events; however, it is more likely that ‘they’ refers to Israel, whose God Yahweh is.

<sup>696</sup> Callender 2015: 75.

<sup>697</sup> For instance, Exod. 6:1-9 (P); cf. Ezek. 20:5-7 (Callender 2015: 75).

<sup>698</sup> Vervenne 1997: 477.

<sup>699</sup> Allen 1990: 100-01. For further notable ‘pastoral’ observations, see Scheck 2010: 164; cf. Origen 2002: 135 Theodore 2006: 196. For further reference to *Ezekiel* in later tradition, see e.g. Mein forthcoming; Mein and Joyce 2011.

this way, it is the sacramental capacity of (typical) *Sidon* that is affirmed, as this sign points to the possibility of an encounter with the presence of Yahweh. Not only that, but the oracle emphasises that Yahweh's holy presence might always be perceived and that, crucially for the priestly prophet, the place of restoration is Yahweh himself, who manifests his presence in the most unlikely of places.<sup>700</sup> Furthermore, by confronting their ego and prejudice, the people embark on a process of purification as the thorn is removed, which allows for the future re-consecration of the people and the fulfilment of the promised restoration and so too the vindication of Yahweh.<sup>701</sup>

#### 4.7.3 Summary

The significance of this oracle for my thesis is evident in the high concentration of recognition formulae encountered in the unit and its pivotal position in the OAN. While some contend that the inclusion of *Sidon* in the series is simply to bring the total of nations addressed up to seven, I considered the possibility that, with the rhetorical nature of the oracle firmly in view (emphasised by the prophet 'setting his face'), the purpose of judgement against *Sidon* was to provide an object lesson for the exiles. In the absence of an indictment, the typical nature of *Sidon*'s identity as briars and thorns lends itself to this hypothesis; not only that, but the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness in *Sidon* would have been a painful pill for the exiles to swallow.

As with the oracles addressed to other foreign nations, I noted that the fault of *hybris* is ever-present in the oracle against *Sidon*. Importantly, though, it was appreciated that the message of these oracles is not political but theological, thus supporting the notion of the oracles' potential rhetorical application to the exiles. Indeed, as elsewhere in

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<sup>700</sup> Or, as Zimmerli (1960: 227) says, 'the faithfulness of God with regard to the sinner is primarily one of grace which makes all things new because it is the grace of the One who is holy'.

<sup>701</sup> Cf. Joyce 2007: 28; Hals 1989: 203.

*Ezekiel's* OAN, the focus here is not on judgement, but on Yahweh's glory and self-vindication.

The second thesis was supported by the observations concerning Yahweh's wrathful scattering and his merciful gathering of the people, and I suggested that the rhetorical purpose of judgement directed to nations in the restoration oracle could be a timely reminder of the on-going covenantal responsibility of the people—in good times and in bad. I also noted that in the last recognition formula of the unit, the judgement of the nations is directly related to restoration for Israel, and that the covenant, with its inherent invitation to respond to Yahweh, is an underlying theme in *Ezekiel*.

In reviewing this summary, it seems that the above exegesis of the oracle against Sidon has delivered the most dramatic support of all three of the theses so far. The oracles against Egypt will be the focus of attention for the remainder of this work.

## 5 EXEGESIS:

### ORACLES AGAINST EGYPT

#### 5.1 Initial considerations

Thus far, the exegetical work has shown that each oracle has a slightly different emphasis, with some supporting my theses more convincingly than others. However, a general picture is beginning to emerge which reveals all three theses to be well-founded. The next task is to see if they hold up in the oracles against Egypt.

#### 5.2 Ezek. 29:1-16

##### 5.2.1 Translation

1 In the tenth year,<sup>1</sup> on the twelfth<sup>2</sup> of the tenth month, the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

2 'Son of Man, set your face towards<sup>3</sup> Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and all Egypt.

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<sup>1</sup> Only here and in 40:1 is ויהי (traditionally translated 'And it came to pass', e.g. KJV) missing from Ezek. date formulas.

<sup>2</sup> LXX μῆνας 'first'. The suggestion (Zimmerli 1983: 106; Block 1998: 133; Allen 1990: 102) for this discrepancy is that 'twelfth' was missing from the Hebrew text from which LXX was translated. Instead אחד 'one' was there occasioned by dittography from לחודש 'month' which follows.

<sup>3</sup> For MT אל-על, cf. Ezek. 25:3 translation note.

3 Speak,<sup>4</sup> and say<sup>5</sup> to him, Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>6</sup> “Behold I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt,<sup>7</sup> the great dragon<sup>8</sup> lying in his Nile streams<sup>9</sup> which says, ‘My Nile<sup>10</sup> is my own; I made it myself’.<sup>11</sup>

4 I will put hooks<sup>12</sup> in your jaws, and I will make the fish of your Nile streams<sup>13</sup> cling to your scales; and I will bring you up from the midst of your Nile streams,<sup>14</sup> and surely<sup>15</sup> all the fish of your Nile streams shall cling to your scales.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> MT דבר ‘speak’ unattested in LXX.

<sup>5</sup> Greenberg (1997: 601) notes this shortened parallelismic form (cf. 14:4; 20:3).

<sup>6</sup> LXX αὐτός.

<sup>7</sup> MT מלך מצרים ‘king of Egypt’ not witnessed in LXX.

<sup>8</sup> MT תנינים. LXX δράκων ‘dragon’. Elsewhere תנינים is pl. for ‘jackals’ (cf. Isa. 13:22), but habitat here excludes these. S T read as תנין ‘sea monster’ (cf. 32:2; Jer. 51:34). תנינים is either orthographic error for תנין or they are parallel/variant forms (Zimmerli 1983: 106; Allen 1990: 102).

<sup>9</sup> Here the pl. (יארים) refers to the tributaries of the Nile (יאר); see following note. Zimmerli (1983: 106) argues this plural usage is assumed towards the lower delta where the centre of the political stage lay.

<sup>10</sup> LXX, S read plural ‘my Nile streams’, but see v. 9 for sing. with no suffix.

<sup>11</sup> MT עשיתני ‘I made myself’. 1st pers. vb. + 1st pers. suffix unique. LXX ἐποίησα αὐτούς ‘I made them’ (cf. v 9) = עשיתים (cf. BHS).

<sup>12</sup> MT תחיים, Q תחים ‘hooks’, cf. BHS; DCH 1996: 194.

<sup>13</sup> LXX, S sing.

<sup>14</sup> LXX, S sing.

<sup>15</sup> MT ואת. Boadt (1980: 31) highlights the emphatic (so-called ‘nominative’) use of the particle.

<sup>16</sup> MT בקשקשתך תרבק ‘they shall cling to your scales’ unattested in LXX.

5 I will hurl<sup>17</sup> you into the wilderness,<sup>18</sup> you and all the fish of your Nile streams;<sup>19</sup> you shall fall in the open field, and not be collected and gathered.<sup>20</sup> I have given you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air.

6 Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am Yahweh; because you<sup>21</sup> have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

7 When they grasped you by the hand,<sup>22</sup> you split and crushed their entire<sup>23</sup> shoulder;<sup>24</sup> when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins unsteady.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> MT וַנִּשְׁתַּחֲתֶיךָ. Usually נִשַׁח means 'to leave', 'abandon' (cf. 31:12), but by referring to 32:4 and LXX καταβαλῶ 'I will throw down', the sense of 'to throw' is apparent (see G. R. Driver 1954: 299; HALOT 1995: 695).

<sup>18</sup> LXX ἐν τάχει 'in haste', perhaps misreading MT המדברה 'into the wilderness', as במהרה 'in haste' (Zimmerli 1983: 107).

<sup>19</sup> LXX, S sing.

<sup>20</sup> So ט (Levey 1987: 85); many (e.g. BHS; NRSV) emend MT תקבץ 'you will be gathered' to תקבר 'you will be buried'. The idiom 'to be gathered to one's father' (Gen. 25:8), however, says much the same thing. For a similar pairing with the synonymous אסף, see Ezek. 11:17, which refers to the gathering of the exiles.

<sup>21</sup> MT היוהם 'they were' 3rd pers. LXX ἐγενήθης = היוהך 2nd pers. For Zimmerli (Zimmerli 1983: 107), this indicates an 'erroneous connection' with v. 6a (understanding the inhabitants of Egypt to be the subject) and so he follows the versions (cf. Boadt 1980: 36). Allen (1990: 102) suggests an easier emendation of היית 'you were', assuming a ו / י error. In addition, 2nd pers. is implied by the following verse.

<sup>22</sup> MT בכפך 'by your hand', but Q with Masora בכף 'by the hand', so ט ו. However, LXX τῆ χειρὶ αὐτῶν 'by their hand'. Zimmerli (1983: 107) points to the parallel in v. 7b and deems this word to be superfluous (cf. BHS).

<sup>23</sup> MT כל, lit., 'all'.

<sup>24</sup> MT כתף 'shoulder'. Also, side of tabernacle (cf. Exod. 27:14). LXX χεῖρ 'hand', perhaps under the influence of 2 Kings 18:21; Isa. 36:6. G. R. Driver (1954: 299) suggests 'armpit' on the basis that a shoulder viewed from the position of the supporting staff (from below) is the armpit.

<sup>25</sup> MT והעמדת, lit. 'you made to stand' is the opposite of what is intended. The consonants עמד have suffered a metathesis for מעד 'shake', implied by LXX and paralleled in Ps. 69:24 (23). G. R. Driver

8 Therefore” thus says the Lord Yahweh,<sup>26</sup> “behold, I will bring a sword against you and cut off from you man and beast.

9 And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste and they shall know that I am Yahweh. Because he<sup>27</sup> said, ‘The Nile<sup>28</sup> is mine and I made it’.<sup>29</sup>

10 Therefore behold, I am against<sup>30</sup> you and against your Nile streams and I will make the land of Egypt parched wastes of desolation<sup>31</sup> from Migdol<sup>32</sup> to Syene,<sup>33</sup> as far as<sup>34</sup> the border of Cush.

11 No foot of man shall pass through it and no foot of beast shall pass through it; and it shall be uninhabited for forty years.

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(1954: 299) supports MT on the basis of Acc. and Arab. ‘to cause to be bruised.’ Zimmerli (1983: 12) says that the phrase is an expression for ‘the loss of bodily stability’.

<sup>26</sup> LXX κτύπος.

<sup>27</sup> MT’s 3rd person here appears influenced by v. 3. LXX ἔσειμην emend to 2nd person which accords with v. 10.

<sup>28</sup> MT יַאֲרֵן ‘Nile’ sing. only here and v. 3. LXX is plural.

<sup>29</sup> MT does not have the suffix. LXX has plural object to agree with οἱ ποταμοὶ ‘the rivers’ and v 3.

<sup>30</sup> MT אֶל-עַל, see Ezek. 25:3 translation note.

<sup>31</sup> LXX reads חָרָב ‘desolation’ as ‘sword’; cf. Jer. 50:35-38 (Greenberg 1997: 606).

<sup>32</sup> MT מִגְדֹּל ‘Migdol’ is Hebrew for ‘tower’.

<sup>33</sup> Re-pointing MT to read ‘to Syene’ (following Zimmerli 1983: 108). LXX ‘and Syene’.

<sup>34</sup> Boadt (1980: 43) maintains that MT וְעַד ‘as far as’ is an emphatic or explicative ו as in ‘yes, even up to...’ (cf. GKC 1910: §154a).

12 And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation amongst desolated countries,<sup>35</sup> and her cities shall be a desolation<sup>36</sup> amongst parched<sup>37</sup> cities for forty years. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the countries.

13 However<sup>38</sup>, thus says the Lord Yahweh,<sup>39</sup> “at the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered.

14 And I will restore the fortunes<sup>40</sup> of Egypt and bring them back<sup>41</sup> to<sup>42</sup> the land of Pathros, the land of their origin;<sup>43</sup> and they shall be a lowly kingdom there.<sup>44</sup>

15 She shall be the lowliest<sup>45</sup> of the kingdoms and shall not exalt herself again above the nations and I will diminish them so that they shall rule over<sup>46</sup> the nations no more.

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<sup>35</sup> Usually taken as superlative (Joüon and Muraoka 2006: §141j n.17).

<sup>36</sup> MT שַׁמְמָה ‘desolation’ unattested in LXX.

<sup>37</sup> As in v. 12a, membership of class not superlative exemplification is the point (Greenberg 1997: 607).

<sup>38</sup> MT כִּי not witnessed in LXX. Greenberg (1997: 607) finds a contrastive sense of כִּי which introduces a new phase of the oracle. But here (cf. 23:28), כִּי introduces supplemental matter (Greenberg 1997: 482).

<sup>39</sup> LXX καὶ ἔσται.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ezek. 16:53; 39:25; Job 42:10.

<sup>41</sup> LXX καὶ ἀκατοίσωω ‘and I will establish’ from Heb. יָשָׁב ‘dwell’ rather than שׁוּב ‘return’.

<sup>42</sup> MT אֶל-עַל, see Ezek. 25:3 translation note.

<sup>43</sup> MT מִכּוֹרֵתָם from כּוֹר = כרה ‘to dig’ (HALOT 1995: 496) only in Ezek. 16:3; 21:35 [30] (Zimmerli 1979: 322). But cf. Gen. 26:25; Num. 21:18, which reference digging wells in association with the homeland (Boadt 1980: 46).

<sup>44</sup> MT שָׁם omitted in LXX.

<sup>45</sup> MT תְּהִיָּה שְׁפִלָּה ‘she shall be the lowliest’ unattested in LXX.

<sup>46</sup> MT בִּרְדוּתָם ‘rule over’. According to Boadt (1980: 47), the repeated use of this phrase in Lev. 25-26 attests to the priestly connections of *Ezekiel*.

16 He<sup>47</sup> shall never again be an object of trust<sup>48</sup> to the house of Israel, a reminder<sup>49</sup> of iniquity when they turned to them.<sup>50</sup> Then they shall know that I am the Lord Yahweh.”<sup>51</sup>

### 5.2.2 Exegesis

The first oracle against Egypt begins with the earliest date, 7 January 587,<sup>52</sup> in *Ezekiel's* OAN. The tenth year is one year before the first oracle against Tyre (Ezek. 26:1), a year after the beginning of the siege against Jerusalem (Ezek. 24:1) and two years before the date given for the fall of Jerusalem in Ezek. 33:21. Thus, for the prophet, the prospect of Egyptian assistance could still potentially distract the exiles' attention away from Yahweh and so *Ezekiel* firmly extinguishes any such possibility.<sup>53</sup>

The introductory prophetic word formula (v. 1) is followed by Ezekiel's epithet בן אדם 'son of man' (v. 2), which according to Sweeney identifies the prophet as a Zadokite priest.<sup>54</sup> These preliminary words are completed by the expression 'set your face' (v. 2),<sup>55</sup> that appears to be a conscious echo of 25:2 and 28:20.<sup>56</sup> In this way, the prophet is summarily commanded to address 'Pharaoh king of Egypt'.<sup>57</sup> The Egyptian word for

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<sup>47</sup> Unusual m.s. vb. ('he shall be') perhaps referring to מצרים (m.) rather than ארץ (f.) *BHS* suggests reading plural with the versions, followed by some commentators (Block 1998: 141; Zimmerli 1983: 109).

<sup>48</sup> MT למבטח 'an object of trust' (*DCH* 2001: 126). Cf. Isa. 36:4-6.

<sup>49</sup> MT מזכיר 'a reminder' (*hiph.* Part.) cf. Ezek. 21:28 (23).

<sup>50</sup> See exegesis.

<sup>51</sup> LXX ΛXX ἄρα.

<sup>52</sup> Following Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 28.

<sup>53</sup> Allen 1990: 104.

<sup>54</sup> Sweeney 2013: 31, 107, 144.

<sup>55</sup> See exegesis Ezek. 25:2; 28:20.

<sup>56</sup> Allen 1990: 104.

<sup>57</sup> This full title, that emphasises his literal and historical significance, occurs again in v. 3 and 30:21, 22; 31:2; 32:2.

'Pharaoh' (*Pr-ḥ3*) literally means 'the Great House' and refers to the king of Egypt. Traditionally, the regnal names of the monarch incorporated his divine and earthly roles, although the word 'Pharaoh' was not always part of this titulary. However, the occurrence of the title 'Pharaoh' in the Bible conforms to the final stages of its development as being synonymous with the 'king of Egypt'.<sup>58</sup> By means of the hostile orientation formula,<sup>59</sup> it is announced that Yahweh is against the king and all Egypt.

In biblical times Egypt consisted of Upper Egypt (in the south), which extended from the first cataract of the Nile north to the apex of the delta near modern Cairo, and Lower Egypt (in the north) which included the delta all the way to the Mediterranean.<sup>60</sup> The Egyptians referred to their country as *t3wy* 'Two Lands', reflecting the duplexity of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt, which was also known as 'The Black Land' on account of the contrast between the silt of the river bed and the red sand of the desert.<sup>61</sup> The Hebrew name מִצְרַיִם 'Egypt' is a form of a common Semitic word that refers to the country.<sup>62</sup>

Addressed to the king and his country, the indictment is one of *hybris*.<sup>63</sup> Gowan points out that while the Hebrew Bible understands the *hybris* of individuals to be absurd,<sup>64</sup> the *hybris* of nations is taken seriously. It 'is viewed as the real danger'<sup>65</sup> and, in contexts

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<sup>58</sup> Redford 2008d: 288.

<sup>59</sup> Hals 1989: 361. Cf. 26:3; 28:22; 30:22.

<sup>60</sup> Block 1998: 166.

<sup>61</sup> Block 1998: 166.

<sup>62</sup> EA refer to Egypt as *misri*, Ugaritic tablets as *msrm* and Assyro-Babylonian texts as *masur*. Block (1998: 166) suggests that the dual form (מִצְרַיִם 'Egypt') may reflect the duality of the 'Two Lands'. The English name 'Egypt' is not related to מִצְרַיִם, but is derived from the sacred name of Memphis (see further exegesis 30:13).

<sup>63</sup> Gowan 1975: 72.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. 'you are but a mortal and no god' (Ezek. 28:9).

<sup>65</sup> Gowan 1975: 113.

such as these, death is the most consistent motif that appears alongside *hybris*.<sup>66</sup> What follows proceeds with the use of figurative imagery in which Pharaoh is described as a great dragon (תנינים).

There is some scholarly debate that focuses on the term תנינים found here (vv. 2-6) and in Ezek. 32:2. Some consider the word to have a mythological reference (translated then as 'dragon');<sup>67</sup> others, however, contend it is demythologised (and so understand it as 'crocodile').<sup>68</sup> Day, who favours a mythological reading, identifies the creature as Leviathan or Rahab.<sup>69</sup> The תנין (a slightly different spelling of תנינים)<sup>70</sup> is a mythical monster (Isa. 51:9; Job 7:12) which Yahweh will defeat 'on that day' (Isa. 27:1).<sup>71</sup> The תנין is found in Isa. 51:9 (cf. 27:1) in parallel with נחש 'serpent' and with Rahab and Leviathan. The staff that changes into a serpent (נחש) in Exod. 4:3 (J) is also referred to as תנין in P (Exod. 7:8). Wakeman contends that 'Leviathan and Rahab are...different names for the same monster. Both are associated with the sea and are defeated by God when he establishes his sovereignty. *Tannin* is unlike Rahab and Leviathan in being more properly a generic term for the mythical monster than a personal name.'<sup>72</sup> Rahab appears in Isaiah: 'For Egypt's help is worthless and empty, therefore I have called her, "Rahab who sits still" (Isa. 30:7). The significance of the identification of Egypt with Rahab is explained by Wakeman: 'That Rahab should be Egypt makes sense, as Rahab is the proto-type of the defeated-by-God; it is only by God's defeat of Pharaoh that Israel

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<sup>66</sup> E.g. Ezek. 26; 27; 28; 29; 32; cf. Isa. 14.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. Boadt 1980: 26.

<sup>68</sup> E.g. Zimmerli 1983: 110.

<sup>69</sup> Day 1985: 93-95. For further discussion, see also Wakeman 1973: 68.

<sup>70</sup> Ronning 1997: 140.

<sup>71</sup> תנין is cognate with Ugaritic *tnn* 'dragon', a mythical power destroyed by Anath (*ANET* 1950: 137).

<sup>72</sup> Wakeman 1973: 79.

was created'.<sup>73</sup> The image of a water monster is also part of the creation myth in the Babylonian tradition where Tiamat is a female dragon of 'the deep' who is sliced in half by Marduk, so creating the heavens and the earth.<sup>74</sup> In the Ugaritic water monster myth, however, it is the establishment of order over chaos that is the primary theme.<sup>75</sup> A similar motif may be discerned in *Ezekiel's* use of the image. After the chaos caused by the sea dragon (Ezek. 32:2) and its destruction (vv. 3-13), order is established (vv. 14-15).

In contrast to those who discern mythological connotations in the word, some commentators prefer a naturalistic understanding of the term. For instance, Cooke maintains that 'mythological associations are foreign to the context',<sup>76</sup> with Hals contending that the imagery has been 'fully demythologised'.<sup>77</sup> Zimmerli is among those who favour this view, translating the term as 'crocodile' to reflect his demythologising interpretation.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the frequent reference to the Nile and Nile streams does strongly point to the likelihood of a crocodile being in view, although this imagery may well have been influenced by additional mythological overtones. What is more, the Nile region was a natural habitat for the crocodile, which accordingly had cultic associations as 'Sobek' in Egyptian worship.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Wakeman 1973: 60.

<sup>74</sup> Handy 2008: 546. For the Babylonian creation epic *Enūma eliš* see *ANET* 1950: 60-72.

<sup>75</sup> Boadt 1980: 27; Durlleser 2006: 208.

<sup>76</sup> Cooke 1936: 326.

<sup>77</sup> Hals 1989: 207.

<sup>78</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 110) finds a similar demythologising in Job 40:25; 41:1 with the reference to the לִיָּיתָן 'Leviathan'.

<sup>79</sup> Hart 1986: 201-02. Sobek is identified as the son of the goddess Neith, who personifies the primordial deep (Lichtheim 1973: 40).

A different view is proposed by Carvalho, who points out that a mythological reading hinges on an interpretation of the image in the light of texts other than *Ezekiel*.<sup>80</sup> Instead, Carvalho favours the translation of the term as ‘serpent’, which allows for the merging of Egyptian and West Semitic ideas. The serpent, contends Carvalho, is more prominent in Egyptian mythology than the crocodile, being seen perhaps most frequently in the Uraeus serpents worn by Pharaoh.<sup>81</sup> The serpent is also associated with the solar god, a representation, maintains Carvalho, that fits with *Ezekiel’s* use of the image in Ezek. 29 and again in chapter 32 where the death of the תַּנִּינִים accompanies the covering of the sun (Ezek. 32:7).<sup>82</sup>

Despite this debate, Darr observes that ‘Ezekiel’s crocodile metaphor is not complex... [I]t requires little more of his audience...than an awareness that he was not speaking nonsense (he did not actually think Pharaoh was a crocodile)’.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, there is no reason to insist that these ideas are mutually exclusive. It is more than likely that the prophet combined both motifs, imbuing the reptilian form with mythical connotations as the identification of the Egyptian god Sobek would seem to suggest. Indeed, cast in this light as a deity, Pharaoh thus challenges the sovereignty of Yahweh.<sup>84</sup>

Be it dragon or crocodile, this great monster lies indolently in his Nile streams.<sup>85</sup> The plural of יַאֲרֵ, the Egyptian term for ‘Nile’, refers to the Nile streams, although Wevers

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<sup>80</sup> Carvalho 2015: 211.

<sup>81</sup> Carvalho 2015: 213.

<sup>82</sup> Carvalho 2015: 213.

<sup>83</sup> Darr 2001: 1405.

<sup>84</sup> Lee 2016: 132.

<sup>85</sup> The root רָבַץ ‘lie down’ and תַּנִּינִים ‘dragon’ are found in close proximity in Isa. 35:7, although there תַּנִּינִים refers to ‘jackals’.

suggests that the singular should probably be read.<sup>86</sup> Be that as it may, the theme of *hybris* is evident in the image of the monster.<sup>87</sup> Pharaoh's claim to creative possession is a direct challenge to Yahweh's role as creator and sovereign of the universe.<sup>88</sup> What is more, Pharaoh's pretension to deity 'has particular potency in the light of developed Egyptian notions of divine kingship (cf. Isa. 31:3)'.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the *hybris* evident in the phrase, one should not imagine that Ezekiel actually heard Pharaoh say: 'My Nile is my own, I made it myself' (29:3). Davis argues that *Ezekiel's* rhetoric employs these creative illustrations, embedded in prophetic and divine speech to represent how the pagan thinks.<sup>90</sup> Davis points out that the following divine speech which mimics that of Pharaoh, referring to the Nile with the personal pronoun suffix 'your' four times (29:4, 5), highlights the absurdity of Pharaoh's claim.<sup>91</sup>

Such arrogance could not be ignored and so the rhetoric advances with a portrayal of Pharaoh's demise. In this, the prophet guides his audience, says Davis, by shattering the mythic imagery. Pharaoh as the dragon lurking in the Nile he claims to have made is summarily hauled out on a fishhook (v. 4).<sup>92</sup> The creature's jaws may well be the most powerful part of its body, yet it is here that Yahweh will display his own strength.<sup>93</sup> Durlleser identifies a sardonic pun in the Hebrew use of the root עָלָה 'go up' (v. 4) to

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<sup>86</sup> Wevers 1982: 160.

<sup>87</sup> Boadt 1980: 27.

<sup>88</sup> Sweeney 2013: 144.

<sup>89</sup> Joyce 2007: 181.

<sup>90</sup> Davis 1999: 231.

<sup>91</sup> Davis 1999: 231.

<sup>92</sup> Davis 1999: 232.

<sup>93</sup> Marzouk 2015: 183.

describe the capture of the dragon by hooks,<sup>94</sup> since the term can also mean ‘to exalt’.<sup>95</sup> However, instead of the monster’s exaltation, he is brought up out of the Nile and flung humiliated into the wilderness (v. 5).

Along with the dragon, fish, which cling to the dragon,<sup>96</sup> will be hauled out of the Nile (v. 4).<sup>97</sup> While some commentators understand the fish to be a reference to the Egyptians,<sup>98</sup> others refer the image to all Egypt’s allies.<sup>99</sup> However, as all the fish of the Nile are consumed with the dragon (v. 5), this suggests that they are to be identified with Egypt’s allies rather than the Egyptians, since it is the inhabitants of Egypt that will gain knowledge of Yahweh (v. 6). Either way, despite Pharaoh being addressed, and the narrative continuing in the second person singular, the content makes it plain that the people of Egypt are included in the punishment.<sup>100</sup>

Once fished out of the Nile, the entire catch will be hurled unceremoniously into the wilderness,<sup>101</sup> ‘the antithesis of the dragon’s watery home’.<sup>102</sup> The haul’s relocation to the ‘open field’ (v. 5; cf. 32:4) symbolically describes Yahweh’s abandonment<sup>103</sup> of

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<sup>94</sup> The destruction of the creature bears some similarity to the account of *Hist. II.70*, in which a crocodile is raised by hooks baited with pork.

<sup>95</sup> Durlesser 2006: 214.

<sup>96</sup> MT דבק ‘to cling’ conveys a sense that they are joined together till death do them part, rather like the leprosy that will cling (דבק) to Gehazi in 2 Kings 5:27.

<sup>97</sup> For an analogous ‘fishing’ metaphor, cf. Hab. 1:15.

<sup>98</sup> Durlesser 2006: 211.

<sup>99</sup> Galambush 2001: 553.

<sup>100</sup> Hals 1989: 207.

<sup>101</sup> Boadt (1980: 34) indicates that in the use of מדרב ‘wilderness’, connotations of being cast into Sheol may be perceived. He refers to Job 10:21-22 and Jer. 2:6, where the idea of Sheol and the wilderness are spoken of as places of deep darkness.

<sup>102</sup> Joyce 2007: 181.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. translation note נטש ‘abandon’, ‘hurl’ (v. 5).

Pharaoh, who is thrown there to fend for himself against the wrath of Yahweh.<sup>104</sup> There Pharaoh's body will undergo the ultimate indignity by forfeiting burial rites.<sup>105</sup> Instead of being gathered (cf. 11:17; 29:13),<sup>106</sup> he will become the beasts' and the birds' *entrée*, although as Kohn observes,<sup>107</sup> whereas the expression לֶאֱכֹלָה 'for food' is used in P to describe the manner and matter of Yahweh's provision,<sup>108</sup> in *Ezekiel* it is invariably employed metaphorically.<sup>109</sup> However, the series of first person verbs that are found in the preceding verses<sup>110</sup> point to Yahweh's determination and the inevitability of his enemy's defeat,<sup>111</sup> a determination that is expressed by the recognition formula (v. 6). Once devoured, the Egyptians will know that Yahweh is responsible for their king's demise.<sup>112</sup>

This recognition formula has been nominally expanded 'all the Egyptians',<sup>113</sup> and is one of the occasions that the nations will know that 'I am Yahweh' when Yahweh punishes them.<sup>114</sup> It is a passage that Zimmerli understands to proclaim global recognition of Yahweh.<sup>115</sup> Durllesser points out that the function of the formula is to declare that the oracle proclaims events that the prophet understands to be the self-revelation of

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<sup>104</sup> Kohn (2002: 65) remarks that the phrase is also found in P, where it is used in relation to various cleansing rites and seems to describe an area outside inhabited areas (Lev. 14:7; 17:5).

<sup>105</sup> Cooke 1936: 327; Marzouk 2015: 185.

<sup>106</sup> See translation note.

<sup>107</sup> Kohn 2002: 73-74.

<sup>108</sup> E.g. Gen. 1:29; Exod. 16:15.

<sup>109</sup> E.g. Ezek. 15:4; 23:27.

<sup>110</sup> וְנָתַתִּי 'I will put', וְהִרְבַּקְתִּי 'I will make cling', וְהִעַלִּיתִיךָ 'I will bring you up', וְנִטְשֶׁתִּיךָ 'I will fling you' (see translation note v. 5).

<sup>111</sup> Lee 2016: 134.

<sup>112</sup> Sweeney 2013: 145.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. 'all the trees of the field' (17:24), 'all flesh' (21:10 [5]).

<sup>114</sup> Category B2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>115</sup> Zimmerli 1982: 109.

Yahweh in history (although here history wears a mythic mantle), and that the purpose of this divine manifestation is that humans recognise and acknowledge it as such.<sup>116</sup> It is a comment that might be tempered by observing that there is no suggestion in *Ezekiel* that the nations will be 'converted', although there does seem to be an understanding in Ezek. 40-48 that individuals from the nations will be part of the new Israel (47:22-23).<sup>117</sup> However, the views of scholars differ with regard to the implications of the formula. Hayes suggests it expresses Yahweh's purposes for the nations,<sup>118</sup> whereas Raabe proposes that the revelatory significance of the recognition formula in the OAN is an attempt to reveal Yahweh to the nations as well as to Israel.<sup>119</sup> Raabe observes a certain logic to the application of the recognition formula. The nations have acted contemptuously towards Israel and have disregarded Yahweh's sovereignty. Consequently, when the nations experience Yahweh's judgement they will know that it is Yahweh who punished them and so will discover from their own experience that Yahweh is the one who deserves to be treated as God.<sup>120</sup> In addition, says Raabe, divine judgement on the nations 'will serve Israel's restoration and elicit Israel's exclusive loyalty to Yahweh'.<sup>121</sup> It is a notion that adds some weight to my argument, which contends that the removal of the nations rhetorically expiates the exiles' guilt of *hybris*, and this nexus is where the relationship between divine judgement on the nations and Israel's restoration may be discerned. That said, the oracles do 'reveal the universal reach of YHWH's power'.<sup>122</sup> In this way, 'Ezekiel asserts that the events do not constitute

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<sup>116</sup> Durlleser 2006: 216.

<sup>117</sup> Even the old Israel was not defined by nationality (16:3).

<sup>118</sup> Hayes 1964: 299.

<sup>119</sup> Raabe 2010: 202.

<sup>120</sup> Raabe 2010: 202. Similarly, Chae (2015: 169) believes that '[a]t the center of the OAN tradition is Israel's un-renounceable theology of Yahweh's kingship'.

<sup>121</sup> Raabe 2010: 203.

<sup>122</sup> Galambush 2001: 551.

meaningless chaos, but rather the just punishment of a sinful people by their powerful God'.<sup>123</sup>

Whereas in the first oracle (29:2-6a) the futility of *hybris* against Yahweh is exposed,<sup>124</sup> in the second (vv. 6b-9a) 'what is being pilloried is the unreliability of any alliance with Egypt'.<sup>125</sup> Zimmerli suggests that these verses are an expansion of the previous judgement oracle (29:2-6a), and here as there, accusation (vv. 6b-7) is followed by judgement (vv. 8-9a).<sup>126</sup> However, Gowan argues that this is the last oracle of an original collection of seven 'reason-announcement type' of oracles that existed,<sup>127</sup> which have been interrupted by the additional oracles against Tyre included there to keep them in one place.<sup>128</sup> Gowan observes that all seven of these oracles express the same point, that the response to the fall of Jerusalem is the basis for judgement against the nations.<sup>129</sup>

The image of the broken reed is one, contends Lee, that captures Israel's political and military condition.<sup>130</sup> The date given in Ezek. 29:1 (January 587 BCE) places this oracle in the aftermath of Pharaoh Hophra's unsuccessful attempt to relieve Jerusalem from Nebuchadrezzar's siege. Israel had relied on Egypt for support but the reed had broken under the dominance of Babylonian aggression. Accordingly, Pharaoh is indicted for

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<sup>123</sup> Joyce 2010: 142.

<sup>124</sup> Renz 1999: 94.

<sup>125</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 404.

<sup>126</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 112.

<sup>127</sup> Ezek. 25:3-6; 6-7; 8-11; 12-14; 15-17; 26:2-6; 29:6-9.

<sup>128</sup> Gowan 1975: 72.

<sup>129</sup> Gowan 1975: 72.

<sup>130</sup> Lee 2016: 145.

being a 'staff of reed'.<sup>131</sup> While the reeds of the Nile could be bundled together to provide a stable floating platform,<sup>132</sup> a single hollow reed is weak and of no use as a supporting staff since it will splinter under the weight of a person (cf. 2 Kings 18:21; Isa. 36:6). The house of Israel had failed to lean on Yahweh (cf. Isa. 10:20; Ps. 23:4; Prov. 3:5) but rather had been tempted and led astray by Egypt.<sup>133</sup> Israel had relied on the misleading support of Pharaoh who had failed them, inflicting a crushing wound to the nation. The disabling nature of this experience is emphasised here (v. 7) by the double presentation of reliance ('they grasped you'; 'they leaned on you').

At this point, a brief excursus is called for. The Hebrew word תפס 'grasp', 'seize' is the same term used in *Ezekiel* to describe the action of Yahweh to take hold (תפס) of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from him by their idols (Ezek. 14:5). In this passage, certain elders of Israel come to the prophet. Yahweh tells Ezekiel that these men have taken their idols into their hearts and placed their iniquity before them as a stumbling block.<sup>134</sup> This striking phrase echoes that used to describe the silver and gold that cannot feed or save the people on the day of the wrath of Yahweh (7:19).<sup>135</sup> There, the people put their trust in their wealth, mistaking it for the key to life.<sup>136</sup> To make matters worse, these idols have come from the temple, the 'beautiful ornament in which they took pride' (v. 20).<sup>137</sup> Moreover, instead of being a sign directing the people to

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<sup>131</sup> The Egyptian papyrus reed is probably the source of the imagery, which is evident elsewhere in the ANE (*ANET* 1950: 206).

<sup>132</sup> See McGrail 2001: 16.

<sup>133</sup> A more detailed description of this treachery is found in Ezek. 17.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. 18:30; 44:12.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Zeph. 1:18.

<sup>136</sup> Block 1997: 264.

<sup>137</sup> The source of pride in this phrase could be ornaments made from the gold and silver of v. 19, or, as is more likely, the proud ornament is the temple which is handed by Yahweh to foreigners and

Yahweh, the temple itself had become a stumbling block, the pride of their power and their heart's desire (cf. 24:21). Their pride in the sign of Yahweh's presence had made them oblivious to the presence of Yahweh himself—their pride had been their downfall. In this way, *Ezekiel* shows that *hybris* has become the object of Yahweh's wrath and a statement follows announcing that he will profane the temple (7:21; 24:21).

This notion of the temple as a stumbling block might inform an understanding of the equivocal phrase 'yet I have been a sanctuary to them in some measure' (11:16). The term מִקְדָּשׁ 'sanctuary' normally refers to the temple as a place of encounter with Yahweh;<sup>138</sup> now, though, in this revolutionary statement,<sup>139</sup> Yahweh promises to be on foreign soil what the temple had been in Jerusalem. Intriguingly, though, it will be in 'some measure'.

The word מִזַּעַט 'something reduced' ('some measure')<sup>140</sup> may be understood in a number of ways. Block points out that this term functions ambiguously as a minimising modifier.<sup>141</sup> Adverbially, it could be understood temporally, 'for a little while' (so NRSV), referring perhaps to the exile, or it may be understood qualitatively, to mean 'in a limited way'. It could also, as an adjective, be translated 'little', or 'few'.

However, another hermeneutical possibility exists. The notion that Yahweh himself will become a sanctuary may well have been met with some consternation. This phrase

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destroyed in v. 21. This interpretation makes sense when compared to 24:21, which describes the temple as the pride of the people's power.

<sup>138</sup> Joyce 2007: 113.

<sup>139</sup> Block 1997: 349.

<sup>140</sup> *DCH* 2001: 392.

<sup>141</sup> Block 1997: 350.

seems to suggest that a direct encounter with Yahweh would be possible without the temple and cult. If so, this concept is likely to have offended the people whose national sense of identity was so closely associated with the accoutrements of their religion; the idea is all the more radical since the prophet himself was a priest. As a sign, the sanctuary had failed to direct people to Yahweh and had become a stumbling block in the process. But by becoming a sanctuary in some measure, the barrier to an encounter with the divine presence is removed by Yahweh. Moreover, by destroying the temple, Yahweh compelled the people to swallow their pride if they were to accept this invitation into his presence. Thus, in this reading, the stumbling block itself is endued with the capacity to become a place of transformation at which the presence of Yahweh may be encountered. A similar idea is found in Isa. 8:14, where it is said that Yahweh will become a sanctuary (מִקְדָּשׁ) and a stumbling block (מִכְשׁוֹל). Perhaps it is this that accounts for Yahweh being a sanctuary in 'some measure'. For all that, *Ezekiel* presents an elegant theological solution for the destruction of the temple cult and the iniquity of the people. It is the contention in this thesis that this elegant theological solution is developed further by the expiatory ruse I have suggested may be discerned in the OAN.

Returning to my initial interest (Ezek. 14:5), a similar theme of unmerited condescension on the part of Yahweh might be discerned. Even though the barrier of idolatry has effectively estranged the house of Israel from Yahweh (v. 5; cf. v. 7), Yahweh agrees to be consulted (v. 4) so that he may seize (v. 5) their hearts. This idea is also evident immediately after the statement that Yahweh had been a sanctuary in some measure (11:16), where it seems to be related to Yahweh's announcement that he will gather the people and restore them to the land (v. 17). There he will remove their idolatrous hearts of stone and give them hearts of flesh, and along with that, the bestowal of a new spirit

that will guide and show the people how to live.<sup>142</sup> This life that Yahweh envisions for his people is one of relationship in which he says that they shall be his people and he shall be their God (11:18-20; cf. 36:24-28).<sup>143</sup>

Needless to say however, even though the divine cardiac surgeon promises the gift of a new heart to the people, it still needs to be received by them. *Ezekiel* seems to be all too aware that however deft the surgeon may be, the sad possibility exists that the patient might reject the donated organ and with it all hope of life. Thus, *Ezekiel* is at pains to encourage the exiles to grasp the paradoxical nature of Yahweh's gift of life. Surrendering their old idolatrous hearts of stone makes way for them to embark on a new life with Yahweh as his people (11:20; 36:28). Indeed, since this gift of life involved restoration to the land (11:17; 36:24), one might imagine that, in a sense, the Promised Land was, for *Ezekiel*, exemplified in the image of the hearts of flesh. Consequently, the prophet's primary mission is one of persuasion.

This mission is nowhere more apparent than in the OAN, especially in the exegesis of the current verse (29:7), where the prophet's polemic is aimed at the exiles' propensity to idolise Egypt: 'they grasped you', 'they leaned on you'. *Ezekiel* is careful to underline the crippling effect which ensues: 'you split and crushed their entire shoulder', 'you broke and made all their loins unsteady'. Hence, the details of this brief excursus shed light on the perspective of Joyce, who remarks, 'to step into the theological perspective of *Ezekiel* is to enter a world where the issue of divine identity is at the centre and everything else is treated in a necessarily derivative fashion'.<sup>144</sup> And so it can be affirmed

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<sup>142</sup> Markter 2013: 528.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. 28:26 exegesis.

<sup>144</sup> Joyce 2010: 151.

that the staff of reed metaphor succinctly functions to assert that Yahweh alone must be the ultimate object of Israel's faith and trust.<sup>145</sup>

Thus, as can be seen from this passage alone, it is possible to construe the nature of Pharaoh's guilt in terms of his failure to provide adequate support for Yahweh's people against the Babylonians. However, when Egypt's involvement is surveyed from the vantage point of Ezek. 17, it may be discerned that the issue for *Ezekiel* is that Egypt had interfered with Yahweh's purposes. By attempting to prevent his agent Nebuchadrezzar from delivering Yahweh's judgement on Israel (17:17), Pharaoh and all of Egypt have incurred the wrath of Yahweh. Since *Ezekiel* proposes that exile is but a step on the journey to the Promised Land (20:34), Egypt's help was viewed as an obstacle that prevented Israel reaching this goal.<sup>146</sup>

The removal of this obstacle is typically described with the idioms 'I will bring a sword'<sup>147</sup> and 'cut off from you man and beast' (v. 8).<sup>148</sup> Underlined by the basic recognition formula (v. 9a),<sup>149</sup> this divine activity ensures that Egypt will become a desolate waste. Strong argues that the recognition formula in the oracles against Egypt is employed to highlight that the exile is part of the process of restoring Israel to the land, thus vindicating Yahweh's presence in the world of the nations.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, according to Strong, since Judah relied on an alliance with Egypt, the humiliation of Egypt allows

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<sup>145</sup> Darr 2001: 1408.

<sup>146</sup> Strong 1993: 234.

<sup>147</sup> Ezek. 6:3; 11:8; 14:17; 33:2 and elsewhere only Lev. 26:25. Boadt (1980: 40) observes the *topos* of a sword is found 84 times in *Ezekiel*.

<sup>148</sup> Ezek. 14:13, 17, 19, 21.

<sup>149</sup> Category A3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>150</sup> Strong 1993: 41.

these oracles to function as indirect oracles of judgement against Israel<sup>151</sup>—although I might add the detail previously suggested, that they function in this way because it is the guilt of *Israel's hybris* that is projected onto the nation. Either way, the Egyptians who live to tell the tale will recognise that Yahweh's power was the cause of their destruction.

The following section (29:9b-16) summarises and develops what has gone before. Surprisingly, it also includes the suggestion of a degree of restoration for Egypt. Many critics, following LXX, emend MT's third person 'because he said the Nile is mine' for second person here (v. 9b). Even though MT may be influenced by v. 3, it should be remembered that Ezekiel did not actually address Pharaoh in this way; rather, the oracle is a masterly exercise in prophetic rhetoric. Unlike v. 3, though, the imagery of the monstrous dragon is not evoked, nor is Pharaoh dignified with acknowledgment. The indictment of *hybris*, introduced by לְכֵן 'because', is however cast in similar terms. Hence Egypt must fall, since here too her efforts at self-assertion can only be opposition to Yahweh's plan.<sup>152</sup> And so the clause advances with the standard לְכֵן 'therefore', which heralds the ensuing judgement.

The challenge to a duel formula (v. 10) once again establishes Yahweh's direct involvement that now wreaks havoc on the dominion the king claimed was his own, the Nile itself, the source of Pharaoh's wealth and power. As Egypt falls, the country becomes parched wastes of desolation as it is reclaimed by the desert. Migdol (v. 10)<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Strong 1993: 41.

<sup>152</sup> Hals 1989: 205.

<sup>153</sup> The name Migdol is also cited in Exod. 14:2; Num. 33:7, but they may not refer to the same place (Lott 2008: 822).

is thought to have been located at the north of the eastern delta region.<sup>154</sup> The word is probably Canaanite in origin and is found as an Egyptian loanword meaning ‘tower’ or ‘fortress’. It is found as a place name at military installations on the Egyptian borders.<sup>155</sup> Syene (v. 10), modern Aswan, situated just above the Nile’s first waterfall, was the southern limit of Egypt beyond which was Cush. The Old Testament writers were aware of the proximity between Egypt and Cush, often pairing the two countries (Isa. 20:3-4; Ezek. 29:10; 30:4). LXX usually translates MT כוש (Cush) as Αιθιοπια ‘Ethiopia’.<sup>156</sup> From the fourth cataract of the Nile in the far south of Egypt, the land of Cush extended into east-central Africa, although its southern boundaries were uncertain.<sup>157</sup> The relationship between Migdol and Syene (cf. Ezek. 30:6) as geographical extremes<sup>158</sup> may be perceived in the analogous ‘from Dan to Beersheba’ (1 Sam. 3:20).<sup>159</sup> Its application as an ‘inclusive formula’<sup>160</sup> here indicates a total devastation of the whole of Egypt.

The devastating desolation is described here in stereotypical language<sup>161</sup> that depicts the termination of normal creaturely activity in the land (v. 11). According to Kohn, the disclosure that Egypt’s judgement will last forty years (v. 11) is a reversed, but apparently direct, allusion to P. In Ezek. 29:12-13 the Egyptians spend forty years in exile while in P it is Israel that does so.<sup>162</sup> While recalling the wilderness wandering of

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<sup>154</sup> Lott 2008: 822. Migdol has been identified as possibly being Tell el-Her or Tell el-Maskhuta and while it is mentioned in the Tell el-Amarna letters no precise location is given.

<sup>155</sup> Lott 2008: 822.

<sup>156</sup> E.g. Ezek. 29:10.

<sup>157</sup> R. H. Smith 2008: 665.

<sup>158</sup> Lott 2008: 822.

<sup>159</sup> Wevers 1982: 161.

<sup>160</sup> Joyce 2007: 181.

<sup>161</sup> E.g. ‘no foot of man and beast’. For merismic phrases in *Ezekiel*, cf. 5:14; 14:15; 33:28; 36:34.

<sup>162</sup> Kohn 2002: 77; cf. Tuell 2009: 205; Sweeney 2013: 145.

Israel (Num. 14:33-44; cf. Ezek. 4:6), forty years is also the same duration as the judgement pronounced against Judah (Ezek. 3:6) as well as being the number of years understood to be one generation (Num. 14:33; Judg. 3:11).

Hyperbole is piled onto hyperbole as the country and cities are described as becoming desolate and waste (v. 12; cf. 25:13; 30:7, 12) as divine judgement rages on.<sup>163</sup> The extent of the devastation is emphasised by its duration of forty years (v. 12), during which time the Egyptians will be exiled from their land.

Observing that the phrase 'scattered among the nations'<sup>164</sup> is found ten times in *Ezekiel*, Kohn contends that its usage is always in relation to the dispersion of Israel by Yahweh.<sup>165</sup> Certainly, the threat of dispersion and scattering is levelled at the house of Israel (22:15; cf. 11:16); here, though (29:12; cf. 30:23, 26), it is Egypt that is the subject of dispersion. Of all the nations mentioned in *Ezekiel*, only Egypt's and Israel's punishment are described in these terms. Examples such as this persuade Lee to contend that the language found in the oracles against Egypt, which paraphrases that found in the oracles against Israel in the first part of the book, is to draw parallels between the two.<sup>166</sup> I would add my suggestion that the purpose of these parallels is to illustrate the failures of Israel by projecting them onto the nations in order to highlight the invitation, implicit in the recognition formula, to respond to Yahweh through the experiential knowledge of his presence in their lives of exile.

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<sup>163</sup> Kohn (2002: 38) observes that the term *הרבה* 'desolation' refers to destruction caused by Yahweh; it is used in P in the same way. E.g. Lev. 26:31. The root is also found in 29:10; see exegesis.

<sup>164</sup> Or 'scattered among all the peoples'.

<sup>165</sup> Kohn 2002: 88.

<sup>166</sup> Lee 2016: 171.

The following announcement, introduced by a messenger formula (v. 13),<sup>167</sup> that Egypt will be gathered is somewhat surprising after the declaration of comprehensive desolation. This is especially so since no indication of what might happen to Judah after forty years is given in Ezek. 4:8.<sup>168</sup> Here Vogels finds a similarity between the restoration of Egypt (29:14) and that of Israel.<sup>169</sup> This is not unreasonable; after all, both occur after a time of purification during forty years of exile. However, the reason why Egypt is singled out from the other nations for this remarkable dispensation is unclear; perhaps it is recollection of the Law which stipulates the requirement of hospitality, arising from the time when Israel resided in Egypt (Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:34). Alternatively, the prophetic influence of Isaiah may be perceived: 'Yahweh will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to Yahweh, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them' (Isa. 19:22). More likely is Greenberg's suggestion, that, unlike the other Palestinian neighbours who rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem, and unlike the king of Tyre's claim to divinity, Egypt was spared annihilation at the hand of Yahweh on account of her being an ally (albeit a failed one) of his people.<sup>170</sup> However, in the other oracles of restoration in *Ezekiel*,<sup>171</sup> the purpose of restoration, as has been seen, is the recovery of the relationship between Yahweh and his people when they receive the gift of a new heart and spirit (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). As Yahweh's holiness is witnessed by the nations (20:41), so Israel will be led by Yahweh (34:13) and the covenantal relationship between them will be recognised (37:21-23). This degree of restoration is not envisaged for Egypt or the other nations in *Ezekiel*. Indeed, Egypt's restoration refers to a re-orientation of the superpower's integrity and hence, as Joyce observes, it amounts in fact to a

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<sup>167</sup> Hals 1989: 361.

<sup>168</sup> Restoration of Israel is foreseen, though (11:17; 20:34, 41; 28:25). In this, perhaps *Ezekiel's* somewhat fluid use of the terms, Israel and Judah, might be discerned.

<sup>169</sup> Vogels 1972: 478.

<sup>170</sup> Greenberg 1997: 607.

<sup>171</sup> Ezek. 11:17; 20:41; 28:25-26; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21-34.

humiliation.<sup>172</sup> This being the case, the gathering of the Egyptians has less in common with the restoration of Israel and more in common with the way Israel was gathered to smelt out the dross (22:20).

The location of Pathros, a name which defines a region rather than a city, between Cairo (Memphis) and Aswan is supported by the Egyptian name for the area *p'-t'-rs(y)* meaning 'the south land'.<sup>173</sup> Relocated there from the internationally accessible platform on the Nile Delta, Pharaoh's country will become the lowliest of kingdoms (vv. 14, 15). Marzouk argues that this relocation establishes an ideal geopolitical distance between the two nations.<sup>174</sup> Thus, the arrogance expressed in vv. 3, 9 is rewarded with the poetically just reprisal of humiliating debasement.<sup>175</sup> However, while Egypt will never rule the nations again, irony is observed by Carvalho in the reinstatement of Egypt as the lowliest nation (Ezek. 29) which then rules again, but in the lowliest of places, Sheol (Ezek. 32).<sup>176</sup>

Their newly acquired impotence ensures that potential reliance on Egypt will never again be a realistic possibility. Egypt will never be the source of temptation to Israel again (v. 16).<sup>177</sup> Renz observes that this 'shows most clearly the rationale behind the oracles against Egypt'.<sup>178</sup> In a similar vein, Greenberg suggests that this verse (v. 16) may be a specific application of Psalm 40:5 (4), 'Blessed are those who make Yahweh their

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<sup>172</sup> Joyce 1989: 154; cf. Allen (1990: 109), who indicates that the redactional role is one of judgement.

<sup>173</sup> Baker 2008b: 178.

<sup>174</sup> Marzouk 2015: 212. Marzouk (2015: 214) contends that the political minimisation of Egypt is connoted by the term שפל 'low' (cf. 17:14, 24).

<sup>175</sup> Joyce 2007: 182.

<sup>176</sup> Carvalho 2015: 218.

<sup>177</sup> Renz 1999: 94.

<sup>178</sup> Renz 1999: 98; cf. Tuell 2009: 205.

confidence and do not put their trust in the arrogant (רַהֲבִים), since, as Greenberg points out, Rahab is associated with the הַנִּיִּים (Ezek. 29:3; cf. Isa. 51:9) and Egypt is symbolised by Rahab in Psalm 87:4.<sup>179</sup> Boadt similarly observes the relationship between this motif of trusting Yahweh and that expressed elsewhere by the prophets, who constantly warn against relying on Egypt.<sup>180</sup>

The text, however, can be read in a number of ways. Boadt translates the verse: 'No longer will it be an object of trust for the house of Israel but it will be a reminder of iniquity<sup>181</sup> when they turned to follow them'.<sup>182</sup> According to this reading, the humiliation of Egypt serves as a constant reminder that Israel was beguiled by the false trust offered by Egypt. However, as Lee observes,<sup>183</sup> the term מִבְּטָח 'an object of trust' lies in apposition to the *hiph.* participle מִזְכִּיר 'cause to remember', and she suggests that the former probably qualifies the latter. Thus, her translation reads: 'No longer will it serve the house of Israel as an object of trust, a reminder of iniquity when they turned to them'. According to this reading, with the Egyptians out of the way, Israel would be less likely to succumb to similar temptation in the future. It is clearly not straightforward. Indeed, the English translations offer a variety of renditions;<sup>184</sup> all, however, fracture the apposition of the terms מִבְּטָח and מִזְכִּיר by inserting 'to the house of Israel'.<sup>185</sup> By avoiding this, Lee's translation is less ambiguous. However, what Lee does not suggest

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<sup>179</sup> Greenberg 1997: 607.

<sup>180</sup> Boadt 1980: 48. Cf. Isa 30:7 20:5; 36:6; Jer. 37:5-10; 43:8-13; 44:29; 46:25.

<sup>181</sup> Kohn (2002: 71) observes that the phrase מִזְכִּיר/מִזְכָּרָה עֵין 'reminder of iniquity' is a concept found here and once in P (Num. 5:15) but nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>182</sup> Boadt 1980: 48. Unlike the confidence gained in the fear of Yahweh (Prov. 14:26).

<sup>183</sup> This is another instance where I had similarly but independently observed the same anomaly as Lee (cf. 25:4), although here she is influenced by Marzouk 2015: 215.

<sup>184</sup> NKJV, NIV reflect Boadt's translation; NRSV, JPS are more in line with Lee.

<sup>185</sup> So NRSV, JPS, NKJV, NIV, ESV.

is the possibility that the removal of Egypt as an object of trust to the south, and with it the constant reminder of Israel's misjudgement, might make sense on two levels. First, the principle of 'out-of-sight-out-of-mind' comes in to play, and second, it is in line with Yahweh's own dealings with iniquity. For instance, the Psalmist reminds his audience 'as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us' (Ps. 103:12). Perhaps there, as in *Ezekiel*, a dual purpose can be perceived. If these oracles are read as I suggest, projecting the guilt of the exiles onto the nations whose removal represents the notion of expiation, then might this idea be as much for Yahweh as it is for his people? Not only does the removal of impurity leave open a possible future of restoration, with the memory of past transgressions no longer haunting the now purified people, but this removal means that Yahweh is no longer reminded of his people's infidelity. Perhaps even God finds it helpful to forgive *and* to forget. Be that as it may, however the phrase 'a reminder of iniquity' is read, it shows, as Lapsley perceptively observes, that 'the very capacity to experience shame constitutes a salvific act by Yahweh—it is a gift from God'.<sup>186</sup>

The oracle concludes with one of the five recognition formulae (v. 16)<sup>187</sup> that are nominally expanded with the phrase יהוה אדני 'the Lord Yahweh'.<sup>188</sup> While this is undoubtedly emphatic, with some finding a universalist note which envisions salvation for Egypt,<sup>189</sup> the subject of ידע 'know' could be Egypt or Israel.<sup>190</sup> If read with Egypt as the subject, the formula does not indicate the establishment of a covenant between

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<sup>186</sup> Lapsley 2000: 145. The theme of shame is found at 16:52, 54, 61, 63; 36:32 (cf. 7:18; 43:10-11; 44:13). The related idea of self-loathing is found at 6:9; 20:43; 36:31 (Joyce 2010: 149). For shame in *Ezekiel*, see e.g. Odell 1992; Lapsley 2000.

<sup>187</sup> Category B2 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Ezek. 13:9; 23:49; 24:24 (cf. p. 74); 28:24.

<sup>189</sup> E.g. Vogels 1972: 482-83; Blenkinsopp 1990: 131.

<sup>190</sup> Joyce 2007: 182.

Egypt and Yahweh,<sup>191</sup> but rather suggests that Egypt will acknowledge Yahweh's supremacy.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, if the phrase refers to Israel, it acts as a warning, reminding the exiles of the perils of failing to put their trust wholeheartedly in Yahweh.<sup>193</sup>

### 5.2.3 Summary

The recognition formula in this oracle emphasises that Yahweh acts in history, although in this instance, history wears a mythic mantle. Although it is not anticipated that the nations will be converted, they will, however, recognise the sovereignty of Yahweh. The idea that judgement on the nations serves Israel's restoration was developed and I noted that if these oracles do project the exiles' guilt, then its removal with the destruction of the nations makes sense at a number of points in the narrative. I suggested that the recognition formula marks the theological nexus where the relationship between divine judgement on the nations and Israel's restoration may be discerned. This underlines the universal reach of Yahweh and vindicates him. The unreliability of Egypt was highlighted, and in an excursus, I discussed the idea of Yahweh grasping the hearts of Israel estranged by idolatry. It was seen that pride had been their downfall but that Yahweh had promised to be on foreign soil what the temple had been in Jerusalem. With Yahweh himself as a sanctuary, an elegant theological solution for both the destruction of the temple cult and the iniquity of the people is presented. It is the contention here that this elegant theological solution is developed further by the expiatory ruse that I have suggested may be discerned in the OAN.

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<sup>191</sup> Contra Eichrodt 1970: 406; Zimmerli 1982: 88.

<sup>192</sup> Galambush 2001: 536.

<sup>193</sup> Lee 2016; cf. Strong 1995: 130.

### 5.3 Ezek. 29:17-21

#### 5.3.1 Translation

17 In the twenty-seventh year, on the first day of the first month,<sup>194</sup> the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

18 ‘Son of Man, Nebuchadrezzar<sup>195</sup> king of Babylon made his army work hard against<sup>196</sup> Tyre. Every head was made bald and every shoulder rubbed raw, yet there were no wages for him nor for his army from Tyre for the work which he rendered against her.

19 Therefore,<sup>197</sup> thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>198</sup> “Behold, I am giving the land of Egypt to Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon and he shall carry off her wealth<sup>199</sup> and despoil her and plunder<sup>200</sup> her and she shall be the wages for his army.

20 As his payment which he worked for,<sup>201</sup> I will give him the land of Egypt, because they worked for me”,<sup>202</sup> declares the Lord Yahweh.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> That is 26 April 571 BCE (Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 28).

<sup>195</sup> MT נְבוּכַדְרֶעֶזַר with ך is closer to the Babylonian *nabû-kudurri-ušur* ‘May Nabu protect the son’ and is found only in Ezek. 26:7; 29:18, 19; 30:10 and Jer. 21:2-25:9; 29:21-52:30. Elsewhere in Hebrew Bible ך has been emended to ן.

<sup>196</sup> MT אֶל-עַל, see Ezek. 25:3 translation note.

<sup>197</sup> לְכֵן omitted in LXX.

<sup>198</sup> LXX αὐτός.

<sup>199</sup> MT וְנִשָּׂא הַמְּנוּחָה ‘he shall carry off her pomp’ not witnessed in LXX. On the term הַמְּנוּחָה, see exegesis.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Deut. 20:14 for שָׁלַל ‘spoil’ and בָּזַז ‘plunder’ as booty given by Yahweh.

<sup>201</sup> MT בָּהּ, lit. ‘with/in it’ (‘for which’), refers to ‘his payment’. However, in LXX the suffix is construed as referring to Tyre: ἐπὶ Τύρον.

<sup>202</sup> MT אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי ‘because they worked for me’, unattested in LXX. אֲשֶׁר can mean ‘because’ (*DCH* 1993: 432 §4c).

<sup>203</sup> LXX αὐτός.

21 “On that day I will cause a horn to sprout<sup>204</sup> for the house of Israel<sup>205</sup> and I will open your<sup>206</sup> mouth<sup>207</sup> among them and they shall know that I am Yahweh.”

### 5.3.2 Exegesis

These verses constitute the shortest of *Ezekiel's* oracles against Egypt. Even so, most of the formulaic elements found in *Ezekiel's* oracles appear here.<sup>208</sup> Opening with a date notice that disrupts the chronology by separating the previous oracle dated January 587 BCE (29:1-16) and the one dated April 587 BCE (30:20-26) which follows, the narrative proceeds with a prophetic word formula. There follows a statement regarding Nebuchadrezzar's defeat of Tyre, that includes the divine response introduced by לכן 'therefore' and then a messenger formula, and a prophetic utterance formula marks the transition into an oracle of salvation for the people of Israel. A recognition formula concludes the chapter.

The oracle is peculiar since it depends on the inaccuracy of an earlier oracle that predicted the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadrezzar (26:7-14).<sup>209</sup> Even though Nebuchadrezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years,<sup>210</sup> he was unable to overthrow the city. By way of compensation, Egypt is offered to Babylon as payment for services rendered to Yahweh during the failed siege against Tyre (29:20). The prediction of Nebuchadrezzar's conquest of Egypt (30:10, 24ff) accounts for the insertion of this oracle in the corpus of oracles against Egypt. Despite this concession, however, there

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<sup>204</sup> MT אצמייה 'I will cause to sprout', LXX ἀνατελει 'it [a horn] shall sprout'.

<sup>205</sup> LXX παντὶ τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραηλ 'the whole house of Israel'.

<sup>206</sup> MT ולך m.s., i.e. the prophet, who is vindicated (Boadt 1980: 52; Greenberg 1997: 616).

<sup>207</sup> The phrase פתחון פה 'opening of the mouth' also occurs at 16:63.

<sup>208</sup> Block 1998: 146.

<sup>209</sup> Galambush 2001: 554.

<sup>210</sup> *Ant.* X.11.1.

are no records of a victory even though Nebuchadrezzar did invade Egypt.<sup>211</sup> Even so, this short oracle that is considered to be ‘a correction from the prophet’s hand’<sup>212</sup> ‘is unexpectedly interesting because of the light it sheds on the nature of prophecy’.<sup>213</sup>

The date notice which places the oracle on the 26 April 571 BCE<sup>214</sup> is the latest date in the book, apart from the much-debated one with which the prophecy begins (Ezek. 1:1),<sup>215</sup> even coming after the final temple vision (40:1). Following the prophetic word formula, the prophet is addressed in customary fashion as בן אדם ‘son of man’ (v. 18). However, rather than the typical instruction to prophesy to a specific addressee, the details of the Babylonian army’s ill-fated assault on Tyre are portrayed. For Block, this suggests that the oracle may have been primarily intended for Ezekiel himself. Perhaps the lack of fulfilment of Ezekiel’s former oracles against Tyre (26:1-28:19) presented more of a challenge to the prophet than it did to his exilic audience.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> *ANET* 1950: 308.

<sup>212</sup> Tuell 2009: 206; Block 1998: 146.

<sup>213</sup> Clements 1996: 134.

<sup>214</sup> Following Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 28.

<sup>215</sup> Joyce 2007: 182. For a summary of that argument, see Joyce 2007: 65-66.

<sup>216</sup> Block (1998: 147-48) lists seven solutions that have been proposed regarding the unfulfilled oracles against Tyre: 1) The contradiction has been denied (Hengstenberg 1869: 260-61); 2) Tyre was conquered, but when Nebuchadrezzar stormed the island he found it abandoned and all the booty removed (Ewald 1875: 154, following Jerome); 3) It is regarded as an editorial issue—an attempt to correct an earlier prophetic error (Garscha 1974: 173); 4) Some believe Ezekiel was wrong in his earlier predictions but is to be commended for his honesty (Kraetzschmar 1900: 222); 5) The transference to Egypt of the threat to Tyre has been dubbed a ‘cynical performance’ (Born 1954: 182); 6) The unfulfilled prophecy is adapted to incorporate that failure into it—prediction after the event (Carroll 1979: 175); 7) Prophetic utterances themselves did not possess inherent power but it was the divine speaker who had the power to fulfil the word (Friebel 1999: 167).

The description of the Tyrian siege proceeds with the task master Nebuchadrezzar making his army work hard against the city (v. 18). The imagery of the soldiers' heads made bald may have been influenced by that found in Isaiah (Isa. 7:20; 15:2; cf. Ezek. 5:1).<sup>217</sup> The terms קָרָה 'bald' and ראש 'head' only appear together twice in *Ezekiel* (7:18; 29:18) and twice in P (Lev. 13:40; 21:5).<sup>218</sup> However, whereas in Ezek. 7:18 baldness is associated with mourning, here (29:18) the Babylonian siege is said to have had the effect of wearing every head bald as well as rubbing shoulders raw.<sup>219</sup> These shoulder injuries may have been caused by carrying the heavy loads required to build ramps and fortifications in the siege.<sup>220</sup>

Despite his efforts and Ezekiel's prediction to the contrary, Nebuchadrezzar failed to secure a victory against Tyre, hence there were no wages for him or his army (v. 18). Thus, Ezekiel's prophecy that Tyre would be decimated (26:3-14) was not fulfilled. Greenberg suggests that in exchange for surrendering to the Babylonians, Tyre may have been exempted from the plundering Ezekiel predicted (26:5). However, precise details of the circumstances in which the siege came to an end have not survived. Records do exist, though, which speak of the on-going existence of the king of Tyre,<sup>221</sup> which suggests that Tyre's destruction was not the totality predicted (26:7).<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 172 and 1983: 119.

<sup>218</sup> See Kohn 2002: 62-62.

<sup>219</sup> For MT מִרַט 'make smooth', i.e. 'rubbed raw', cf. Yahweh's polished sword (21:16 [11]).

<sup>220</sup> While some commentators (Block 1998: 150) assume the siege work to be the cause of these injuries, others suggest they are the consequence of preliminary causeway construction (Allen 1990: 110), which Alexander was to complete later. Still others (Taylor 1969: 201) propose the wounds were inflicted by wearing helmets and armour.

<sup>221</sup> *ANET* 1950: 308.

<sup>222</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 24.

These events may well have brought into question the validity of Ezekiel's prophetic utterances and the reliability of Yahweh's word. After all, while the prophet's denunciation of false prophets seems to hinge on the accuracy of their claims (13:1-23), Ezekiel maintains that his words prove him to be a true prophet: 'None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be fulfilled' (12:28).<sup>223</sup> However, despite this apparent failure, Ezekiel seems unabashed that the earlier threats have not materialised and that consequently some reparation is due.

Clearly prophecy was understood more broadly than simply constituting totally accurate prediction.<sup>224</sup> Indeed, as Carroll observes, it seems that '[i]f the first expectation did not measure up fully to the prediction then a further oracle could be produced to incorporate the failure into it'.<sup>225</sup> Roberts suggests that such unfulfilled prophecies underline their conditional nature; although no reason for this is given in *Ezekiel*, it appears that the God of the Bible can change his mind.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, the prophet does not accept the worthlessness of his previous utterances when events challenge earlier expectations.<sup>227</sup> It was evidently more important that prophets were perceived to understand the truth about what Yahweh was doing in the world.<sup>228</sup>

However, while the prophet might appreciate the truth about Yahweh's activity, Ezekiel's audience have yet to recognise that the purpose of the prophet's preaching is to make

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<sup>223</sup> See also the apparently clear injunction found in Deuteronomy 'If a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that Yahweh has not spoken' (Deut. 18:22).

<sup>224</sup> Gowan 1985: 103.

<sup>225</sup> Carroll 1979: 175.

<sup>226</sup> E.g. Jonah 3:9, 10.

<sup>227</sup> Clements 1996: 134.

<sup>228</sup> Gowan 1985: 103.

them acknowledge their rebellion and their return to Yahweh. For Boadt, Ezekiel's choice of imagery suggests that he does not expect literal fulfilment of his utterances. The 'consecrated language of tradition' underlies an expressive model of prophecy which is used for rhetorical effect and is hardly to be taken literally.<sup>229</sup> Block agrees: 'Prophetic proclamation is more than fortune-telling; it is rhetorically charged with exuberance, passion, hyperbole, figurative language, abstraction, whatever means it will take to evoke a response in the hearer'.<sup>230</sup>

But as well as highlighting the prophet's understanding of Yahweh's activity, in this episode the audience also glimpses the prophet's honesty. As Allen remarks, the result which saw the king of Tyre being replaced by a Babylonian High Commissioner<sup>231</sup> would, for a prophet with less integrity than Ezekiel, have been considered sufficient vindication of their prediction.<sup>232</sup> Thus one sees that the difference between the false prophets of Jerusalem and *Ezekiel* lies in the direction of their loyalty, not in the precision of their predictions.<sup>233</sup> Although he has experienced uncertainty, Ezekiel is vindicated precisely because he does not attempt to justify the word of Yahweh, which stands in contradiction to events. In the absence of a clear alternative, the prophet simply waits for another word from Yahweh. While this is certainly a remarkable testament to the prophet's faith, the fact that his school or subsequent editors made no attempt to smooth out these

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<sup>229</sup> Boadt 1980: 53.

<sup>230</sup> Block 1998: 154; cf. Roberts 1979: 251.

<sup>231</sup> See Katzenstein 1973: 332.

<sup>232</sup> Allen 1990: 109.

<sup>233</sup> Tuell 2009: 208.

uncomfortable wrinkles is equally impressive, especially as the amendment itself was also unfulfilled.<sup>234</sup>

In recognition of these events, Yahweh responds with a solution introduced by לכן 'therefore'. Instead of Tyre, Yahweh will give *Egypt* to Nebuchadrezzar. Thus, as Hals observes: 'The text does not withdraw, disavow, or rescind the earlier message, rather it picks it up by way of reinterpretation'.<sup>235</sup> Indeed, Raabe suggests that the OAN 'were probably meant to be taken in a typological way'.<sup>236</sup> Divine judgement against these nations typified divine judgement against all nations.

The term הַמְנוֹן 'multitude', 'pomp' (v. 19) is described by Bodi as 'an important catchword in the overall structure of the book'.<sup>237</sup> Bodi categorises the meaning of the term in three groups.<sup>238</sup> The basic meaning is 'noise', 'sound' (Amos 5:23; 1 Kings 18:41), but it can also have a quantitative meaning that designates 'multitude', 'abundance' (1 Kings 20:13, 28; Psalm 37:16). As well as these, הַמְנוֹן can be used metaphorically to describe 'chaos', 'pomp' or 'pride'. While some scholars translate the term almost without exception quantitatively,<sup>239</sup> others prefer the metaphorical application.<sup>240</sup> Bodi is one who emphasises the metaphorical sense of the term, which for him stands for

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<sup>234</sup> Joyce (2007: 182) suggests that the very fact this detail was not updated as well, points to an early closure of the book. For Greenberg (1997: 618), this second unfulfilled prophecy validates the oracles, hence he urges caution be exercised when ascribing these elements to later hands.

<sup>235</sup> Hals 1989: 211.

<sup>236</sup> Raabe (2010: 204) suggests that an ongoing significance may be found in the motif of the Day of Yahweh (30:3).

<sup>237</sup> Bodi 1991: 128. 16 of the 26 occurrences of הַמְנוֹן in *Ezekiel* are found in chs. 29-32. The term appears in Isa. and Jer. 19 times with a further 19 incidents elsewhere in MT.

<sup>238</sup> Bodi 1991: 118, 19, 28.

<sup>239</sup> E.g. Wevers 1982: 234, 39, 43-49; NRSV.

<sup>240</sup> E.g. Zimmerli 1983: 117, 23, 25, 26, 41, 45, 56, 57, 63, 65, 69.

‘irreverence, *hybris* and insolence on the part of humans toward YHWH’.<sup>241</sup> Lee also observes that a metaphorical understanding of the term is applied in *Ezekiel* both to Egypt (Ezek. 32:12) and to Israel (5:7; 7:11-14).<sup>242</sup> For Lee, this emphasises the common state of disorder between the two nations.<sup>243</sup> However, there are occasions, as here (29:19), when the context calls for a quantitative interpretation. Indeed, the proportion of the divine gift is expressed by the degree to which Egypt will be sacked so that the entire Babylonian army can be recompensed.

Lest there should be any doubt that Yahweh intended to give Egypt to Nebuchadrezzar in lieu of wages, this point is spelt out in the phrase ‘as his payment which he worked for’ (v. 20). Zimmerli observes that Lev. 19:13 might be recalled here, for it speaks of the justice that requires the wages for those who labour to be paid in a timely fashion. In a different vein, Eichrodt suggests that *Ezekiel’s* apparent anxiety about monetary matters ought to be regarded as an ironical critique of the disturbed faith of the exiles and their concern over the unfulfilled prophecy against Tyre.<sup>244</sup> Such irony, argues Eichrodt, would effectively assert the sovereignty of Yahweh to fulfil a prediction in whatever way seemed suitable and it would emphasise ‘the cool and nonchalant’ extent of Yahweh’s control.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, the international scope of Yahweh’s reach is underlined by the repetition found here (v. 20; cf. v. 19), that Yahweh will give the king of Babylon the land of Egypt.

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<sup>241</sup> Bodi 1991: 128.

<sup>242</sup> Lee 2016: 155-56.

<sup>243</sup> Lee 2016: 156.

<sup>244</sup> Eichrodt 1970.

<sup>245</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 410.

However, not only are the details of this unorthodox pay cheque described, but the identity of the director general is revealed to be none other than the Lord Yahweh (v. 20). But what was the purpose of the CEO's employment contract? Why might Yahweh recruit the intelligence services of a foreign nation? Other than Ezekiel, the exiles seem unaware of Nebuchadrezzar's role in Yahweh's campaign. I have already suggested that the relationship between the judgement of the nations and the restoration of Israel is closer than at first meets the eye. If the prophet is indeed projecting the guilt of the exiles onto the nations as I propose, then this passage could be construed as offering support for my argument, particularly if the parallel idea found in Isaiah is kept in mind: 'For I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you' (Isa. 43:3). One is reminded of the destruction of Egypt's firstborn at the exodus event (Exod. 12:29), and the ensuing tradition in which Israel's firstborn, having been spared (12:27) and consecrated to Yahweh (13:2 P) as a sign of his power (13:16), were redeemed by five shekels for the sanctuary (Exod. 13:13; Lev. 27:6; Num. 3:47; 18:15, 16). Here too (Ezek. 29:20), the destruction of Egypt seems to be in the interests of Israel's redemption. Indeed, the theme of compensation that characterises the *asham*<sup>246</sup> might be discerned here. The destruction of Egypt meant that Israel would not have their support (cf. 29:6), thus contributing to the inevitability of exile. Since Ezekiel appreciated the exile to be part of the journey to restoration, Egypt's destruction is effectively what enabled Israel's renewal. Consequently, this passage could be understood as a case of a nation compensating for a nation. As such, it is a development of the principle of *lex talionis*, which is evident throughout the text, one that likely provided at least part of the motivation for Ezekiel's prophetic endeavours (3:18; 33:6). In the light of the affinity of thought found here, my contention that the removal of the nations in *Ezekiel's* OAN

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<sup>246</sup> Cf. Excursus p. 127.

metaphorically expiates the guilt (projected onto the nations) of the exiles does not seem to be beyond the realms of possibility. Indeed, this prospect is highlighted as the drama progresses to a change of scene that is marked by a prophetic utterance formula (v. 20).<sup>247</sup>

The theatrical locus of the narrative is depicted with a backdrop that directs the prophet's audience to a time in the future: 'On that day' (v. 21). This is the day when Yahweh's justice will be revealed and fulfilled.<sup>248</sup> It is then that Yahweh will cause a horn to sprout (אֶצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן) for the house of Israel (v. 21).<sup>249</sup> On the basis that this idea seems out of place, some contend that this brief oracle of hope is secondary;<sup>250</sup> for Zimmerli, though, there is nothing against attributing the authorship to Ezekiel himself.<sup>251</sup> Indeed, Zimmerli suggests that the content of these oracles represents considered reflection on those that have gone before.<sup>252</sup> Moreover, this verse (v. 21) foreshadows the message of restoration that dominates the later part of the book and, as such, its significance is in relation to the whole, rather than this specific oracle.

Derived from the image of an animal's strength (cf. Ps. 92:11 [10]), horns in the Hebrew Bible function figuratively for 'power'. Here (v. 21), the image is employed to depict power to deliver a people from their enemies in battle.<sup>253</sup> Indeed, the phrase is interpreted in ת as פֹּדֶקֶן 'liberation', 'deliverance', 'redemption'.<sup>254</sup> Levey notes that ת

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<sup>247</sup> Hals 1989: 361.

<sup>248</sup> For 'the Day of Yahweh', see exegesis Ezek. 30.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. sprouting of the nation as a vine (17:6).

<sup>250</sup> E.g. Hals 1989: 210.

<sup>251</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 118.

<sup>252</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 119.

<sup>253</sup> E.g. Num. 23:22; 2 Sam. 22:3.

<sup>254</sup> Recalling perhaps Ps. 132:17.

avoids using the Messianic מִשְׁחָא 'which would have been in order here'.<sup>255</sup> Eichrodt, however, is unable to decide if these words reflect the imagery found in Psalm 132:17 which points to the coming of a great son of David (cf. Ezek. 34:23), or if the image should be understood in a more general way that refers to the anticipation of Israel's ultimate restoration.<sup>256</sup> Either way, this, as Joyce points out, is an isolated verse of 'messianic' hope.<sup>257</sup> Even so, the current context is suggestive of a more immediate restoration for Israel. Consequently, Greenberg contends that both the fall of Egypt and the reinvigoration of Israel vindicate Ezekiel.<sup>258</sup> Zimmerli offers a more nuanced proposal, arguing that not only is the judgement of Egypt related to the restoration of Israel, but it is as Egypt is judged that deliverance dawns.<sup>259</sup> Zimmerli's observation adds weight to my contention that the judgement of the nations is directed to the exiles, whose iniquity has been projected onto the nations. According to my argument, in the destruction and removal of the nations, a theological rationale is proposed which allows for the possibility of Israel's restoration. Since the exiles would doubtless appreciate that all impurity must be removed prior to re-consecration and that without the temple cult expiation was no longer a possibility, this ruse could be just the life-line they needed to inspire their return to Yahweh. It could also contribute to Yahweh's vindication as his justice could be maintained during this salvific activity. Indeed, Ganzel recognises that the later restoration oracles do 'convey themes of atonement, return, compassion and deliverance',<sup>260</sup> and Betts observes that *Ezekiel's Tora* of judgement ends in hope.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Levey 1987: 87. Cf. Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 98a), which understands this verse as referring to the coming son of David.

<sup>256</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 411.

<sup>257</sup> Joyce 2007: 182.

<sup>258</sup> Greenberg 1997: 617.

<sup>259</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 120.

<sup>260</sup> Ganzel 2010: 200.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Ezek. 36:8-11. Betts (2005: 198) argues that Ezekiel was a prophet and a priest whose main activity was instruction of the Tora to the exiles. Their identity as a nation chosen by Yahweh relied

Moreover, Davis rightly contends that the point here is theodicy, that Israel will come to see that Yahweh is justified in executing judgement<sup>262</sup> and, it might be added, restoration.

No doubt the opening of the prophet's mouth will facilitate this realisation. According to Kennedy, the phrase פתחון פה 'open mouth' (Ezek. 29:21; cf. 16:63) is equivalent to Akkadian *pit pi* and is possibly 'a technical designation referring or alluding to the ceremony of the opening of the mouth'.<sup>263</sup> The expression was employed in the cultic dedication of sacred images which were then used liturgically as a source of oracles. Kennedy observes that 'the startling effect' of the phrase 'is to portray Ezekiel as a kind of living idol. Like the idol, he is deaf and mute until the deity moves to speak through him'<sup>264</sup>—although perhaps here one can detect a note of divine irony; after all, it was because of their idolatry that the Israelites lost their distinctive identity as worshippers of Yahweh.<sup>265</sup> Not only that, but Pharaoh was also, in a sense, 'a sort of *living* idol'.<sup>266</sup> Moreover, Carvalho suggests that since this oracle has the latest date notice that the prophet utters, the Egyptian ritual performed on the dead to bring them to eternal life might be in the background to Ezekiel's revivification.<sup>267</sup> According to Carvalho, read this way, 'the prophet is promised a post-mortem re-birth'.<sup>268</sup> Carvalho maintains that this is underlined by the images of restoration that frame this idea (29:13-16, 21). Thus, these allusions to Ezekiel's ritual rebirth, contends Carvalho, reflect the final editor's

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on the people's knowledge of Yahweh and his covenant which according to Betts could only come from the Tora.

<sup>262</sup> Davis 1999: 235.

<sup>263</sup> Kennedy 1991: 233; cf. Glazov 2001: 263.

<sup>264</sup> Kennedy 1991: 235.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Marzouk 2015: 154.

<sup>266</sup> Tuell 2009: 211, cf. 30:13 exegesis.

<sup>267</sup> Carvalho 2015: 219.

<sup>268</sup> Carvalho 2015: 219.

view of the on-going efficacy of the OAN.<sup>269</sup> Be that as it may, the point, as Joyce observes, seems to be that Yahweh is not an object, but works in and through human agency.<sup>270</sup> Indeed, while the objective purpose of the oracle is payment for Nebuchadrezzar, Allen contends that, in the opening of Ezekiel's mouth, the mission of this human agent will be vindicated as his voice is heard amidst the house of Israel.<sup>271</sup> According to Allen, 'Yahweh's revelation of himself depends on his vindication of Ezekiel by fulfilling the oracles entrusted to him'.<sup>272</sup> However, a slightly different interpretative possibility exists. Perhaps it is the house of Israel who, having had their lips opened, will be heard amongst the nations. Read this way, Yahweh would be vindicated as his people's voice is heard once more. Notwithstanding that, the ultimate purpose of Egypt's judgement, Israel's restoration and Ezekiel's re-validation, is expressed in the basic recognition formula which concludes the chapter (v. 21).<sup>273</sup> In the formula, Fishbane recognises an element of pathos which underlines that Yahweh's concerned performance is directed to his disregarding people.<sup>274</sup> An element of irony is also discerned by Fishbane in the formula that is intensified by virtue of the fact that, while the exiles have limited or no knowledge of Yahweh's sovereignty, Ezekiel 'is suffused by this awareness'.<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Carvalho 2015: 219.

<sup>270</sup> Joyce 2007: 182.

<sup>271</sup> Allen (1990: 109) suggests that the exiles would have heard the disgruntled murmuring of the Babylonians on their return from the siege and used this against Ezekiel, who is accordingly encouraged by an empathetic word from Yahweh.

<sup>272</sup> Allen 1990: 110.

<sup>273</sup> Category R3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>274</sup> Fishbane 1987: 186.

<sup>275</sup> Fishbane 1987: 186.

### **5.3.3 Summary**

In this brief oracle, I noted that the notion of Egypt as wages supports my contention that the removal of the nations in *Ezekiel's* OAN metaphorically expiates the guilt (projected onto the nations) of the exiles. According to my argument, in the destruction and removal of the nations, a theological rationale is proposed, which allows for the possibility of Israel's restoration. Since the exiles would doubtless appreciate that all impurity must be removed prior to re-consecration and that without the temple cult expiation was no longer a possibility, this ruse could be just the life-line they needed to inspire their return to Yahweh. It could also contribute to Yahweh's vindication, as his justice could be maintained during this salvific activity.

## 5.4 Ezek. 30:1-19

### 5.4.1 Translation

1 The word of Yahweh came to me saying:

2 ‘Son of Man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>276</sup> “Wail,<sup>277</sup> Alas,<sup>278</sup> O Day!<sup>279</sup>

3 Surely<sup>280</sup> the Day is near;<sup>281</sup> yes,<sup>282</sup> the Day of Yahweh<sup>283</sup> is near<sup>284</sup>—a day of clouds,<sup>285</sup> it shall be a time<sup>286</sup> for the nations.

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<sup>276</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>277</sup> MT ילל ‘wail’ only appears in the prophets (e.g. Isa. 13:6; Jer. 25:34). Unattested in LXX.  $\tau$  adds ‘and say’, thus connecting it to what follows.

<sup>278</sup> MT הוה ‘alas’, *hapax* variation of אה / האה ‘aha/alas’ (Ezek. 6:11; 21:20 [15]; 25:3; 26:2). Duplicated in LXX.

<sup>279</sup> For Boadt (1980: 58), the usual translation of ליום ‘for the day’ is weak. He prefers to see the ל as an emphatic particle of vocative (cf. G. R. Driver 1954: 302) intensification: ‘O Day’ or ‘such a Day’.

<sup>280</sup> MT כִּי is also emphatic (Boadt 1980: 59).

<sup>281</sup> Cf. 7:7; 9:1; 12:23.

<sup>282</sup> Boadt notes (1980: 60, 62) that the ו further adds to ‘an ascending climax’ of the delayed identification of Yahweh. Greenberg (1997: 621) indicates that the way the expression is joined by a ו (see following note) ‘recalls the augmenting parallelism of numbers’ in Amos 1:3, 6 (‘for three, yes [ו] for four’).

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Ezek. 7:7, 12, where a day of doom such as this is implied.

<sup>284</sup> *BHS* recommends deleting MT’s second יום קרוב ‘the Day is near’ on the grounds of dittography, so following LXX.

<sup>285</sup> MT ענן ‘clouds’ not witnessed in LXX, but cf. 34:12; Zeph. 1:15; Joel 2:2.

<sup>286</sup> I.e. a time of doom, cf. 7:7, hence  $\tau$  תבר ‘crushing’ (Levey 1987: 87). Boadt (1980: 63) observes the regular pairing of יום ‘day’ and עת ‘time’ in the context of imminent judgement (Ezek. 7:7, 12; 21:30 [25], 34 [29]; 30:3; Isa. 13:22; Jer. 46:21).

4 A sword shall come upon Egypt and anguish<sup>287</sup> shall be in Cush, when the slain<sup>288</sup> fall in Egypt, and her wealth<sup>289</sup> is taken away,<sup>290</sup> and her foundations<sup>291</sup> are torn down.

5 Cush,<sup>292</sup> and Put<sup>293</sup> and Lud, all the mixed peoples,<sup>294</sup> and Cub, and the people<sup>295</sup> of the covenant<sup>296</sup> land with them<sup>297</sup> shall fall by the sword.”

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<sup>287</sup> MT תלחלה ‘anguish’—like the anguish of a woman in childbirth (Isa. 21:3). Greenberg (1987: 621) observes the duplication of חול ‘withe’ here, which produces a ‘powerful derivative’ that he renders ‘convulsions’.

<sup>288</sup> MT תלל ‘slain’, cf. the assonance with תלחלה ‘anguish’.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. 29:19 translation note and exegesis.

<sup>290</sup> MT ולקחו המונה ‘her wealth is taken away’ absent from LXX.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Ezek. 13:14. This expression may be figurative (Greenberg 1987: 621).

<sup>292</sup> Cush, Put and Lud are listed in the same order in Jer. 46:9 as elements of Necho’s army at Carchemish (46:2).

<sup>293</sup> LXX usually identifies MT פוט ‘Put’ with ‘Libya’, cf. Ezek. 27:10; 38:5; Jer. 26:9 (LXX 46:9). Baker (2008c: 560), who includes Ezek. 30:5 (but see further exegesis) as one of the instances, points out that in Nah. 3:9 (mistyped as v. 8), Put and Lub (Libya) are identified as separate nations. There, this toponymic pair is joined in MT by ו ‘and’ which could have an explicative function leading to a translation of ‘that is’. In other words, ‘Put, that is Libya’ as opposed to ‘Put and Libya’.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. exegesis.

<sup>295</sup> MT ו בני ‘and the sons of’. Perhaps Israelite mercenaries fighting for Egypt (Boadt 1980: 67; cf. Zimmerli 1983: 130).

<sup>296</sup> LXX τῆς διαθήκης μου ‘of my covenant’.

<sup>297</sup> MT אִתָּם ‘with them’ absent from LXX. Greenberg (1997: 622) indicates this is characteristic of priestly style list closure (cf. e.g. Gen. 6:18; 7:7, 13; 8:16, 18; 9:8).

6 Thus says Yahweh:<sup>298</sup> “The supporters of Egypt shall fall and her proud strength<sup>299</sup> shall come down; from Migdol to Syene<sup>300</sup> they shall fall in her by the sword”, declares the Lord Yahweh.<sup>301</sup>

7 “She<sup>302</sup> shall be desolate among desolate lands and her<sup>303</sup> cities shall be in the midst of ruined cities.

8 And they shall know that I am Yahweh when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers<sup>304</sup> are destroyed.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> MT אמר יהוה ‘Thus says Yahweh’, unattested in LXX.

<sup>299</sup> Boadt (1980: 67) observes that *Ezekiel* employs an abstract concept to refer to the concrete context.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. 29:10.

<sup>301</sup> LXX κτύπος.

<sup>302</sup> MT ונשמו ‘they shall be...’ is read as ונשמה (cf. *BHS*). LXX καὶ ἐρημωθήσεται ‘she shall be made desolate’ (cf. 29:12).

<sup>303</sup> MT m. suffix (ועריו) is emended to f. (ועריה) referring to f. Egypt (cf. *BHS*). LXX καὶ αἱ πόλεις αὐτῆς would imply ועריהם ‘their cities’. See Greenberg 1997: 622-23 for discussion.

<sup>304</sup> MT עוזיה ‘her helpers’, i.e. her allies (Greenberg 1997: 623). Boadt (1980: 68) identifies a clear military connotation derived from the Ugaritic-Hebrew root *gzi* ‘warrior’.

<sup>305</sup> MT נשברו ‘they are destroyed’, from שבר ‘broken’. Cf. 27:26; 26:2 exegesis.

9 On that day, messengers<sup>306</sup> shall go out from my presence<sup>307</sup> in ships<sup>308</sup> to terrify<sup>309</sup> the unsuspecting<sup>310</sup> Cush and anguish shall be in them on the day of Egypt,<sup>311</sup> for surely<sup>312</sup> it is coming.<sup>313</sup>

10 Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>314</sup> “I will put an end to the pride<sup>315</sup> of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar,<sup>316</sup> king of Babylon.

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<sup>306</sup> See exegesis p. 267.

<sup>307</sup> MT מלפני 'from my presence', absent from LXX. MT develops the idea of Yahweh's presence in Egypt when he set fire (v. 8) to it (Allen 1990: 113), effectively highlighting Yahweh's role in causing terror in Cush (Zimmerli 1983: 124).

<sup>308</sup> MT בציים 'in ships'. For discussion of ציים, an Egyptian loanword, see Krantz 1982: 66-69. But LXX σπεύδοντες 'swift' suggests אצים 'hurrying' (plu. part.), from איץ 'to hasten'. The similarity of thought, which Zimmerli (1983: 130) sees as an example of 'the exegesis of scripture by means of scripture', between this verse and Isa. 18:2, favours MT here. For an alternative view, G. R. Driver (1954: 300) relates בציים to Arab. bāṣa 'escape', 'outrun', thus conveying a sense of 'running ahead'.

<sup>309</sup> MT להחריד 'to terrify'. Elsewhere pairing of החריד 'fear', בטח 'security' (see also following note) in Ezek. 34:28; 39:26.

<sup>310</sup> MT בטח 'trust'. Unattested in LXX. For adjectival use of בטח, cf. Gen. 34:25 העיר בטח 'the city unawares'.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. the similar 'day of Midian' (Isa. 9:3 [4]) and 'day of battle' (Zech. 14:3).

<sup>312</sup> Reading כי as emphatic which underlines force of הנה 'behold'.

<sup>313</sup> Greenberg (1997: 503) indicates that this phrase 'expresses the imminence of the threatened disaster' (cf. 24:14, 24).

<sup>314</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>315</sup> See exegesis p. 268.

<sup>316</sup> On orthography of the name, see 26:7 translation note.

11 He and his people<sup>317</sup> with him,<sup>318</sup> the most ruthless<sup>319</sup> of the nations,<sup>320</sup> shall be brought<sup>321</sup> to destroy the land and they shall<sup>322</sup> unsheathe<sup>323</sup> their swords against Egypt and fill<sup>324</sup> the land with the slain.

12 I will dry up<sup>325</sup> the Nile streams and deliver the land into the hand of evildoers,<sup>326</sup> I will make the land desolate and everything in it, by the hand of foreigners. I am Yahweh, I have spoken.”

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<sup>317</sup> Many render MT עַם ‘people’ as a military term: ‘army’ (Allen 1990: 112; Boadt 1980: 72), ‘forces’ (Block 1998: 162), ‘troops’ (JPS).

<sup>318</sup> MT אִתּוֹ ‘with him’, absent from LXX. Boadt (1980: 72) observes that this phrase is characteristic of the priestly tradition (Gen. 6:18; 7:7; Exod. 29:21; cf. Ezek. 38:6, 9, 22; 39:4), ‘to which Ezekiel has affinities’.

<sup>319</sup> For superlative force of עֲרִיצֵי גוֹיִם ‘most ruthless of the nations’ (so NRSV; JPS; KJV) where the adjective is not after the substantive but before, governing it in construct state (GKC 1910: §132c, 11g). Gesenius (1910: §133g) further indicates that, when expressing a superlative, it is sufficient to make the adjective determinate (either by means of the article or a genitive).

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Ezek. 28:7; 31:12; 32:12 and Isa. 25:3, 5.

<sup>321</sup> MT מוֹבְאִים ‘shall be brought’ is a pass.part. (*hoph.*) highlighting that Babylon is simply an agent and executor of Yahweh’s purposes (Greenberg 1997: 624).

<sup>322</sup> LXX adds πάντας ‘all’.

<sup>323</sup> MT וְהִרְיקוּ ‘and they shall unsheathe’, from Heb. רִיק ‘to empty’, but cf. Ezek. 5:2, 12; 12:14; 28:7. The notion of ‘emptying’ contrasts with that of ‘filling’ the land with the slain (Greenberg 1997: 624). On this, see also 9:7; 35:8.

<sup>324</sup> LXX πλησθήσεται ‘she shall be filled’.

<sup>325</sup> MT וְנָתַתִּי יְאֵרִים חֲרֵבָה lit. ‘I will give to the Nile streams dry land’. For חֲרֵבָה ‘dry land’ elsewhere, see Gen. 7:22; Exod. 14:21; Josh. 3:17; Hag. 2:6; cf. Isa. 37:25. Block (1998: 162) observes assonantal word play here with חֲרֵבֹתָם ‘their swords’ in v. 11. Cf. נִחְרְבָה ‘ruined’ (30:7). Ancient traditions may be recalled which speak of an empty Nile (*ANET* 1950: 445) as well as the Sumerian myth of Enki drying up the Euphrates and Tigris (*ANET* 1950: 336).

<sup>326</sup> MT וְנִמְכַרְתִּי אֶת הָאָרֶץ בְּיַד רְעִים ‘and I will deliver the land into the hand of evil doers’, absent from LXX. Cooke (1936: 337), following Herrmann, suggests that רְעִים ‘evildoers’ is miswritten for זָרִים ‘foreigners’ later in the verse, which accounts for the scribal confusion (cf. Zimmerli 1983: 125).

13 Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>327</sup> “I will destroy the idols<sup>328</sup> and I will bring an end to the worthless gods<sup>329</sup> from Memphis<sup>330</sup> and there shall be<sup>331</sup> no longer a prince<sup>332</sup> in the land of Egypt; and I will put fear into the land of Egypt.<sup>333</sup>

14 I will make Pathros<sup>334</sup> desolate, set fire to Zoan, and execute judgements in Thebes.<sup>335</sup>

15 I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and cut off the pomp of Thebes.<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> LXX κούρτος.

<sup>328</sup> MT והאבדתי גלולים ‘I will destroy the idols’, absent from LXX. Zimmerli (1983: 125) indicates that this was added after the following אילים ‘rams, rulers’ was corrupted to אלילים (see next note).

<sup>329</sup> MT אלילים ‘worthless gods’ (DCH 1993: 291), unique in *Ezekiel*. LXX μεγιστῶνας ‘nobles’ = אילים ‘rams, rulers’, which BHS recommends and Zimmerli (1983: 125) follows since it is in parallel with נשיא ‘prince’ and elsewhere *Ezekiel* uses this for גלולים ‘idols’. Boadt (1980: 77), however, observes the ‘not so easily dispensed with’ assonance between גלולים and אלילים. The same terms occur elsewhere only in Lev. 26:1, 30 in the context of the breaking of idols, devastation, desolation, the sword and exile.

<sup>330</sup> MT נף, a variant of נף (Hos. 9:6).

<sup>331</sup> MT sing. LXX pl. vb. agreeing with ἄρχοντας ‘rulers’ (see following note).

<sup>332</sup> MT ונשיא ‘prince’ (sing.), but LXX ἄρχοντας ‘rulers’ (pl.).

<sup>333</sup> Final phrase absent from LXX and S.

<sup>334</sup> LXX (S v) γῆν Παθουρης ‘land of Pathros’, cf. 29:14. The direct object particle את that precedes the place name in MT (את פתרוס) is probably an orthographic error for ארץ (Cornhill in Zimmerli 1983: 126).

<sup>335</sup> MT נא ‘No’, i.e. ‘Thebes’ (DCH 2001: 577). LXX Διοσπόλις ‘Diospolis’, v (T) ‘Alexandriam’. That Thebes be identified as Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great in 331BCE, is a clear instance of anachronism in v (Block 1998: 164).

<sup>336</sup> MT נא. LXX Μέμφεως suggests correction to נף ‘Noph’, since a different place might be expected after v. 14.

16 I will set fire to Egypt, Pelusium<sup>337</sup> shall writhe<sup>338</sup> in agony and Thebes<sup>339</sup> shall be invaded and Memphis shall be<sup>340</sup> distressed by day.<sup>341</sup>

17 Young men<sup>342</sup> of On<sup>343</sup> and Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword and those cities shall go into captivity.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> MT סין 'Sin', 'Pelusium'. LXX Συήνη 'Syene' (Aswan) whereas MT סין = Σάις in v. 15. ט 'Pelusium' in vv. 15, 16.

<sup>338</sup> MT הוּל 'writhe' (infin.constr.) BHS suggests emending to הוּל infin. abs. as intensifier (so NRSV; cf. LXX).

<sup>339</sup> See translation note v. 14.

<sup>340</sup> Boadt (1980: 79) indicates that ל תהיה 'it shall be to...' does double duty to the infin. ('to invade') and noun phrase, i.e. 'shall be distressed by day' (but see following note).

<sup>341</sup> MT וּנְפְרְצוּ יוֹמָם 'and Memphis, adversaries by day'. LXX διαχυθήσεται ὕδατα presupposes וּנְפְרְצוּ מַיִם 'and water will be scattered' (cf. Nah. 3:8). BHS suggests וּנְפְרְצוּ חוֹמֹתֶיהָ 'and its walls broken down' (cf. RSV); but NRSV 'shall face adversaries by day'. ט (Levey 1987: 88) paraphrases 'and as for Memphis, enemies shall encircle her day in and day out'.

<sup>342</sup> MT בְּהוֹרֵי 'youths', 'young men'. Boadt (1980: 80) renders this 'warriors', on the basis of Jer. 49:26; 50:30.

<sup>343</sup> MT אִיִּן 'iniquity', but LXX (cf. ט) Ηλίουπόλεως = אִין 'On', 'Heliopolis' (cf. BHS), followed here. Greenberg (1997: 626) suggests אִיִּן is a pejorative vocalisation of אִין.

<sup>344</sup> MT וְהָנָה תִּלְכְּנָה 'they shall go into captivity'. Verb and pronoun are f.pl., referring to On and Pi-beseth. The translation 'those cities' (as opposed to the young men) clarifies this (cf. NRSV). LXX adds αἱ γυναῖκες 'and the women' (shall go into captivity) to clarify the f. pl. ambiguity. Boadt (1980: 80) considers the possibility that here וְהָנָה is an instance of delayed identity until the 'daughters' of v. 18 are mentioned. He acknowledges that a simpler solution is that וְהָנָה refers to the cities themselves.

18 At Tehaphnehes the day shall be dark<sup>345</sup> when I break the yoke<sup>346</sup> of Egypt there, and her proud strength shall come to an end and she shall be covered by a cloud and her daughters<sup>347</sup> shall go into captivity.

19 Thus I will execute judgements on Egypt<sup>348</sup> and they shall know that I am Yahweh.”

#### 5.4.2 Exegesis

The absence of a date notice, which is unique in the oracles against Egypt, at the beginning of this chapter has contributed to a lack of conviction surrounding its authenticity. This sceptical view is bolstered by a high degree of divergence between MT and LXX and the general appearance of afterthoughts and explanatory notes that seem to comprise this chapter.<sup>349</sup> While many maintain a dubious stance, it remains entirely possible that the text reflects the development of the prophet's own thoughts, although these may not be presented with the same literary panache found elsewhere in the book.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> MT *השך* 'to withhold' emended to *השך* 'to be dark'. LXX *συσκοτάσει* 'shall become dark'. The Day of Yahweh is associated with darkness (Zeph. 1:15).

<sup>346</sup> MT *במרות* 'bars', i.e. of a yoke (DCH 2001: 172). LXX *σκήπτρον* 'staff', 'sceptre' (Lust et al. 1992).

See further exegesis.

<sup>347</sup> I.e. 'dependent towns', cf. 26:6.

<sup>348</sup> Allen (1990: 114) suggests that *מצרים* 'Egypt' signifies 'Egyptians' (cf. 30:23, 26). However, Boadt (1980: 84) observes a similarity in thought and language between this verse and Exod. 12:12 and suggests that *Ezekiel* is consciously drawing on the Exodus tradition.

<sup>349</sup> E.g., v. 5 is a 'marginal note' (Block 1998: 155) interrupting vv. 4, 6 and v. 9 appears to be inspired by Isa. 18. See further translation notes and exegesis.

<sup>350</sup> Block 1998: 155. Greenberg (1997: 629), however, questions whether accuracy and aesthetic excellence as criteria of authenticity are valid in a critical approach, preferring himself to observe a style in this oracle that is unmistakably *Ezekiel's*.

Despite being editorially appropriate as a continuation of the general content of chapter 29,<sup>351</sup> the absence of a date formula renders an historical setting to this oracle elusive. While some favour this being a continuation of the anachronistic 29:17-21,<sup>352</sup> others, based on the chapter's stylistic divergence, propose a period between the dates which flank that of 29:17. Hence, this oracle may not follow sequentially from the previous one, but may precede that which follows.<sup>353</sup> Accordingly, it has been suggested that the oracle may be dated to a three-month window between 7 January and 29 April 587 BCE (29:1; 30:20).<sup>354</sup>

The Day of Yahweh against Egypt is announced in three sections. In the first, the nations will fall by the sword on that Day (vv. 1-5). The second section speaks of Nebuchadrezzar as Yahweh's agent of destruction (vv. 6-12). Human warfare and cosmic imagery emphasise that while Babylon is Yahweh's agent, the Day and the victory belong to him. The third section (vv. 13-19) presents Yahweh's conquests after the fashion of the ancient Near East.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> Greenberg 1997: 630.

<sup>352</sup> Becker 1971: vol. 1, 72.

<sup>353</sup> Renz 1999: 99.

<sup>354</sup> Block 1998: 156; cf. Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 28.

<sup>355</sup> Galambush 2001: 554. For an alternative structure, and in spite of the messenger formula in v. 6, Zimmerli (1983: 127) divides the unit by three messenger formulae presenting three oracles: vv. 1-9, 10-12, 13-19. Greenberg (1997: 627) identifies further topical division: Egypt's doomsday announced (vv. 1-9), Nebuchadrezzar commissioned by Yahweh to action Egypt's doomsday (vv. 10-12), destruction of authority and population centres (vv. 13-19). In addition, four sections can be perceived, ending with a recognition formula (Block 1998: 155).

A similarity has been observed between these oracles and the Egyptian prophecy of Nefer-Rohu.<sup>356</sup> However, while some older scholars dismissed the authenticity of chapter 30,<sup>357</sup> Joyce observes that the eschatological tone of this chapter is reminiscent of chapter 7.<sup>358</sup> Both passages speak of the Day as an ominous time (30:3; 7:7). The language of war and cosmic elements are evident in both (30:5, 18; 7:15, 26), as is the suggestion of terror and panic often associated with holy war (30:13; 7:17).<sup>359</sup> Consequently, Hals contends that this material has 'definite contacts with apocalyptic'.<sup>360</sup>

However, despite a degree of scholarly diffidence directed to this chapter, Boadt finds a careful organisation that is not reckoned with seriously enough.<sup>361</sup> Greenberg also observes a pronounced unity in the oracle, with the word 'day' comprising the general theme in which 'the day of Egypt' is found to define 'the Day of Yahweh'.<sup>362</sup>

Instead of a date notice, which in any case, as Joyce observes, would have been awkward alongside reference to the indeterminate eschatological Day of Yahweh,<sup>363</sup> the oracle begins with a typical prophetic word formula (v. 1). Having been addressed as

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<sup>356</sup> This Egyptian prophecy (*ANET* 1950: 445) speaks of the sun disc being covered and that no one can live when clouds cover it (cf. Ezek. 30:3). It also mentions that the rivers of Egypt are empty (cf. Ezek. 30:12).

<sup>357</sup> E.g. Jahn 1905; Hölscher 1924; Cooke 1936.

<sup>358</sup> Joyce 2007: 183.

<sup>359</sup> Hals 1989: 213.

<sup>360</sup> Hals 1989: 214.

<sup>361</sup> Boadt 1980: 71.

<sup>362</sup> Greenberg (1997: 628) discusses further unifying language and structure. By contrast, the list of Egyptian cities 'follows no discernible order, which suggests a limited acquaintance with Egypt's topography'. According to Zimmerli (1983: 128), though, this is a display of learning rather than presenting knowledge of current affairs.

<sup>363</sup> Joyce 2007: 183.

בן אדם 'son of man' (v. 2),<sup>364</sup> Ezekiel receives a divine command to prophesy, which is followed by a messenger formula. However, instead of an indictment, a dramatic warning follows which recalls the opening of chapter 7. Block indicates that although Ezekiel's audience is the exiles, the instruction to 'wail' (v. 2) creates an impression that Egypt is being directly addressed<sup>365</sup> and it emphasises the harrowing nature of the day that is foretold.

According to Sweeney, the supposed eschatological character of the Day of Yahweh (v. 3) derives from its cultic setting in the Jerusalem temple, where heaven and earth are understood to meet.<sup>366</sup> The imagery of the Day was significant for Ezekiel the priest, because, says Clements, 'time was holy, given by God for the proper performance of human duties and marked at intervals by the right rituals and services'.<sup>367</sup> Thus, time was understood to have quality as well as duration.<sup>368</sup> That the Day might be considered holy is supported by its association with theophanies (Ezek. 30:12, 13; cf. Isa. 13:5). In the past, the Day of Yahweh had meant his appearance in power of victory over enemies.<sup>369</sup> For the early prophets, though, it is Yahweh's own victory over his own people that is significant.<sup>370</sup> By the exile, as Allen observes, the concept 'is well attested as a sinister prophetic figure of judgement against Israel or other nations'.<sup>371</sup> Indeed, Ezek. 7 speaks of the end of Israel in similar terms to those found in chapter 30 against

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<sup>364</sup> Cf. exegesis 25:2.

<sup>365</sup> Block 1998: 157.

<sup>366</sup> Sweeney 2013: 148.

<sup>367</sup> Clements 1996: 135.

<sup>368</sup> E.g. 'So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart' (Ps. 90:12).

<sup>369</sup> E.g. 'The day of Midian' (Isa. 9:3 [4]).

<sup>370</sup> E.g. Amos 5:18; Isa 13:9; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 7:19. Whether holy war language is in the background or not, military supremacy does seem to be in view (Boadt 1980: 63).

<sup>371</sup> Allen 1990: 115. Victory over pagan practice may also be perceived. E.g. Ezek. 30:13; 38:10; 39:11, 13; Jer. 46:10; Zech. 14:3 (Cooke 1936: 78).

Egypt<sup>372</sup> it is a feature, says Zimmerli, that serves to comfort the exiles.<sup>373</sup> Zimmerli, however, does not offer a reason why Israel might find the destruction of their potential ally comforting. Perhaps he means that solace could be sought by Israel in knowing that Yahweh treated the nations and Israel in the same way.

The brief exclamations crescendo as the colourful language of 'clouds' (v. 3; cf. Joel 2:2) is incorporated with the ambiguous phrase 'time of the nations'. While Yahweh's wrath is also directed to other nations, *Ezekiel's* primary interest here is with Egypt.<sup>374</sup> Even so, the phrase indicates that an international battle is imagined in which Yahweh is perceived to be the real threat.<sup>375</sup> Not only is it real, but it is also imminent. In the repeated use of 'near' (v. 3), a heightened sense of threatening urgency is expressed.<sup>376</sup>

The threat materialises in the form of what Zimmerli contends to be a 'strangely depersonalised "sword"' (v. 4).<sup>377</sup> Block understands the term metonymically for war in general, that will come against Egypt.<sup>378</sup> The anguish this causes will affect the whole nation and beyond it to Cush.<sup>379</sup> Boadt observes that Egypt and Cush<sup>380</sup> symbolise the foreign and distant to Israel; the names of the countries are used as parallel terms here for neighbours on the Nile.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Boadt (1980: 63) observes the following connections in Ezek: 7:7 = 30:9b; 7:7 = 30:3b; 7:8 = 30:3 (קָרוֹב 'near'); 7:10 = 30:3 (יּוֹם 'day'); 7:10 = 30:9b (בֹּאֵה הִנֵּה 'behold it comes'); 7:12 = 30:3b.

<sup>373</sup> Especially the motif of the Day of Yahweh (Zimmerli 1983: 135). Block (1998: 171) also understands these consoling associations for Israel.

<sup>374</sup> Block 1998: 157.

<sup>375</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 128.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. Zimmerli's (1979: 205) comment on Ezek. 7:7.

<sup>377</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 128.

<sup>378</sup> Block 1998: 158.

<sup>379</sup> Cf. 29:10, p. 228; 30:9, p. 267.

<sup>380</sup> Cf. 29:10; 30:4, 9.

<sup>381</sup> Boadt 1980: 63.

Not only will people perish, but humiliation is anticipated as the nation's 'wealth' is removed.<sup>382</sup> One is reminded of the sage's words which, in the light of this verse (v. 4), seem imbued with particular irony: 'riches do not profit in the day of wrath' (Prov. 11:4). No amount of federal reserve will compensate on the day as the very fabric of the country is demolished and its foundations are torn down (v. 4). This idea is reminiscent of that found in the context of judgement against Israel (7:19)<sup>383</sup> and is one that bolsters my argument for projection of Israel's *hybris* onto the nations. For Strong, the apocalyptic proportions of this destruction underline the relationship between these oracles and *Ezekiel's* message: the exile is the way to the land.<sup>384</sup> The prophet's graphic description of Egypt's downfall leaves no room for doubt in the minds of his audience: Egypt will not come to their aid.

In the portrayal of six distinct allied corps (v. 5), Block discerns a transitional function in which the previous oracle (vv. 2b-3) is developed and the following one (vv. 6-9) prepared.<sup>385</sup> Although this verse (v. 5) disrupts the context of vv. 2-4, it clarifies the phrase *סמכי מצרים* 'supporters of Egypt' (v. 6).<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> The Hebrew term *הַגִּבּוֹן* 'wealth' is characteristic of *Ezekiel* (see translation note here and exegesis 29:19). It can also mean 'multitude', 'pomp'. Alternatively, a metaphorical application of 'pride' is found. In view of v. 6, pride could be the direction of thought here, although Cooke (1936: 332) argues in favour of 'wealth' (as opposed to 'multitude'), which is followed here.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. the discussion on this verse at 29:7 exegesis.

<sup>384</sup> Strong 1993:91.

<sup>385</sup> Block 1998: 158.

<sup>386</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 129.

The first ally listed is Cush (v. 5);<sup>387</sup> this is followed by Put (v. 5), who according to the Table of Nations (Gen. 10:6; 1 Chron. 1:8) is the son of Ham and brother of Cush, Mizraim (Egypt) and Canaan. On five other occasions,<sup>388</sup> the people of Put are referred to as being warriors who supported various other nations, suggesting that the nation was known to be a source of mercenaries. Despite these references, the identification of Put is debated.

The next ally listed is Lud (v. 5). The Table of Nations (Gen. 10:13; 1 Chron. 1:11) identifies Ludim as one of the sons of Mizraim (Egypt). In the same genealogy, a further reference to Lud as a son of Shem is found (Gen. 10:22; 1 Chron. 1:17). In addition, an identification with the Lydians of central Asia Minor has been made (*Ant.* 1.144). Due to these varying references, and despite several biblical texts associating Lud with Egypt,<sup>389</sup> a definite identification cannot be proposed, although an interpretation of the evidence (Gen. 10:22, 13) is amenable to placing Lud in north Africa.<sup>390</sup> Speaking of the combination of Lud and Put, which are found together with Persia in Ezek. 27:10, Greenberg indicates that the outermost limits of the known world are designated in the phrase.<sup>391</sup>

The fourth group is identified in MT as הערב 'the mixed people'.<sup>392</sup> In Jer. 25:20 this word is found as part of the list of nations and kings; it is also used in Jer. 50:37 of foreign inhabitants of Babylon. Greenberg highlights its distinction from the proper noun

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<sup>387</sup> Cf. 30:4, 9; 29:10.

<sup>388</sup> Jer. 46:9; Ezek. 27:10; 30:5; 38:5; Nah. 3:9.

<sup>389</sup> E.g. Ezek. 27:10; 29:10; 30:5; Jer. 46:9.

<sup>390</sup> Baker 2008a: 396.

<sup>391</sup> Greenberg 1997: 551.

<sup>392</sup> *DCH* 2001: 551.

עֲרָב 'Arabia' (Ezek. 27:21),<sup>393</sup> although NRSV renders it so here (30:5), influenced perhaps by הָעֲרָב in 1 Kings 10:15 which is corrected to עֲרָב in the parallel 2 Chron. 9:14. However, א interprets the Hebrew in this verse (Ezek. 30:5) as סוּמְכוֹתָא 'reserve units', 'allies'.<sup>394</sup> Following these mixed mercenaries is Cub. MT וְכֹב is unknown but many emend to וְלֹב 'Lybia'.<sup>395</sup> on the basis of LXX.

The final group is designated 'people of the covenant land'. Lee points out that the theological meaning of the term 'covenant' is illuminated elsewhere in *Ezekiel* where the restored covenant between Yahweh and Israel is in view.<sup>396</sup> Importantly, though, as Davis observes, rather than being 'a tie of affection', the covenant is 'an instrument for maintaining the integrity of God's identity and will within Israel and before the nations'.<sup>397</sup> However, in this context (v. 5), Tuell suggests that the phrase 'people of the covenant land' refers to all Egypt's other allies.<sup>398</sup> Joyce agrees that it implies Egypt's allies, but ones who are possibly Jewish mercenaries.<sup>399</sup> Lee also contends that these oracles contain subtle allusions to Judah as being among Pharaoh's entourage.<sup>400</sup> Even so, despite this impressive array, all will fall by the sword in what promises to be a comprehensive annihilation.

A further messenger formula (v. 6) advances the narrative, reminding the prophet's audience that this judgement is a divine proclamation. Not only will Egypt's allies fall,

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<sup>393</sup> Greenberg 1997: 621.

<sup>394</sup> Levey 1987: 87.

<sup>395</sup> E.g. Cooke 1936: 332; cf. *BHS* so NRSV.

<sup>396</sup> E.g. Ezek. 16:59, 60, 62; 20:37; 34:25; 37:26; 44:7 (Lee 2016: 148).

<sup>397</sup> Davis 1999: 230.

<sup>398</sup> Tuell 2009: 210.

<sup>399</sup> Joyce 2007: 183.

<sup>400</sup> Lee 2016: 124.

but so will Egypt, whose pride in its own strength will prove to be misplaced.<sup>401</sup> Extending from the northern reaches of Migdol to the southern extremities of Syene,<sup>402</sup> all will fall by the sword as Egypt suffers a humiliating defeat. The finality of this prospect is underlined by a prophetic utterance formula (v. 6).

The magnitude of this destruction is not restricted to the inhabitants of the land; the land itself will experience a devastation (v. 7). Described here in terms that recall those of 29:12,<sup>403</sup> the desolation of Egypt will be conspicuous and the dereliction of the cities will be the mark of their prominence. In the developed recognition formula that follows (v. 8),<sup>404</sup> the supplementary clause that consists of a suffixed infinitive construct *בַּתֵּת* 'when I set (give)' fire that is joined by *ו*, is itself extended. Here a consecutive perfect *וַיִּשְׁבְּרוּ*<sup>405</sup> 'they are destroyed (broken)' is added to the infinitive phrase which recalls Yahweh's acts that precede this recognition of him.<sup>406</sup> Hals argues that the role of the recognition formula in this chapter is without any kind of positive knowing associated with the announcements of doom, but rather a grudging renunciation of control over its destiny and acknowledgement of Yahweh is expected by Egypt.<sup>407</sup> Hals further suggests that the expansion (v. 8b) highlights a negative orientation by presenting Yahweh as the bringer of destructive fire and power of the kind before which all are helpless.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> In the phrase 'proud strength', Block (1998: 161) finds a characteristic expression of *Ezekiel's* denoting *hybris*. The idea of strong pride is also discernible in Ezek. 7:20, 24; 24:21.

<sup>402</sup> See exegesis 29:10.

<sup>403</sup> Block (1998: 161) observes 'a parallelistic and superlative construction' here.

<sup>404</sup> Category B2, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>405</sup> In this case *niph.* perfect.

<sup>406</sup> Cf. Ezek. 6:13; 12:15; 15:7; 20:42 (cf. p. 71), 44; 28:22; 39:28, which demonstrate similar developments where a consecutive perfect is added to the infinitive phrase.

<sup>407</sup> Hals 1989: 215.

<sup>408</sup> Hals 1989: 215.

Orientation, however, depends on perspective, and it is important to bear in mind that the wrathful judgement expressed by fire is a characteristic of divine holiness.<sup>409</sup> I noted in the oracle against Sidon the pairing of the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness and his self-glorification (28:22), a combination that is also found immediately after the death of Aaron's presumptuous sons, Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:3) where the proof of Yahweh's holiness was a dangerous fire. Although the notion of Yahweh's holiness being dangerous may be striking to a twenty-first-century reader, *Ezekiel* matches the idea found in Leviticus and does not shy away from presenting Yahweh in this way. In chapter 30 alone, Yahweh's wrathful judgement is depicted by dangerous fire on three occasions (30:8, 14, 16). It is a theme that the prophet is clearly fond of, his rich imagery frequently portraying Yahweh burning with anger (22:31; 36:5; 38:19).<sup>410</sup> One might, at this point, recall the character from Gibbons' satirical novel *Cold Comfort Farm*, Amos Starkadder, who preached twice a week at the Church of the Quivering Brethren, invariably on the theme of 'burning'.<sup>411</sup> When quizzed by his cousin Flora, he explained that he must tell the Brethren to prepare for a time of torment.<sup>412</sup> Perhaps Ezekiel's own preaching was motivated by a similar concern, although rather than preparing his congregation for a time of torment, he was keen for them to avoid one. No more clearly can this be seen than in his use of the recognition formula, which, maintains Fishbane, has 'a contemporary hortatory intent'.<sup>413</sup> Moreover, says Fishbane, since the judgements are described in advance, the prophet's audience has a proleptic intimation of this future

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<sup>409</sup> Muilenburg 1962: 618.

<sup>410</sup> See Schöpflin 2005: 113; Odendaal 1999: 202.

<sup>411</sup> Gibbons 1938: 89.

<sup>412</sup> Gibbons 1938: 89.

<sup>413</sup> Fishbane 1987: 186.

knowledge in the present.<sup>414</sup> It is a present in which, according to Lee, the theme of the Day of Yahweh is a literary motif that binds the judgement of Egypt to that of Israel.<sup>415</sup>

As I have argued, since it is Israel's guilt that is of particular interest to *Ezekiel*—or rather, it is the vexed question of its removal in the absence of the cult that is of particular interest to *Ezekiel*—the relationship between Israel's judgement and that of Egypt that Lee observes is apparent because, so I propose, the prophet projects Israel's guilt onto the nations in order to get his audience's attention. Read this way, the Day of Yahweh becomes a wake-up call for the exiles that illustrates the serious error of their ways, and shows them that since the mighty Egypt is subject to Yahweh's rule, so should they be. Hence, the motif of the Day of Yahweh functions rather like science fiction does today. In the same way that we do not really expect the futuristic worlds of say the Star Wars movies to become a reality one day, so it is unlikely that the imagery of the Day of Yahweh was understood to be a detailed prediction of the future. Rather, it was appreciated that the Day describes an imaginary future in which Egypt suffers a defeat of apocalyptic proportions. Through the motif of the Day, the prophet creates a visionary space for the exiles in which they can reflect on the Present. *Ezekiel* seemed to understand the importance of this. As previously noted, time for Ezekiel the priest was holy; it was understood to have quality as well as duration.<sup>416</sup> One is reminded here of C.S. Lewis' observation: 'The Present is the point at which time touches eternity'.<sup>417</sup> Lewis explains that the present moment is the only time humans can have an experience analogous to that which God has of reality as a whole, since only in the present moment is freedom and actuality offered. Thus, by creating this visionary space for the exiles,

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<sup>414</sup> Fishbane 1987: 186.

<sup>415</sup> Lee 2016: 169.

<sup>416</sup> Cf. exegesis 30:3 p. 259.

<sup>417</sup> Lewis 2001: 75.

Ezekiel the prophet is encouraging them to quite literally *carpe diem!* By reflecting on their current circumstance through the lens of the Day, it could be suggested that a new hope for the prophet was that the exiles would recognise the freedom offered by the actuality of Yahweh's presence, and realise that their confidence in Egypt was misplaced, being nothing more than a fantasy set in a galaxy far far away.

Be that as it may, the Day inaugurates Yahweh's wrath so that the nations 'shall know that I am Yahweh' (Ezek. 30:8; cf. 7:9). Thus, the recognition formula emphasises the identity of the author (made explicit by reference to the same as arsonist),<sup>418</sup> and therefore the purpose of the doomsday which is developed in the extension that follows (v. 9).

It has been suggested that the seemingly incongruous reference (there has been no mention of the Nile in this chapter) to ships (v. 9) has been inspired by Isaiah 18:2,<sup>419</sup> which speaks of messengers<sup>420</sup> being sent along the Nile by papyrus vessels to a nation tall and smooth whose land the rivers divide. In this verse (Ezek. 30:9), the inaccessibility of Cush has rendered it unsuspecting of the terror that it will nevertheless experience. Although it is generally assumed (as here) that a military attack is in view,<sup>421</sup> another less likely possibility exists. The messengers (מלאכים) that go out from Yahweh's presence could be a reference to wind. The Psalmist declares: 'you make the winds your messengers (מלאכים), fire and flame your ministers' (Ps. 104:4). An emphasis on

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<sup>418</sup> The language of fire and destruction is reminiscent of Amos 1: אש 'fire' (vv. 4, 7, 10, 12); שבר 'destroy' (v. 5).

<sup>419</sup> Block (1998: 162) observes that *Ezekiel* develops Isaiah by: a) reversing the direction of travel: upstream not down; b) using divine not earthly messengers; c) robust ships replace flimsy papyrus bundle boats; d) the source of terror becomes terrified.

<sup>420</sup> צירים 'messengers', whereas it is מלאכים 'messengers' in Ezek. 30:9.

<sup>421</sup> E.g. Block 1998: 162.

fire in Ezek. 30 has already been observed, but considering the messengers go out in ships, perhaps the winds are in view here. Conceivably, these messengers could be read as being the wind in the ships' sails. The terror instilled in Cush, a land which is separated from neighbouring countries by two rivers, could be caused by the strength of that wind; after all, high winds have already wrecked one ship in *Ezekiel* (27:26). Notwithstanding the midrashic nature of this interpretation, one might continue by observing that in the previous verse of this Psalm, it is said that Yahweh makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind (Ps. 104:3), ideas that bear more than a passing resemblance to those found in Ezek. 1.

For all that, the anguish in this verse (Ezek. 30:9) will be experienced on that inevitable day, the imminence of which, argues Block, is an 'announcement which functions rhetorically like a sentry's trumpet blast, warning residents and the military to prepare for an attack'.<sup>422</sup> While hailed as the day of Egypt (v. 9), its effect will be felt much further afield.

The messenger formula that follows (v. 10) marks, for Zimmerli, the beginning of another oracle<sup>423</sup> in which the judgement of Ezek. 30:1-9 is historically concretised by reference to Nebuchadrezzar,<sup>424</sup> who will, as Yahweh's agent, put an end to the הַגְּבוּרָה of Egypt. If the term הַגְּבוּרָה is understood metaphorically to denote 'pride',<sup>425</sup> then a veiled indictment may be perceived, one that could support my argument that the prophet is projecting the guilt of Israel's pride onto the nations. However the term is translated, though,<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> Block 1998: 162.

<sup>423</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 127, but see p. 257 n. 355 for alternative structures.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. 26:1-6 and the historically related 26:7-14.

<sup>425</sup> Cf. 29:19 exegesis.

<sup>426</sup> Bodi 1991: 118, 19, 28.

Yahweh proclaims his intention to eradicate Egypt's הַמִּצְרַיִם by the hand of his Babylonian operative (v. 10).

Constituting the king's army,<sup>427</sup> this task force is described as עַרְיָצִי גוֹיִם 'the most ruthless of nations' (v. 11).<sup>428</sup> In the phrase, Block sees a compressed description of the barbaric treatment a conquered people experience as described in Deut. 28:49-52,<sup>429</sup> while Carvalho suggests that the emphasis on death in the oracles against Egypt reflects the prominence of the mortuary cult in Egypt.<sup>430</sup> Either way, this expression parallels that found in Isa. 25:3, 5 where גוֹיִם 'nations' are associated with זָרִים 'strangers' (cf. Ezek. 28:7).<sup>431</sup> Here though (v. 11), Nebuchadrezzar's army is described<sup>432</sup> as a detailed reference to the sword<sup>433</sup> is developed from v. 4. Referring to the phrase רִיבֵק הַחֶרֶב 'unsheathe the sword', Boadt contends it is one of the expressions which are 'hardly an accidental coincidence',<sup>434</sup> that are applied both to Judah<sup>435</sup> and to the nations. The contention here is that by drawing these parallels, *Ezekiel* is illustrating Israel's guilt by projecting it onto the nations to instil a sense of remorse within the exiles that will be sufficient for them to return to Yahweh, which will, in turn, vindicate him as they do so.

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<sup>427</sup> Cf. 26:7.

<sup>428</sup> Cf. Ezek. 28:7; 31:12; 32:12. The verb עָרַץ denotes 'to cause terror' (*DCH* 2007: 566).

<sup>429</sup> Block 1998: 91.

<sup>430</sup> Carvalho 2015: 217.

<sup>431</sup> Strangers were by definition hostile; cf. Latin *hostis* (Greenberg 1997: 574).

<sup>432</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 79.

<sup>433</sup> Cf. 28:7.

<sup>434</sup> Boadt 1986: 198.

<sup>435</sup> Ezek. 5:2, 12; 12:14.

As the swords are drawn, so the land will be filled with the slain (v. 11).<sup>436</sup> The devastation will not be restricted to the land, however, as Yahweh, the instigator of Egypt's judgement, claims responsibility for the worst catastrophe imaginable as he dries up the Nile (v. 12),<sup>437</sup> the source of Egypt's wealth and pride.<sup>438</sup> Thus, 'the divine overlord attacks nature itself',<sup>439</sup> and in so doing Yahweh will deliver the entire country to זרִים 'evildoers',<sup>440</sup> causing the land and everything in it to be desolated by זרִים 'foreigners'.<sup>441</sup> The inevitability of this is underlined by the conclusion formula for divine speech, 'I am Yahweh, I have spoken', which stresses the power of Yahweh's word.<sup>442</sup>

The following section (vv. 13-19) is characterised by the announcement of Yahweh's judgement against Egypt, which is signalled by a sequence of first person verbs,<sup>443</sup> and the effect of Yahweh's judgement, which is cast in the third person.<sup>444</sup> Unlike Jeremiah,

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<sup>436</sup> The idea of the slain filling the land is echoed in Ezek. 32:5-6 where the carcass of the sea dragon is strewn on the mountains, filling the valleys and drenching the land with its blood.

<sup>437</sup> The term חֲרֵבָה 'dry land' that is used here, parallels the idea of destruction associated with its use in Gen. 7:22, although here it is reversed.

<sup>438</sup> Block (1998: 165) suggests that this idea reflects that found in Isaiah's oracle against Egypt (Isa. 19:1-17, esp. vv. 5-7).

<sup>439</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 417.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. רְעֵי גוֹיִם 'worst of the nations' (7:24).

<sup>441</sup> זרִים 'foreigners', 'strangers'; cf. 7:21; 11:9; 28:7, 10; 31:12. The pairing of 'evildoers' and 'foreigners' further recalls chapter 7 (vv. 21, 24).

<sup>442</sup> Hals 1989: 360.

<sup>443</sup> First person: האבד 'to destroy' (v. 13, cf. 26:17; 28:16; 32:13); השבֵה 'to bring an end' (v. 13; cf. 7:24; 16:41; 23:27; 48; 34:10, 25); הַיַּד בְּיָדָא 'to put fear into' (v. 13); השַׁמַּה 'to make desolate' (v. 14; cf. 20:26; 30:12); אֶשׁ בָּהֶן 'to set fire to' (vv. 14, 16a; cf. 30:8, 16); עֲשֵׂה שְׁפָטִים 'to execute judgements' (vv. 14, 19; cf. 5:10, 15; 11:9; 14:21; 16:41; 25:11; 28:22, 26); שֶׁפַךְ חַמָּתִי 'to pour out my wrath' (v. 15; cf. 7:8; 9:8; 14:19; 20:8, 13, 21; 22:22; 36:18); הַכְרַת 'to cut off' (v. 15; cf. 14:13, 17, 19, 21; 21:8, 9; 25:7, 13, 16; 29:8); שִׁבַר 'to break' (v. 18; cf. 27:26; 30:21, 22, 24).

<sup>444</sup> Third person: הוֹלַח 'writhe in agony' (v. 16; cf. 12:24); לֹא יִהְיֶה עוֹד 'be no longer' (v. 13; cf. 12:24); נִפְלַח בַּחֶרֶב 'fall by the sword' (v. 17; cf. 4, 9); נִבְקַע 'be invaded' (v. 16; cf. 13:11; 26:10).

who spent time in Egypt (Jer. 43:7), Ezekiel relied on secondary geographical reports, which may account for the seemingly random list of toponyms in this unit.<sup>445</sup> Zimmerli suggests that these place names could reflect, through the emphasis of cities in the delta (Thebes, located in Upper Egypt, being the exception), the change of situation regarding the geographical epicentre of Egyptian power at the time of Ezekiel.<sup>446</sup> It could also be an acknowledgment of the areas where Jewish military or refugee colonies were based (cf. Jer. 44:1).<sup>447</sup> On the other hand, it has been suggested that this series may consciously reflect the chaotic situation imagined in Egypt.<sup>448</sup> Despite the sequential disorder, all the places that are mentioned had historically high moments which justified the accusations of pride that distinguished the ostensibly indestructible kingdom.

The narrative, introduced by a messenger formula (v. 13), advances detailing the destruction Yahweh intends to inflict upon the worthless idols of Egypt.<sup>449</sup> The accusation of idolatry is a characteristic of *Ezekiel's* reference to Egypt,<sup>450</sup> and understandably so, since apparently Israel had shown their weakness for the idols of Egypt (Ezek. 20:7) and depended on Egypt, not Yahweh, to support them (29:6-7). The

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5:12; 6:11, 12; 7:15; 11:10; 17:21; 23:25; 24:21; 25:13; 30:5, 6; 32:22-24; 33:27; 39:23); הלך בששבי 'to go into captivity' (vv. 17, 18; cf. 12:11); השך היום ב 'the day will be dark when' (v 18; cf. 32:8); נשבת 'will come to an end' (v 18; cf. 6:6; 33:28); ענן כססה 'will be covered by a cloud' (v. 18; cf. 30:3; 32:7; 38:9, 16).

<sup>445</sup> Block 1998: 165.

<sup>446</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 134. By the time of the Saite dynasty (664-525 BCE), the southern part of the country was annexed and administered by an assigned governor and commercial shipping master. Cultic continuity was assured, though, by the installation of a royal priestess at Thebes (Redford 2008c: 178). Cf. 29:14, 15 exegesis.

<sup>447</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 134.

<sup>448</sup> Block 1998: 165; cf. Eichrodt 1970: 417.

<sup>449</sup> The term אבד 'destroy' used here reflects its use in the destruction of the ship as Tyre's idol in 26:17.

<sup>450</sup> Especially chs. 20, 23.

emphasis on Egyptian idolatry is, suggests Carvalho, because Ezekiel viewed Egyptian culture as being more dangerous than Mesopotamian for the simple reason that accommodation to Egyptian culture was voluntary and not the result of violent overthrow.<sup>451</sup> Moreover, the economic stability of Egypt, which was agriculturally based, suggested that their religion was effective.<sup>452</sup>

Scholars maintain that the term גִּלּוּלִים 'idols'<sup>453</sup> (v. 13) is derived from the word גֵּל 'dung',<sup>454</sup> the ultimate impurity. The word implies then that these idols are things of dung.<sup>455</sup> As Lee points out, the problem for Ezekiel was not that Egypt was worshipping these idols, but that Israel had succumbed to the pagan practice (cf. Ezek. 20:7-8).<sup>456</sup> Ezekiel seems to appreciate that an awareness of Yahweh's presence has a moral condition that involves obeying his commands and accepting his standards. Thus, the destruction of these Egyptian idols removes the troublesome religious connection. Moreover, as Greenberg observes, the punishment of a people includes its gods.<sup>457</sup>

The toponym Memphis (vv. 13, 16), is derived from an abbreviated form of Egyptian *pepy-mn-nfr* 'Pepy firm and fair' from which Gk. Μέμφις is drawn. However, the Egyptian

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<sup>451</sup> Carvalho 2015: 205.

<sup>452</sup> Carvalho 2015: 205.

<sup>453</sup> Or 'dung gods' (Bodi 1993: 481-510). 39 of the 48 occurrences of the term in the Hebrew Bible appear in *Ezekiel* (6:4, 5, 6, 9, 13 [x 2]; 8:10; 14:3, 4, 5 [x 2], 6, 7; 16:36; 18:6, 12, 15; 20:7, 8, 16, 18, 24, 31, 39 [x 2]; 22:3, 4; 23:7, 30, 37, 39, 49; 30:13; 33:25; 36:18, 25; 37:23; 44:10, 12).

<sup>454</sup> E.g. Kutsko 2000: 32-34; Bodi 1993: 481-510; Zimmerli 1979: 187.

<sup>455</sup> Zimmerli (1979: 187) observes that different terms for 'idols' are used in Isaiah and Jeremiah, which leads him to surmise that that was common parlance of the Jerusalem priesthood. In *Ezekiel*, גִּלּוּלִים are found as features of sanctuaries in the 'high places' (6:6).

<sup>456</sup> Lee 2016: 152.

<sup>457</sup> Greenberg (1997: 624) refers to the model of Dagon (1 Sam. 5). See also Jer. 43:12. A similar assault against Egypt's gods and her people is found in the Egyptian plague narratives (Exod. 12:12 [P]; Num. 33:4).

sacred name of Memphis is *Hwt-k3-ptḥ* ‘Ka, mansion of Ptah’, which underlies (Gk.) Αἴγυπτος ‘Egypt’.<sup>458</sup> This cultic centre of Ptah, located fifteen miles south of the southern apex of the Nile Delta, was the capital of Egypt and residence of the Pharaohs for much of its history. In Ezekiel’s time, the city was home to a Jewish colony.<sup>459</sup> Ptah was a creator god, celebrated for his creation by word of mouth.<sup>460</sup> It is understandable, therefore, that destruction of Egypt and her gods begins for *Ezekiel* in Memphis where there will no longer be an Egyptian ruler. This is important, since the association in Egyptian thought between their ruler and deity requires explicit denunciation of both.<sup>461</sup> Indeed, Tuell contends that the association with idols and the prince of Egypt is deliberate since, as Pharaoh is regarded as a god in Egypt, he is, in a sense, ‘a sort of *living* idol’.<sup>462</sup> Thus, *Ezekiel*’s polemic against Pharaoh may be perceived in his use of the term נָשִׂיךְ ‘prince’, which Joyce suggests is used provocatively to rob the sovereign of his pretensions.<sup>463</sup> In this way, Yahweh will instil fear in all Egypt. After all, says Boadt, if Yahweh can abandon Israel for her rebellion, how much more will Egyptian idolatry incur his judgement.<sup>464</sup> It is more likely, though, that *Ezekiel* is concerned about Israel’s idolatry and is not so interested in that of Egypt but is simply using it as an illustration for the benefit of the exiles.<sup>465</sup> His prophetic mission is to ensure the return of Israel to Yahweh (2:3; 3:21; 33:11); indeed the on-going motivation for this is nothing if not compelling: ‘their blood I shall require at your hands’ (3:18; 33:6). Moreover, if Yahweh

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<sup>458</sup> *Ai-ku-pi-ti-yo* in Linear B (Redford 2008b: 689).

<sup>459</sup> Redford 2008b: 689. Jeremiah speaks of Judeans who had settled in Migdol, Tahpenes, Memphis and Pathros (Jer. 44:1).

<sup>460</sup> Redford 2008b: 689; cf. *ANET* 1950: 4-6.

<sup>461</sup> For divine kingship in Egypt, see Bright 1981: 39.

<sup>462</sup> Tuell (2009: 211) also argues that the title ‘prince’ rather than king or Pharaoh is designed to emphasise the humiliation of the Egyptian ruler.

<sup>463</sup> Joyce 2007: 183. See also translation note on LXX ‘ruler’.

<sup>464</sup> Boadt 1980: 78.

<sup>465</sup> Cf. Lee 2016: 152.

is portrayed treating profane Egypt's idolatry this seriously, the exiles might imagine how much more seriously he would treat that of Israel. Thus, if this illustration, which the present thesis contends projects Israel's guilt onto the nations, was appreciated by Ezekiel's audience to the extent that it inspired acknowledgment of their own idolatrous shortcomings, then the prophet would have fulfilled his mandate while paving the way for the restoration of the exiles.

This judgement is described in terms of the desolation of Pathros (v. 14).<sup>466</sup> As well as laying waste to Pathros, Yahweh will set fire to Zoan. The eastern delta is identified by reference to Zoan, a place name that identifies a major city lying on the lower Tannic branch of the Nile,<sup>467</sup> 29 miles south of the Mediterranean.<sup>468</sup> Yahweh will also execute judgements on Thebes. Second only in importance to Memphis, and centre of the cult of Amon (cf. Nah. 3:8),<sup>469</sup> the state god of the New Kingdom,<sup>470</sup> Thebes is located 440 miles south of the Mediterranean and 150 miles north of Elephantine (Syene). Testament to the halcyon days of Thebes are the temples of Luxor and Karnak<sup>471</sup> on the east, and the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of the Nile.<sup>472</sup> The significance of Thebes is reflected in *Ezekiel's* emphasis (vv. 14, 15, 16) on its destruction.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Cf. 29:14 exegesis.

<sup>467</sup> MT זֵעַן 'Zoan'; LXX Τάσις.

<sup>468</sup> Redford 2008g: 1107. The importance of Zoan is reflected in Isaiah's designation 'the princes of Zoan' (Isa. 19:11).

<sup>469</sup> MT אֲמוֹן 'No', 'Thebes', referred to in Nah. 3:8 as אֲמוֹן אֲמוֹן 'No (i.e. Thebes) of Amon'.

<sup>470</sup> 'The New Kingdom' refers to the period 1550-1069 BCE (Kitchen 2008: 329).

<sup>471</sup> Joyce 2007: 184.

<sup>472</sup> Redford 2008f: 442-43.

<sup>473</sup> Cf. Jer. 46:25.

The imagery of divine wrath being poured out is expressed elsewhere in *Ezekiel*;<sup>474</sup> here it is directed to Pelusium ‘the stronghold of Egypt’ (v. 15).<sup>475</sup> In the same way that *Ezekiel* speaks of Yahweh destroying the stronghold of Israel (24:25), so he will destroy that of Egypt. Situated in the north-eastern delta, 20 miles west of the modern-day Suez Canal and just south of the Mediterranean coast, Pelusium, modern Tell Farama, was a key military city.<sup>476</sup> Mention of it here with Thebes, at the opposite end of the Nile, conjures up an image of wholesale judgement as the pomp of Egypt is severed. Having set fire to Zoan (v. 14), Yahweh declares his intention to destroy all Egypt with fire. As a consequence of this immolation, Pelusium will experience agonising death throes while Thebes will suffer the ignominy of invasion and Memphis will experience constant distress (v. 16).<sup>477</sup>

The carnage continues as young warriors from On and Pi-beseth fall and their cities are trounced (v. 17). The city of On (Heliopolis) is located at the apex of the Nile Delta, 10 miles north of Cairo. Known in Egyptian as *lwnw* ‘pillar town’, it was the cultic centre of Re and Atum, Egyptian sun gods.<sup>478</sup> Not far from On is Pi-beseth, located 39 miles northeast of Cairo in the eastern delta, which enjoyed its greatest heyday during the 22nd Dynasty.<sup>479</sup> The toponym Pi-beseth (פִּי בֵּסֶתַי) is derived from Egyptian *Pr-b3stt* ‘house of Baste’ (Gk. Βουβάστος ‘Bubastis’), the lioness goddess, who was later associated with the cat and is identified by the Greeks with Artemis.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>474</sup> Ezek. 7:8; 9:8; 14:19; 20:8, 13, 21, 33; 21:36 (31); 22:22; 36:18; cf. pp. 67, 137.

<sup>475</sup> MT מִעוֹן ‘refuge’, ‘stronghold’.

<sup>476</sup> Meltzer 2008: 221.

<sup>477</sup> See translation note v. 16 p. 255.

<sup>478</sup> Redford 2008a: 122. Cf. Jer. 43:13, which speaks of the obelisks of Heliopolis.

<sup>479</sup> Founded under Sheshonk 1 (945-924), and known as the Libyan or Bubastite Dynasty, this era lasted until circa 715 BCE (Redford 2008e: 370).

<sup>480</sup> Redford 2008e: 371. Herodotus describes the breath-taking temples of Baste (*Hist.* ii. 138).

The brutal terms in which the massacre has been described have a cosmic feel, discernible as the day darkens (v. 18), and Egypt is covered by a cloud, perhaps echoing the day of clouds in v. 3. The Hebrew תַּחֲפַנְהֵס 'Tehaphnehes', a variant of Tahpanhes (Jer. 43:9), reflects Egyptian *t3-h(t)-n.t-p3-nhsy* 'the Fortress of Penhase'. The city was situated 15 miles southwest of Pelusium in the north-eastern delta, popularly identified by the Greeks with Daphnae.<sup>481</sup>

At Tehaphnehes on this dark day, Yahweh will break the yoke of Egypt (v. 18). According to Cooke, MT גִּזְרֵת 'bars' (of a yoke) is used as a figure of tyranny.<sup>482</sup> Zimmerli, however, prefers LXX σακήπτρον 'staff'.<sup>483</sup> As Egypt broke 'like a staff of reed' under Israel (29:7), so Yahweh will break Egypt's supporting staffs. Alternatively, a royal allusion of σακήπτρον 'sceptre' (cf. Ps. 45:7 [6]) is possible and suggestive of the downfall of Pharaoh himself (cf. Ezek. 31), particularly in the light of the association of Pharaoh's palace in Tehaphnehes. Elsewhere, the breaking of a yoke is an image of liberation (Jer. 28:10), so here (Ezek. 30:18), with the prospect of an end to Egypt's tyranny, and the hope of restoration for Israel on the horizon (cf. 29:21), the image of 'liberation' evoked by the breaking of a yoke is plausible. As Yahweh broke the yoke of Egyptian dominion when he brought his people out of Egypt (Lev. 26:13), so he intends to break that dominion here (Ezek. 30:18). When read with my argument to the fore, one may discern that *Ezekiel* could be employing this imagery to highlight the theological ruse I have suggested. In this instance, having claimed (albeit implicitly) to know better than Yahweh

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<sup>481</sup> Lambdin 1962: 510.

<sup>482</sup> Cooke 1936: 334.

<sup>483</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 127.

by seeking assistance from Egypt, the burden of the exiles' guilt is rhetorically removed with the destruction of the Egyptian yoke so that the process of restoration can begin.

Either way, a political collapse of Egypt that includes its dependent towns is clearly envisaged, as its proud strength comes to an end (v. 18).<sup>484</sup> These events will constitute Yahweh's judgements on Egypt (v. 19).<sup>485</sup> The basic recognition formula<sup>486</sup> that ends this oracle emphasises that Egypt is not ruled by Ptah, Baste, or the earthly ruling Pharaohs, but, in *Ezekiel's* colourful portrayal, it is Yahweh who reigns in total sovereignty over Egypt. Indeed, Yahweh will show his sovereignty over creation by drying up the Nile and by turning day into darkness.

#### 5.4.3 Summary

The theme of the Day of Yahweh dominates this oracle. It is clear that, for *Ezekiel*, time has quality as well as duration; it is holy. The on-going humiliation of Egypt leaves no room for doubt: Egypt is not to be relied upon. I noted an emphasis on the judgement of fire and discussed the relationship between fire, wrath and holiness. The imagery of burning was something to be understood as provoking terror of such torment in the prophet's congregation. The recognition formula was seen to have a hortatory intent: *Ezekiel* is keen for the exiles to avoid the Day of Yahweh as a possible future. As such, it serves as a wake-up call that encourages the exiles to seize the day.

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<sup>484</sup> For the phrase עֹז גִּבּוֹר 'proud strength', see also Ezek. 7:24; 24:21. This example of a phrase appearing in the OAN and the oracles against Israel, is used to bolster Boadt's (1986: 198) argument for the importance of the OAN within the overall schema of the book.

<sup>485</sup> For Yahweh executing שְׁפָטִים 'judgements', cf. exegesis 25:11 and esp. 28:22.

<sup>486</sup> Category A3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

## 5.5 Ezek. 30:20-26

### 5.5.1 Translation

20 In the eleventh year, on the seventh day of the first month,<sup>487</sup> the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

21 ‘Son of Man, I have broken the arm<sup>488</sup> of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and behold, it has not been dressed<sup>489</sup> to promote healing,<sup>490</sup> to set a splint<sup>491</sup> to dress it,<sup>492</sup> to strengthen it to hold a sword.

22 Therefore, Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>493</sup> “Behold, I am against<sup>494</sup> Pharaoh, king of Egypt, I will break his arms, the strong one and the one which was broken<sup>495</sup> and I will make the sword drop from his hand.

23 And I will scatter the Egyptians<sup>496</sup> among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> I.e. 29 April 587 (Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 28).

<sup>488</sup> LXX βαρραχίωνας (pl.).  $\tau$  interprets ‘might’ (Levey 1987: 88).

<sup>489</sup> MT לחבשה ‘dressed’ from חבש ‘to bind’, cf. 16:10; 24:17.

<sup>490</sup> MT רפאות can denote healing in the abstract sense and the concrete sense of administering medicine (cf. Jer. 30:13; 46:11; Sir. 3:28).

<sup>491</sup> MT חתול ‘bandage’, ‘splint’ (DCH 1996: 334), a *hapax* from חתל ‘to swaddle’; cf. 16:4; Job 38:9.

<sup>492</sup> MT לחבשה ‘to dress it’ absent from LXX.

<sup>493</sup> LXX κούριος.

<sup>494</sup> על-אל, cf. 25:3 translation note.

<sup>495</sup> The phrase speaking of two arms is often deleted since ‘arm’ is singular (v. 21 cf. *BHS*).

<sup>496</sup> Cf. translation note v. 19.

<sup>497</sup> A repeat of 29:12b.

24 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and I will put my sword into his hand and I will break the arms of Pharaoh and he shall groan before him, groans of one mortally wounded.<sup>498</sup>

25 I will strengthen<sup>499</sup> the arms of the king of Babylon but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall and they shall know that I am Yahweh when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against<sup>500</sup> the land of Egypt.

26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries and they<sup>501</sup> shall know that I am Yahweh.”

### 5.5.2 Exegesis

In terms of genre, this oracle can be identified as a ‘demonstration oracle’, which intends to announce the character and presence of Yahweh.<sup>502</sup> Many have questioned its authenticity, citing amongst other stylistic issues that of repetition.<sup>503</sup> Block, however, indicates that repetition is a weak mark of inauthenticity; indeed, ‘repetition is often the key to effective communication’.<sup>504</sup> Thus, ‘given the rhetorical function of his oracles’, it

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<sup>498</sup> LXX ‘and he shall bring it [the sword] upon Egypt and he shall plunder it and loot it’ instead of MT v. 24b. But for possible background of MT, see Allen 1990: 118.

<sup>499</sup> MT והחזקתי ‘I will strengthen’ *hiph.*, as opposed to והזקתי ‘I will strengthen’ *pi.* (v. 24), is an instance of different conjugations of the same verb being used for poetic effect in parallel clauses (Boadt 1980: 33, 86; Allen 1990: 118).

<sup>500</sup> על-אֵל, cf. 25:3 translation note.

<sup>501</sup> LXX πάντες ‘all’.

<sup>502</sup> According to Block (1998: 172), these verses (vv. 20-26) are to 30:1-19 what 29:17-21 is to 29:1-16.

<sup>503</sup> E.g. Boadt 1980: 85.

<sup>504</sup> Block (1998: 174) further notes the distinction between ‘inauthentic’ and ‘secondary’. A ‘secondary’ text is a chronological expression, whereas ‘inauthentic’ is one from another hand, perhaps the Ezekiel school.

may satisfactorily be attributed to the prophet,<sup>505</sup> although Hals deems the entire passage to be ‘strangely redundant’.<sup>506</sup> With regard to form, the oracle begins as the word of Yahweh is received by the prophet (v. 20) and speaks of an event that has evidently already happened: ‘I have broken the arm of Pharaoh’ (v. 21). The proclamation is introduced with לְכֵן ‘therefore’ plus a messenger formula and a formula of encounter (v. 22), and the oracle concludes with a recognition formula (v. 26).

A date notice,<sup>507</sup> dated three months after the oracle in 29:1-16, places the oracle after Hophra’s withdrawal from Jerusalem, and the final stages of the siege<sup>508</sup> set the scene for the revelation event. Kohn<sup>509</sup> observes that referring to months by ordinal numbers alone is found only in *Ezekiel*, P and the post-exilic prophets.<sup>510</sup> Elsewhere the name is used, for instance ‘the month of Abib’ (Exod. 23:15; Deut. 16:1). A prophetic word formula introduces the narrative,<sup>511</sup> which begins as the prophet is addressed in typical fashion as בֶּן אָדָם ‘son of man’ (v. 21) and proceeds in the perfect tense, ‘I have broken’. What follows is an extended metaphor based on the image of the arm as an expression of military might.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Block 1998: 173.

<sup>506</sup> Hals 1989: 216.

<sup>507</sup> See translation note p. 278.

<sup>508</sup> Galambush 2001: 554.

<sup>509</sup> Kohn 2002: 48.

<sup>510</sup> Gen. 7:11; 8:4, 5, 13, 14; Exod. 12:18; Num. 9:5; Ezek. 1:1; 8:1; 20:1; 29:17; 30:20; 31:1; 45:18, 21, 25; Hag. 1:15; 2:1, 10, 18; Zech. 7:5.

<sup>511</sup> Hals 1989: 362.

<sup>512</sup> Tuell 2009: 212.

The event to which the broken arm of Pharaoh refers (v. 21) could be the occasion of Hophra's abortive attempt to assist Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 37:5).<sup>513</sup> The imagery of Pharaoh's broken arm draws on recognised traditions which understand the arm as a symbol of strength (Ezek. 20:33).<sup>514</sup> Here, though, it refers to depriving Pharaoh of his military strength.<sup>515</sup> Irony is evident in the use of the image, since Hophra's epithet was 'strong-armed man'.<sup>516</sup> The image also reflects Egyptian mythic elements derived from Egyptian royal rhetoric which refers to the king's muscular arm.<sup>517</sup> Carvalho observes that '[m]any of the oracles against Egypt use images that resonate with the Egyptian religious iconography in a rhetorically sophisticated way to undercut the ideological appeal of Judah's southern ally'.<sup>518</sup> This is particularly striking here, as the image of Pharaoh's arm as a symbol of strength in Egyptian culture<sup>519</sup> is reversed into the broken arm of Pharaoh's defeat.<sup>520</sup>

In the phrase 'and behold!' that follows (v. 21), Greenberg perceives a hint that time has lapsed since Pharaoh's arm was broken, yet despite this warning, Pharaoh has failed to

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<sup>513</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 138; cf. Eichrodt 1970: 420; Block 1998: 175) dates this attempt to 588 BCE, so that by 587 the possibility of renewed hope may have been on the exiles' horizon. According to 2 Kings 25:4, Jerusalem's walls were breached three months later.

<sup>514</sup> As well as the above reference, there seems to be an association with the exodus traditions: 'might of your arm' (Exod. 15:16 J); 'outstretched arm' (Exod. 6:6 P). Cf. the related 'strong hand' (Exod. 3:19 J). This idea is also reflected in Egyptian thought, so contributing to the colourful narrative. E.g., Thutmose IV was 'mighty of arm'; Amenhotep II was a god whose 'arm is great' (Hoffmeier 1986: 378-87).

<sup>515</sup> For this idea, cf. Ps. 10:15; Jer. 48:25. This reversal of the imagery is similar to that of the yoke (cf. 30:18 exegesis, p. 276).

<sup>516</sup> Freedy and Redford 1970: 483.

<sup>517</sup> Carvalho 2015; Freedy and Redford 1970: 482.

<sup>518</sup> Carvalho 2015: 216.

<sup>519</sup> Block 1998: 176; Odell 2005: 386.

<sup>520</sup> Lee 2016: 137.

understand his situation and respond appropriately.<sup>521</sup> This is portrayed by his arm that has not been dressed (שבש 'bound up') to promote healing (v. 21). Failure to attend to his current predicament is also described in terms of the absence of a splint. LXX μάλαγμα 'medicinal plaster' interprets the idea of MT התול as 'splint' in such a way that it closely reflects the familiar remedy for broken bones today. The inclusion of three consecutive infinitive constructs (להשבש 'to dress', להזקק 'to strengthen', להחזק 'to hold') here make for a striking narrative presentation (v. 21). Since Egypt has not taken 'remedial measures', the damage is beyond repair (cf. Jer. 46:11),<sup>522</sup> the arm has not healed and cannot wield a sword. Hence Yahweh's intervention achieves a two-fold purpose: punishment for Pharaoh's interference; and the end of Israel's Egyptian hope. Typically, the combination of לכן 'therefore' and messenger formula (v. 22) signals a transition from indictment to sentence; in the absence of indictment here, though, a rhetorical interpretation of these formulae as connecting parts of the oracle is to be commended.<sup>523</sup> After all, the aim of these oracles is to assert the powerlessness of Egypt and, as Clements notes, 'although these foreign-nation prophecies were addressed to distant peoples and lands, their significance was directly linked to Judah and the fate of the Jews', since 'these were the people who actually heard what the prophet had to say'.<sup>524</sup>

One might speculate that the lack of indictment suggests that the prophet senses a glimmer of response from his audience that would furnish superfluity to such an accusation, although it is acknowledged that this is unlikely to be the reason. However,

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<sup>521</sup> Greenberg 1997: 631.

<sup>522</sup> Greenberg 1997: 631.

<sup>523</sup> Block 1998: 176.

<sup>524</sup> Clements 1996: 137.

leaving that to one side for a moment, one could imagine that, at this stage, the exiles are beginning to appreciate that the rhetorical nature of *Ezekiel's* oracles means they are intended for them. It is *their* pride and *their* rebellion that is being vilified by the prophet. Maybe the satirical portrayal of Pharaoh's strong arm being broken, and the absurdly comical suggestion that the Egyptian king would not attend to his injury, has struck a chord with the exiles, who might in Pharaoh's injury see a reflection of their own. And so, as the repercussions of that become audible at last as they resonate with the exiles' own stubborn response (cf. 2:4) to their brokenness apart from Yahweh, perhaps, even now, they might be persuaded to return to him who promises to bind up their wounds (34:16; cf. Ps. 147:3).

There follows a challenge to a duel formula<sup>525</sup> directed to Pharaoh king of Egypt (v. 22)<sup>526</sup> in which Yahweh lays down the gauntlet, the picking up of which will prove to be somewhat challenging, since now Yahweh intends to break both Pharaoh's arms, the strong one<sup>527</sup> and the one that was previously broken (v. 22). Freedy and Redford suggest that the two arms of Pharaoh refer to the Egyptian army on the one hand and their navy on the other.<sup>528</sup> Boadt further observes the possibility that the broken arm is the defeated Egyptian army, while the healthy arm is its navy still actively supplying Tyre against Babylonian attack, and it was with this assistance that Tyre could withstand the Babylonian assault for thirteen years.<sup>529</sup> Either way, both of Pharaoh's arms will be broken in an encounter with Yahweh, rendering the Egyptian king powerless to hold a sword. As a consequence of Yahweh's intervention and their monarch's incapacitation,

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<sup>525</sup> Hals 1989: 359. Cf. Ezek. 26:3; 28:22; 29:3, 10.

<sup>526</sup> See Ezek. 29:2, 3 and exegesis there. Cf. 31:2; 32:2.

<sup>527</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 139) cautions against asking pedantically if this is Pharaoh's left arm.

<sup>528</sup> Freedy and Redford 1970: 482.

<sup>529</sup> Boadt 1980: 85.

the Egyptians will be scattered (v. 23). In contrast to Ezek. 29:13-16, there is no word of restoration for Egypt here. Boadt<sup>530</sup> observes that many words found in the oracles against Israel are also found in those against Egypt.<sup>531</sup> For instance, one such example, as has already been seen,<sup>532</sup> is the phrase 'scattered among the nations and dispersed throughout the countries' (v. 23), which is found three times in the oracles against Judah, and three times in the OAN.<sup>533</sup>

Boadt suggests that this common phraseology may reflect a lesson for Israel, one 'now being played out before their eyes'.<sup>534</sup> A slightly more nuanced view may be detected from Lyons, who suggests that since the nations have expressed pleasure at Israel's downfall, these semantic links exist because the fate of the nations has become associated with the fate of Israel in the mind of the prophet.<sup>535</sup> It might be added, that the fate of the nations has become associated with the restoration of Israel in the mind of the prophet. Indeed, as I have argued, it is the (rhetorical) fate of the nations that offers an interpretative solution to the theological nodus concerning the expiation of the exiles' guilt that *Ezekiel* appreciated had to be resolved.

The thought in v. 22 is intensified as the drama returns to the arm metaphor in which Nebuchadrezzar's arms will be strengthened to grasp Yahweh's sword (v. 24). Lee observes that irony is evident as Yahweh breaks Pharaoh's arms, making the sword fall

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<sup>530</sup> Boadt 1986: 198.

<sup>531</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 139) observes that the reference to scattering the Egyptians (MT מִצְרַיִם 'Egypt'; cf. translation note v. 19) breaks the connection between vv. 22 and 24 and anticipates v. 26. Zimmerli suggests that this is responsible for LXX's assimilation of v. 24b to 29:19.

<sup>532</sup> Cf. 29:12 exegesis, p. 229.

<sup>533</sup> Ezek. 6:8; 11:16; 12:15; 29:12; 30:23, 26. Others include: 'execute judgements' (5:10, 15; 30:14, 19), 'proud strength' (7:24; 30:18) and 'unsheathe sword' (5:12-14; 30:11).

<sup>534</sup> Boadt 1986: 199.

<sup>535</sup> Lyons 2009: 122.

from his arms and instead delivers his own sword into the strengthened hand of Nebuchadrezzar (Ezek. 30:24).<sup>536</sup> The image ‘persuasively paints a more exalted and powerful status of YHWH in contrast to his adversary, Pharaoh’,<sup>537</sup> although Clements describes this divine activity as ‘a little grotesque’.<sup>538</sup> Thus, with both arms broken, Pharaoh will groan.<sup>539</sup> Kohn contends that the groaning of Egypt’s Pharaoh under the weight of the Babylonians (Ezek. 30:24) appears to be a direct (albeit reversed) literary allusion to the groaning of the Israelite slaves under the weight of the Egyptians found in P (Exod. 2:24; 6:5).<sup>540</sup> However, unlike the groaning that initiated the Israelites’ liberation, the groans of Pharaoh articulate his terminal subjugation, as he writhes in the dynamic throes of an excruciating demise (Ezek. 30:24).<sup>541</sup>

Once again, the prophet assures his audience that it is Nebuchadrezzar’s arms that will be strengthened by Yahweh, and not those of Hophra (v. 25). While Nebuchadrezzar did not defeat Egypt or subject it to exile, the metaphorically broken arm of Hophra did not heal and he lost the support of the army who made their general Amasis Pharaoh. An unsatisfactory three-year co-regency ended when Amasis delivered Hophra to be strangled by a mob in 570 BCE.<sup>542</sup> Thus in the ascendancy of Babylon and the subordination of Egypt, Yahweh will be known.

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<sup>536</sup> Lee 2016: 137.

<sup>537</sup> Lee 2016: 139.

<sup>538</sup> Clements 1996: 137.

<sup>539</sup> As with the dying groan from the city (Job 24:12), Yahweh will not respond. Only these references attest the verb נָאָק ‘groan’. Elsewhere, אָנַק ‘groan’ (Ezek. 9:4; 24:17; 26:15) or נִאָקָה ‘groaning’ (30:24; cf. Judg. 2:18) is witnessed.

<sup>540</sup> Kohn 2002: 66-67, 76, 112.

<sup>541</sup> MT מִלֵּל ‘mortally wounded’, i.e. ‘pierced by the sword’ (cf. 31:17).

<sup>542</sup> Tuell 2009: 213.

The recognition formula (v. 25)<sup>543</sup> witnesses a ב plus infinitive expansion: 'when I put (give)'.<sup>544</sup> The development, which is a summary of Yahweh's preceding activity, depicts Yahweh putting his sword into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, who will stretch it out against Egypt.<sup>545</sup> This menacing gesture, found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,<sup>546</sup> ironically reflects the draconian practice of Egypt.<sup>547</sup> Through this act and its consequence, the nations will recognise the supremacy of Yahweh. A second recognition formula (v. 26)<sup>548</sup> precedes a further exposition highlighting that the purpose of Yahweh's drawn sword is the scattering and dispersion of the Egyptians, the witness of which ensures knowledge of Yahweh. And so, this impressive double conclusion accentuates the objective of this oracle:<sup>549</sup> the demise of Pharaoh is a revelation of Yahweh's presence and power.<sup>550</sup>

### 5.5.3 Summary

Despite the lack of direct indictment, one can imagine that the exiles were beginning to appreciate the rhetorical nature of *Ezekiel's* oracles. It is *their* pride and *their* rebellion that is being vilified by the prophet. Maybe the satirical portrayal of Pharaoh's strong arm being broken, and the absurdly comical suggestion that the Egyptian king would not attend to his injury, has struck a chord with the exiles, who might in Pharaoh's injury see a reflection of their own. Common phraseology between the oracles against Israel and those against the nations may also reflect a lesson for Israel. Indeed, as I have

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<sup>543</sup> Category B2, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>544</sup> Lit. 'give'.

<sup>545</sup> Cf. Yahweh's outstretched hand at Ezek. 25:7, 13 16 and exegesis there.

<sup>546</sup> Cf. 1 Chron. 21:16; Josh. 8:18.

<sup>547</sup> Hoffmeier 1986; cf. Block 1998: 177.

<sup>548</sup> Category A3, Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>549</sup> For a similar double conclusion, cf. Ezek. 37:13-14.

<sup>550</sup> Sweeney 2013: 151.

argued, it is the (rhetorical) fate of the nations, that offers an interpretative solution to the theological nodus concerning the expiation of the exiles' guilt that *Ezekiel* appreciated had to be resolved. Once again, it has been shown that the recognition formula vindicates Yahweh by emphasising that through his acts and their consequences, his supremacy will be acknowledged.

## 5.6 Ezek. 32:1-16

### 5.6.1 Translation

1 In the twelfth year,<sup>551</sup> in the twelfth month, on the first of the month, the word of Yahweh came to me saying:

2 ‘Son of Man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: “You consider yourself<sup>552</sup> a young lion of the nations,<sup>553</sup> but you are like a dragon<sup>554</sup> in the seas; you splash about<sup>555</sup> in your rivers<sup>556</sup> and trouble the waters<sup>557</sup> with your feet, and foul their<sup>558</sup> rivers.”

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<sup>551</sup> Some Heb. Mss and LXX read ‘eleventh’ year.

<sup>552</sup> I.e. ‘you compare yourself to...’ The *niph.* of דָּמָה ‘to be like’ is found only here in MT. Accordingly, some read the homonym ‘to cease’ (so Allen 1990: 129). But LXX ὁμοιωθήs ‘you were likened to’ and the comparison that follows this supports MT (cf. 31:2, 8, 18).

<sup>553</sup> MT כַּפִּיר גּוֹיִם ‘lion of the nations’ is a unique phrase, cf. ‘leader [lit. ‘ram’] of the nations’ (31:11).

<sup>554</sup> Cf. 29:3.

<sup>555</sup> MT וַתִּגַּח ‘you splash about’, from גִּיַח ‘to burst forth’. LXX ἐκεράττιζες ‘you were goring’, understood from נָגַח ‘to gore’.

<sup>556</sup> MT בְּנַחְרוֹתַיךְ ‘in your rivers’ has been emended (since Ewald; cf. BHS, Zimmerli 1983: 154) to בְּנַחְרוֹתֶיךָ ‘in your nostrils’ on account of a clash with נַחְרוֹתָם ‘their rivers’ later in verse. But MT parallels previous בַּיָּם ‘in the seas’ (Day 1985: 94). Moreover, bubbling forth (גִּיַח) from nostrils is more characteristic of hippopotami, which were hunted in Egypt, than crocodiles (Erman and Ranke 1923: 271).

<sup>557</sup> MT וַתְּרַלַּח מַיִם ‘you trouble the waters’ (cf. 32:13). Garfinkel (1983: 65) observes an Akkadian parallel (mê dalāḫu), which carries both concrete and metaphorical senses of political turmoil.

<sup>558</sup> LXX 2nd pers. However, Greenberg (1997: 651) observes a characteristic of *Ezekiel* is to change person in repetition.

3 Thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>559</sup> “I will spread my net<sup>560</sup> over you with an assembly<sup>561</sup> of many peoples and they<sup>562</sup> shall haul you up in my seine net.<sup>563</sup>

4 I will hurl<sup>564</sup> you on the ground, and on the open field will I fling you,<sup>565</sup> and I will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you, and I will satiate the beasts of all the earth<sup>566</sup> with you.

5 I will spread your flesh on the mountains, and fill the valleys with your carcass.<sup>567</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>560</sup> MT רשת ‘net for catching birds or people’ (DCH 2010: 564).

<sup>561</sup> MT בקהל ‘with an assembly’, absent from LXX.

<sup>562</sup> LXX καὶ ἀνάξω σε ‘and I will raise you’ = והעליהיך.

<sup>563</sup> MT בהרמי, lit., ‘in my hunting net/ fishing net’ (DCH 1996: 319), i.e. seine/drag net (cf. 26:5, 14; 47:10).

<sup>564</sup> Cf. 29:5; 31:12 for נטש ‘leave’, forsake’.

<sup>565</sup> MT אטילך ‘I will fling you’ i.e. hurled like a spear (1 Sam. 18:11). LXX πεδία πλησθήσεται σου ‘plains will be full of you’, perhaps influenced by v. 6b (Allen 1990: 129).

<sup>566</sup> MT כל הארץ ‘beasts of all the earth’ hapax variation of כל חית הארץ ‘all the beasts of the earth’ (cf. BHS; Ƨ Levey 1987: 91; Zimmerli 1983: 155; Allen 1990: 128).

<sup>567</sup> MT רמותך ‘your carcass’. Meaning and derivation uncertain: either from רום ‘be high’ (cf. 31:10) or from רמה ‘maggot’, ‘worm’ (cf. Exod. 16:24), i.e. a metonym for ‘corpse’. LXX ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματός ‘from your blood’, where רמותך = מרמך.

6 I will drench the land with your oozing<sup>568</sup> blood,<sup>569</sup> even to<sup>570</sup> the mountains; and the ravines<sup>571</sup> shall be filled with you.<sup>572</sup>

7 I will cover the heavens when you are snuffed out,<sup>573</sup> and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with cloud and the moon shall not shine its light.

8 All the bright lights in the heavens I will darken above you, and I will bring darkness upon your land” declares the Lord Yahweh.<sup>574</sup>

9 “I will disturb<sup>575</sup> the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your broken remains<sup>576</sup> among the nations, to<sup>577</sup> the lands which you have not known.

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<sup>568</sup> MT צפת ‘discharge’ (*DCH* 2010: 145), a *hapax*. From צופ ‘to flow [over]’. LXX ἀπὸ τῶν προχωρημάτων ‘from your excrement’. Some (see Zimmerli 1983: 155) emend to צאה from צאה ‘excrement’ (cf. Ezek. 4:12).

<sup>569</sup> MT מרמך ‘with your blood’, absent from LXX.

<sup>570</sup> על-אל; cf. 25:3. ט ‘on the mountains’ (Levey 1987: 92).

<sup>571</sup> MT אפקים ‘ravines’, lit. ‘channels’ (for water), hence ‘watercourses’ (so NRSV). Cf. 31:12.

<sup>572</sup> MT מניך ‘with you’. Some suggest (Zimmerli 1983: 155; Allen 1990: 130) that this may be an orthographic error for previous מרמך ‘with your blood’; others (Greenberg 1997: 653), that the idea is governed by the image of drenching, not the carcass (v. 5).

<sup>573</sup> MT בכבוהך ‘when you are snuffed out’ (*pi*. infin.), from כבה, a unique expression in *Ezekiel*. It presupposes Yahweh as unexpressed subject (Zimmerli 1983: 155). ט (Levey 1987: 92) has Yahweh as subject, followed by some (Block 1998: 203). Greenberg (1997: 653) observes a passive function to the active infin. (lit. ‘in the snuffing out of you’).

<sup>574</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>575</sup> MT והכעסתי ‘I will disturb’ (lit. ‘I will provoke to anger’), from כעס ‘to be angry’; cf. 16:42 and 8:17; 16:26 (*DCH* 1998: 449). The *hiph*. attested here is unusual in Ezek. (Zimmerli 1983: 160).

<sup>576</sup> MT שברך ‘your destruction’; cf. ‘wreck’ (Ezek. 27:26). LXX misreads as שביך ‘your captivity’ (but see v. 15 LXX ‘scatter’). Boadt (1980: 145) observes *Ezekiel* only uses שבי ‘captivity’ with הלך ‘to go’ (Ezek. 12:11; 30:17, 18). ט paraphrases ‘those broken by war’ (Levey 1987: 92).

<sup>577</sup> על-אל; cf. 25:3.

10 I will make many peoples appalled at you; their kings shall shudder with horror<sup>578</sup> because of you,<sup>579</sup> when I brandish<sup>580</sup> my sword before them; they shall constantly tremble<sup>581</sup> each for their life, on the day of your fall.”<sup>582</sup>

11 For thus says the Lord Yahweh:<sup>583</sup> “The sword of the king of Babylon<sup>584</sup> shall approach you.

12 I will cause your multitudes to fall by the swords of warriors,<sup>585</sup> all of them the most ruthless of nations.<sup>586</sup> They shall devastate the pride<sup>587</sup> of Egypt and all her hordes shall be destroyed.

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<sup>578</sup> MT ישערו 'they shall bristle' ('shudder'), cf. 27:35 MT שערו 'they bristled bristle'. Block (1998: 547) suggests 'the hair [of the kings] bristles with horror'—although 'bristling with anger' is the usual English idiom. Zimmerli's (1983: 53; cf. Allen 1990: 80) translation 'hair stands on end' conveys the sense of fright rather better.

<sup>579</sup> MT עליך 'over (because of) you', absent from LXX.

<sup>580</sup> MT בעופפי 'when I brandish', from עוף 'to fly' (*DCH* 2007: 312). *BHS* suggests בנופפי 'when I wave', from נוף 'to wave'.

<sup>581</sup> MT וחרדו לרגעים, lit., 'they will tremble to the moment'; cf. 26:16.

<sup>582</sup> Cf. Ezek. 26:15, 18; 27:27; 31:13, 16; 32:10.

<sup>583</sup> LXX αὐτῶν.

<sup>584</sup> Cf. 21:24 (19).

<sup>585</sup> MT גבורים 'warriors' cf. 32:21, 27; 39:18, 20.

<sup>586</sup> Cf. 28:7; 30:11; 31:12; 32:12.

<sup>587</sup> MT גאון 'pride' (cf. 7:20; 16:49, 56), often גאון עז 'proud strength' (cf. 24:21; 30:6, 18; 33:28).

13 I will destroy all her livestock from beside abundant waters,<sup>588</sup> and the foot of man shall not trouble<sup>589</sup> them again, the hooves<sup>590</sup> of cattle shall not trouble<sup>591</sup> them.<sup>592</sup>

14 Then<sup>593</sup> I will make their waters settle,<sup>594</sup> and make their rivers run like oil”,<sup>595</sup> declares the Lord Yahweh.<sup>596</sup>

15 “When I make the land of<sup>597</sup> Egypt desolate and when the land is stripped<sup>598</sup> of its fullness, when I strike down<sup>599</sup> all those who live in it, then they shall know that I am Yahweh.”

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<sup>588</sup> MT מים רבים ‘abundant waters’ is a cosmic term (cf. v. 2) that refers to the Nile (Greenberg 1997: 654). On מים רבים see May 1955: 9-21.

<sup>589</sup> MT תרלהם ‘trouble them’, from רלה ‘turbid’. LXX ταραξή ‘it shall disturb’, but cf. end of verse and note there.

<sup>590</sup> MT פרסות ‘hooves’. LXX ἵχνοσ ‘track’, ‘footprint’ sing. thus paralleling רגל (cf. 29:11). Greenberg (1997: 654) indicates disagreement of this kind is not unusual (e.g. 11:5 ‘your thoughts...I know it’; 26:2 and translation note), perhaps arising from a perception of the noun as being collective.

<sup>591</sup> MT תרלהם ‘trouble them’. LXX καταπατήση ‘it shall trample’ (cf. v. 2).

<sup>592</sup> For similar content, cf. 29:11. Greenberg (1997: 654) notes again (cf. v. 2) *Ezekiel’s* style of varying repetition.

<sup>593</sup> אז ‘then’, only here in Ezek. For Boadt (1980: 148) the usage here suggests an archaized expression which introduces a collection of older poetic fragments that have been constructed into a salvation oracle.

<sup>594</sup> MT אשקיע ‘I will cause to sink’ (from שקע), i.e. the mud stirred up in v. 13; LXX ἡσυχάσει ‘it will be at rest’; ט אשקיע ‘I will give rest’. Thus, *BHS* suggests אשקיע ‘I will give respite/cause quiet’, from שקט.

<sup>595</sup> i.e. calmly and clearly. The image is rooted in a Semitic idea (cf. Gen. 27:28; Job 29:6) of ‘paradise plenty’ (Boadt 1980: 148).

<sup>596</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>597</sup> MT את ארץ ‘the land’, absent from LXX.

<sup>598</sup> MT ונשמה (niph.f.part. שמה ‘be desolate’) re-pointed to ונשמה (niph.pf.) with versions and most commentators (cf. *BHS*).

<sup>599</sup> MT בהכותי ‘when I strike down’. LXX interprets ὅταν διασπείρω ‘when I scatter’ (= בזרותי).

16 This is a lamentation,<sup>600</sup> which will be chanted;<sup>601</sup> the daughters<sup>602</sup> of the nations shall chant it; over Egypt and all its pomp they shall chant it, declares the Lord Yahweh'.<sup>603</sup>

### 5.6.2 Exegesis

Following the date formula (v. 1), a lament over Pharaoh is raised (v. 2) in which the Egyptian king's past glory is unflatteringly presented. The first part of the chapter (vv. 2-10) describes the judgement of Yahweh in cosmological terms.<sup>604</sup> A further oracle of judgement presents these ideas in a concrete historical context in which the Babylonian attack is recounted.<sup>605</sup> A similar sequence may be discerned in both oracles (vv. 2-10; 11-15):<sup>606</sup> a messenger formula (vv. 3, 11); an oracle of judgement (vv. 3-8, 11-12 and 13); a prophetic utterance formula (vv. 8, 14); a consequential comment of application (vv. 9-10) or circumstance (v. 15); and an *inclusio* (vv. 2, 16) that completes the unit.<sup>607</sup> While identified as a lament, the lack of dirge metre has been observed, making it highly unlikely it ever functioned as a professional dirge.<sup>608</sup> Indeed, rather than lamenting an

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<sup>600</sup> Cf. 19:14b.

<sup>601</sup> MT וְקִוְּנָהּ 'they shall chant it' 3 pl. LXX καὶ θρηνησεῖς αὐτόν = וְקִוְּנָהּ 2 m.s. (cf. *BHS*).

<sup>602</sup> ט interprets 'villages' (cf. 26:6). For mourning and women elsewhere, see Ezek. 8:14 (cf. Jer. 9:17). Boadt (1980: 150) suggests the phrase possibly 'refers metaphorically to the nations themselves (cf. Ezek. 32:18) as professional mourning women'.

<sup>603</sup> LXX κύριος.

<sup>604</sup> Boadt 1980: 128.

<sup>605</sup> Boadt 1980: 128; cf. Eichrodt 1970: 431, 34.

<sup>606</sup> Based on prophetic formulae, Zimmerli (1983: 157) and Wevers (1982: 170) sub-divide further these two broad divisions.

<sup>607</sup> See Boadt 1980: 127-29. A lack of general agreement characterises commentators' analysis of the structural form of these verses with suggestions varying between three and six sub-sections. See Boadt 1980: 127.

<sup>608</sup> Hals 1989: 225.

event that has already happened, the content looks forward, ‘in anticipatory prophetic fashion’<sup>609</sup> to the fulfilment of this divine proclamation.

A date notice begins the oracle placing it to 3 March 585,<sup>610</sup> two months after Ezekiel received news of Jerusalem’s fall.<sup>611</sup> The minority reading of ‘eleventh’ year<sup>612</sup> may have been influenced by the ambiguous date in 32:17,<sup>613</sup> and from a desire to date this oracle before the fall of Jerusalem (Ezek. 33:21)—although, as Boadt observes,<sup>614</sup> there is no reason why Babylon would divert attention to Egypt before the siege of Jerusalem was over. Either way, this oracle (32:1-16), which continues with a prophetic word formula (v. 1), looks forward to the inevitable fall of Egypt, so ruling out any potential assistance from them.

Addressed as בן אדם ‘son of man’,<sup>615</sup> the prophet is instructed to raise a lament over Pharaoh king of Egypt (v. 2).<sup>616</sup> Cooke suggests the designation ‘lament’ has ‘the sense not of a dirge, but of a tragic song weighted with denunciations’,<sup>617</sup> and Durlleser observes that the lament genre is a powerful rhetorical device which headlines the demise of the subject regardless of the oracle’s content.<sup>618</sup> Although the prophet is directed to speak to the king directly, Block points out that Ezekiel’s ‘real audience

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<sup>609</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 158.

<sup>610</sup> Parker and Dubberstein 1956: 28.

<sup>611</sup> ‘In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month’ (Ezek. 33:21).

<sup>612</sup> See translation note v. 1 p. 288.

<sup>613</sup> ‘In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth of the month’ (32:17). Several Hebrew manuscripts and S read ‘eleventh’ year here also.

<sup>614</sup> Boadt 1980: 129.

<sup>615</sup> For ‘son of man’, cf. 25:2 p. 89.

<sup>616</sup> Cf. Ezek. 29:2, 3; 31:2.

<sup>617</sup> Cooke 1936: 346.

<sup>618</sup> Durlleser 2006: 238.

consisted of his fellow exiles and his primary goal was their mental and spiritual transformation', and that 'for rhetorical purposes' he addresses a hypothetical third party,<sup>619</sup> who in this instance, although considering themselves 'a young lion of the nations', is compared to a dragon in the seas (v. 2). While this comparison is unflattering, it effectively portrays Pharaoh's dominion as extending over land and sea, as well as the terrestrial and cosmic realms.<sup>620</sup>

A number of Egyptian inscriptions depict royal identification with the lion<sup>621</sup> which is frequently the symbol of divinity in Egypt<sup>622</sup> and the ANE.<sup>623</sup> In the 26th Saite Dynasty (664-525 BCE),<sup>624</sup> the kings depicted themselves as sphinxes,<sup>625</sup> their recumbent body symbolising their role as indomitable guardian of the nation.<sup>626</sup> While Yahweh is described as a ravaging lion in the prophets,<sup>627</sup> *Ezekiel* also refers to the kings of Judah as 'young lions' (19:2-3).<sup>628</sup> In this verse (32:2) the additional term 'nations' ('a young lion among the nations') may be a theological comment distinguishing the comparison to Pharaoh from the association with the lion and Yahweh's own, or as a way of

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<sup>619</sup> Block 1997:222-3.

<sup>620</sup> Lee 2016: 134.

<sup>621</sup> E.g. the Kadash Inscriptions of Ramesses II (Gardiner 1960). The royal symbols of Ramesses I and II have a lion running by their chariot. Ramesses II called himself 'the living lion...slayer of his enemies' and Ramesses III described his victory over the Libyans in a similar way: 'the lion, the lord of victory' (Boadt 1980: 130).

<sup>622</sup> E.g. Pakht the lion-goddess of Middle Egypt; Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess; Mehit, lion-goddess worshipped at Thebes and Aker (Seton-Williams and Stocks 1993: 45-46).

<sup>623</sup> E.g. Ishtar (*ANEP* 1969: §522).

<sup>624</sup> Seton-Williams and Stocks 1993: 25.

<sup>625</sup> A sphinx is a mythical creature with the head of a man (Pharaoh) and the body of a lion.

<sup>626</sup> Lloyd 1983: 286.

<sup>627</sup> Isa. 31:4; Jer. 25:38; Hos. 5:14; Amos 3:8.

<sup>628</sup> The lion as symbol of royal power is also attested in Mesopotamia. In Assyria lion hunting was reserved for royalty. See Boadt (1980: 130-32) for further examples of lion imagery in the ANE.

highlighting Pharaoh's perceived sense of power.<sup>629</sup> Either way, in *Ezekiel* the imagery is often blurred<sup>630</sup> as with the idea behind the תנינ image which is likely to be a blend of the Nile 'crocodile' (cf. 29:3, 9) and be mythical<sup>631</sup> in origin.<sup>632</sup> Whatever inspired these ideas, the reference is clearly to Pharaoh and is directed to his *hybris*. Indeed, as Fishbane observes, 'the whole thrust of Ezekiel's visions and predictions challenge the people with divine intentions'.<sup>633</sup> Thus, the emphasis is not on the enmity between the nations and Israel but on the way their *hybris* has offended Yahweh.<sup>634</sup> The idea is to present their paganism in such a way that Israel will be dissuaded from assimilation,<sup>635</sup> so removing the threat to the relationship between Israel and Yahweh.<sup>636</sup> However, Hals contests the assertion made by some<sup>637</sup> that *hybris* is the underlying theme in *Ezekiel's* OAN, on the grounds that Egypt's power is not insolent, and that the theme of *hybris* is not as strong in the oracles against Egypt as it is in those against Tyre.<sup>638</sup> Despite Hals' claim, the motif of *hybris* is self-evident in these oracles (e.g. 29:3). Says Clements, the cardinal offence of *hybris*, 'lifting oneself up against God',<sup>639</sup> is most demonstrably berated in oracles against foreign nations.<sup>640</sup> But while Gowan maintains the charge is

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<sup>629</sup> Zimmerli 1983: 158.

<sup>630</sup> Boadt (1980: 132) points to other examples in Mesopotamian art, e.g. the 7-headed monster with a lion's body and serpent heads (*ANEP* 1969: 671).

<sup>631</sup> Cf. 29:3 exegesis.

<sup>632</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 159) stresses that Ezekiel does not have an actual Egyptian animal in mind, but Greenberg (1997: 651) says it is 'probably the crocodile'.

<sup>633</sup> Fishbane 1987: 186.

<sup>634</sup> Davis 1999: 230.

<sup>635</sup> Davis 1999: 230.

<sup>636</sup> Marzouk 2015: 156.

<sup>637</sup> E.g. Boadt 1980: 179.

<sup>638</sup> Hals 1989: 205.

<sup>639</sup> Clements 1978:65

<sup>640</sup> Against Tyre (Ezek. 28); against Egypt (Ezek. 31; 32). This *hybris* is evident in trade dealings, military pomp, power and aspirations to divinity.

only concerned with the self-exaltation of the king and has nothing to do with Israel,<sup>641</sup> it might be added that even though *hybris* is depicted as being a fault of the nations in these oracles, it is one that Israel is equally guilty of. Indeed, I have argued that it is the *exiles'* guilt on this count that is being projected onto the nations, although the nations were also guilty in this respect.

Be that as it may, as Cooke observes: 'The boastful pride of the Pharaohs is abundantly illustrated by their monuments at Karnak and elsewhere'.<sup>642</sup> Indeed, the boastful pride of Pharaoh was evident in the image of the 'dragon' that we first encountered in 29:3 and which is recalled here (v. 2), although now it refers not to the dragon of the Nile, but to the dragon of the seas. Thus, while not explicitly named, the Nile is portrayed as the dragon's home. In the term מַיִם 'seas', a clearer cosmic relation is discernible,<sup>643</sup> since the terms 'seas' and 'rivers' evoke the primeval waters (Ps. 24:2) and mythical monsters (Ps. 74:13; Isa. 51:9-10), who will ultimately be destroyed by Yahweh (Isa. 27:1). Hence the images *Ezekiel* employs here (32:2) are best understood as a contrast. The regal lion was a symbol of nobility while the sea dragon was associated with chaos and an enemy of Yahweh.<sup>644</sup> Thus one finds that Pharaoh, who considered himself to be a noble lion, is in fact a threatening monster.<sup>645</sup>

Marzouk contends that 'Egypt is a monster because Egypt stands in for the threat of religious assimilation'.<sup>646</sup> Marzouk argues: 'In many cases, monsters are horrific not

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<sup>641</sup> Gowan 1985: 100.

<sup>642</sup> Cooke 1936: 326.

<sup>643</sup> Wevers 1982: 170; cf. Boadt 1980: 181. These cosmic terms are developed in what follows (e.g. vv. 7, 8).

<sup>644</sup> Marzouk 2015: 169.

<sup>645</sup> Tuell 2009: 218.

<sup>646</sup> Marzouk 2015: 152.

because of their difference but because of the erosion of difference'.<sup>647</sup> Thus, 'Egypt stands for...the threat of losing the boundaries between Israel and the nations'.<sup>648</sup> No doubt the prophet's priestly background informed his efforts to regulate boundaries elsewhere (cf. 22:26; 44:23), and this may account for his determination to add a corrective to the erosion of boundaries here. He does this by portraying Pharaoh's ineffective splashing as having all the hallmarks of a noisy and ill-disciplined child at the shallow end of the pool who has simply rendered the water undrinkable. The actions of the dragon represent insubordination against Yahweh and, while the prophet addresses Pharaoh directly, this oracle is for the benefit of the exiles,<sup>649</sup> who, should they appreciate the rhetorical nature of the device, will be suitably convicted of their own rebellion against Yahweh (2:3). Moreover, this is not simply for illustrative purposes; this is a divine word from the Lord Yahweh (v. 3). By this route, the messenger formula introduces the forthcoming judgement.<sup>650</sup>

Instead of hooks (cf. 29:4), Yahweh announces he will use a net to subdue the sea dragon.<sup>651</sup> Thus, a combination of metaphorical imagery is found in the proclamation that the dragon will be gathered in Yahweh's net.<sup>652</sup> While the vigour of this vignette has been observed,<sup>653</sup> Carvalho points out that the image of Yahweh hunting with a net is

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<sup>647</sup> Marzouk 2015: 238.

<sup>648</sup> Marzouk 2015: 238.

<sup>649</sup> Block 1998: 200.

<sup>650</sup> Block (1998: 204-07) discusses this in relation to Yahweh's specific actions against Pharaoh: 1) captured from water (v. 3); 2) flung on land (v. 4); 3) remains scattered (vv. 5, 6); 4) snuffed out (vv. 7, 8); 5) witnesses terrified (vv. 9, 10).

<sup>651</sup> A net can be a metaphor for death (e.g. Eccl. 9:12).

<sup>652</sup> This image is well represented (e.g. Marduk snares Tiamat in *EE* IV:95) in the ANE (Held 1973: 182) where nets are used in hunting (see reliefs in 'Room 10: Assyria: Lion hunts' at: [www.britishmuseum.org/visiting/galleries/middle\\_east/room\\_10\\_assyria\\_lion\\_hunts.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/visiting/galleries/middle_east/room_10_assyria_lion_hunts.aspx)), and to capture enemies (cf. Ezek. 12:13; 17:20; 19:8).

<sup>653</sup> Darr 2001: 1408.

found on three other occasions in *Ezekiel*,<sup>654</sup> all of which are related to the capture of Zedekiah; in this way, contends Carvalho, *Ezekiel* links the fate of the two leaders.<sup>655</sup> However, in a different vein, Marzouk argues that the prophet ‘subverts the Egyptian claim of power by means of integrating the funeral dirge with the combat myth’.<sup>656</sup>

The metaphorical imagery and the concrete notion of an assembly of many peoples blend in this verse (v. 3), as elsewhere in *Ezekiel* (31:6).<sup>657</sup> As Tuell points out, in 29:4-5 it is Yahweh alone who will capture the sea dragon, while here (32:3) it is ‘with an assembly of many peoples’.<sup>658</sup> This expression appears twice in *Ezekiel* (23:24; 32:3) and three times in P (Gen. 28:3; 48:4), but nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. However, whereas in P the phrase is related to blessings promised to Israel, in *Ezekiel* it refers to foreign nations who contribute to Israel’s demise.<sup>659</sup>

In the use of הרם ‘seine net’ (v. 3), *Ezekiel* might deliberately be evoking the sense of the cultic use of the homonym ‘devoted object’, in which the object is banned from profane use and devoted to Yahweh for destruction (cf. Lev. 27:21; Deut. 7:26). It is striking that רשת ‘net’ is not used here as it is earlier in the verse (cf. 12:13; 17:20) to equal effect. However, whereas the seine net is cast and reeled in by an assembly of peoples, it is Yahweh who will hurl the dragon onto the ground. Once lifted from the watery seas, it will be flung into the open field (v. 4). Hence, unlike Tiamat, who,

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<sup>654</sup> Ezek. 12:13; 17:20; 19:8; cf. 47:10.

<sup>655</sup> Carvalho 2015: 214; cf. Bodi 1991: 165, 69.

<sup>656</sup> Marzouk 2015: 167.

<sup>657</sup> Greenberg 1997: 651.

<sup>658</sup> Tuell 2009: 218; see also translation note.

<sup>659</sup> Kohn (2002: 71) suggests that the difference hinges on a different understanding of the term עם. In P it can mean ‘kin’ as well as ‘people’, while in *Ezekiel* it is used to designate ‘people’ or ‘nations’ (עַמִּים).

according to *Enūma eliš*, was also hunted by a net, the cosmos being created out of her body by Marduk, in *Ezekiel*, birds and beasts will descend on the carcass of the chaos monster to gorge themselves on the ample carrion (v. 4; cf. 29:5).<sup>660</sup>

The dismemberment of the dragon emphasises Yahweh's ability to annihilate the monster,<sup>661</sup> the sheer size of which is indicated by the preponderance of flesh that is sufficient to spread on the mountains and fill the valleys (v. 5). Whereas the mountains supplied a safe haven for Israel's survivors of Yahweh's judgement (Ezek. 7:16), here they provide the venue to exhibit the canvas on which the palette of Yahweh's work is displayed.<sup>662</sup> Moreover, unlike the body of Israelites that is vividly described by the prophet being dramatically revived (Ezek. 37:1-14), the body of the dragon will remain devoid of life.<sup>663</sup> The lack of burial is the final humiliation for the Egyptian monster,<sup>664</sup> with the finality of this condition being underlined by the development of the idea in which the blood of the carcass will drench the land to the mountains and ravines (v. 6).<sup>665</sup> People travelling in those parts will not fail to see the strewn limbs and so the might of Yahweh.<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> Marzouk 2015: 186.

<sup>661</sup> Marzouk 2015: 185.

<sup>662</sup> Cf. Ezek. 35:8.

<sup>663</sup> Marzouk 2015: 188.

<sup>664</sup> Marzouk 2015: 186.

<sup>665</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 160) observes a crescendo of 'gruesome traits' from 29:5 to 31:12 to 32:4-6. This is not a normal animal but one of mythical proportions, or as Zimmerli observes, 'a world beast of cosmic dimensions'. The language used reflects Assyrian usage found in the inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser I: 'I piled up the corpses of their warriors on the mountain ledges and made their blood flow into the hollows and plains' (Grayson 1972: 9; *ARAB* 1926: 78) and in the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal II: '...dyed the mountain red with their blood, and filled the ravines and torrents of the mountains with their corpses' (Grayson 1972: 135; *ARAB* 1926: 142).

<sup>666</sup> Marzouk 2015: 186. Margulis (1967: 335-36) discerns a resemblance between the ideas found here and those presented in the Egyptian Myth of Edfu.

Greenberg observes that the reference to the land is to the alluvial flood-plains of the river Nile.<sup>667</sup> Against this backdrop, the description of the monster's ignominious end is particularly vivid.<sup>668</sup>

The Hebrew term אַפְיָק 'ravines' evokes<sup>669</sup> the deepest part of the valley<sup>670</sup> (i.e. stream-bed),<sup>671</sup> and it is used here to convey a sense of entirety. As Davis observes: 'Ezekiel's consummate skill in manipulating the images that attach to the foreign nations breaks the power of their absolutising myths'.<sup>672</sup> Marzouk agrees: '[A]scribing a monstrous body to Pharaoh/Egypt discloses Egypt's identity in relation to Israel. Egypt should not be perceived as a political ally and as a source of trust and confidence; rather, it stands in for religious chaos and political turbulence.'<sup>673</sup>

A change of scene punctuates the narrative; Yahweh's wrath is transposed to a cosmic plane as he vows to 'cover the heavens' (v. 7). This development is in keeping with the cosmic symbolism of the תַּנִּינִים, whose destruction has cosmic repercussions as the sun, moon and stars are darkened.<sup>674</sup> Irony is perceptible as the prophet portrays the sun-

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<sup>667</sup> Greenberg 1997: 652.

<sup>668</sup> Block 1998: 205.

<sup>669</sup> See translation note.

<sup>670</sup> Cf. MT גַּאִיּוֹת 'valleys' (v. 5).

<sup>671</sup> HALOT 1994: 78.

<sup>672</sup> Davis 1999: 233.

<sup>673</sup> Marzouk 2015: 157.

<sup>674</sup> Tuell 2009: 218.

god Pharaoh's sky being darkened by Yahweh.<sup>675</sup> The notion of doomsday darkness<sup>676</sup> is quickened by the figurative image of Pharaoh's wick being extinguished in judgement<sup>677</sup>—language that evokes the Day of Yahweh for Egypt (Ezek. 30:3, 18).<sup>678</sup> In this way, by showing that these images are simply cultural productions not eternal truths,<sup>679</sup> *Ezekiel's* persuasive rhetoric underlines the timeless (and imageless) identity of the reality that is Yahweh.

Just as life in Egypt is dependent on the Nile, so is it conditional on the sun. However, unlike Egyptian mythology, in *Ezekiel*, the sun will not reappear. Yahweh will bring darkness upon the land (v. 8).<sup>680</sup> The proposition to block all the lights of heaven and darken the land of Egypt is a reprise of the great plagues of the exodus,<sup>681</sup> and this forthcoming event will show Pharaoh that the true creator God<sup>682</sup> is the one whose proclamation of judgement is being made (v. 8).

Having been expressed as cosmic mourning, the distribution of the dragon's broken remains is related to a comprehensive human emotional response as the hearts of many

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<sup>675</sup> The imagery is reminiscent of Isa. 43:17, which speaks of Yahweh extinguishing the Egyptians in the Reed Sea where they were quenched like a wick. Cf. Joel 2:10. In a different vein, a contrast between Pharaoh being snuffed out and David, 'the lamp of Israel' (2 Sam. 21:17) might be discerned.

<sup>676</sup> The 'darkness' (Tromp 1969: 95) of Sheol is also in view here as the heavens are covered (כסה) with mourning garb or even covered by the grave (cf. Ps. 106:17).

<sup>677</sup> Greenberg 1997: 653. Boadt (1980: 142) notes that the standard expression כוכבי השמים 'the stars of heaven' (cf. Gen. 22:17) is broken up here.

<sup>678</sup> Zimmerli (1983: 160) compares these 'elements of cosmic eschatology', of 'apocalyptic expression', to Joel 2:10; 4:15; cf. Isa. 50:2-3.

<sup>679</sup> Davis 1999: 232.

<sup>680</sup> Marzouk 2015: 199.

<sup>681</sup> Greenberg (1997: 653) sees a parallel use of language and theme in the ninth plague (Exod. 10:21-22), while Boadt (1980: 142) finds a reversal of the order in Gen. 1:14 (P) 'for dramatic effect'.

<sup>682</sup> Sweeney 2013: 158.

peoples are disturbed (v. 9).<sup>683</sup> The notion of exile to unknown lands (v. 9) reflects the experience of Israel (6:8; 12:15), and expounds the metaphorical description of vv. 5-6.<sup>684</sup> And so, as Pharaoh's undignified swansong is performed for the benefit of many, their response will reverberate as shudders, and as Yahweh brandishes his sword, kings and their subjects will quake, in the light of this grim parade (v. 10).<sup>685</sup> Although 'the eschatological horizon has evidently retreated',<sup>686</sup> it is an apocalyptic event that leaves a stark warning for kings to take note of Yahweh, who alone is sovereign on the Day of Egypt's fall (v. 10).<sup>687</sup> As Marzouk observes: 'The body of the monster is a site of divine punishment and is a mythic, corporally-inscribed "text of terror" that spreads horror in the hearts of the surrounding nations'.<sup>688</sup>

Thus, Yahweh's might is affirmed: it is a power that has the capacity to darken the heavens and terrify the nations. It was on the basis of this revelation, says Hals, that hope and trust in Yahweh's future acts rested, although within the confines of this unit that confidence remains implicit.<sup>689</sup> While it is accepted that much within this unit remains implicit, nevertheless, and in support of my thesis, it is the actions of Yahweh that invite this response.

A further oracle, in which Yahweh's cosmic victory is interpreted in terms of Nebuchadrezzar's historical involvement, is introduced by a messenger formula (v. 11). Despite this concrete context, here, as at 30:24-25, the sword in the hand of

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<sup>683</sup> See translation note.

<sup>684</sup> Allen 1990: 131.

<sup>685</sup> This motif is found in the oracles against Tyre (26:15-18; 27:28-36; 28:19).

<sup>686</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 434.

<sup>687</sup> I.e. the Day of Yahweh; cf. 30:3 exegesis, p. 259.

<sup>688</sup> Marzouk 2015: 189.

<sup>689</sup> Hals 1989: 225.

Nebuchadrezzar is Yahweh's. Indeed Nebuchadrezzar *is* Yahweh's sword,<sup>690</sup> since Nebuchadrezzar's role is merely to actualise in the earthly realm<sup>691</sup> the cosmic defeat of chaos by Yahweh.<sup>692</sup> Thus, despite being the main aggressor, Babylon is not included in *Ezekiel's* oracles of judgement against foreign nations, because, in the eyes of Ezekiel, Babylon was ordained by Yahweh to be his instrument of punishment for Israel.<sup>693</sup> The fact that Babylon is absent in *Ezekiel's* OAN suggests to Davis that they serve a different purpose from the OAN in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Whereas in those prophecies the destruction of Babylon functions, maintains Davis, as an indirect promise of salvation to Israel, in *Ezekiel's* oracles, the purpose is to present object lessons for the exiles (cf. 23:13)—the fate of the nations clarifies their own.<sup>694</sup> It is a view that supports my own: the point of the OAN is to illustrate the exiles' own shortcomings, and the prophet does this, so this thesis contends, by projecting Israel's rebellion against Yahweh, as being that of the nations. Moreover, in the oracles against Egypt, the object lesson is particularly evident since, as Carvalho observes, Israel had forsaken its identity in the pursuit of the illusory Egyptian power.<sup>695</sup>

The swords of Nebuchadrezzar's task-force, 'the most ruthless of nations' (v. 12), are requisitioned by Yahweh (cf. 30:11) to utterly humiliate the Egyptian army and the nation's pride. The ambiguous terms הַמְּנוֹן 'multitude' (i.e., 'army'), 'wealth', 'pomp' and גִּאווֹן 'pride', 'magnificence' point to Ezekiel's perception of a bifurcated reality. Indeed,

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<sup>690</sup> Cf. 32:10.

<sup>691</sup> Durlleser 2006: 222.

<sup>692</sup> Marzouk 2015: 181.

<sup>693</sup> Cooke 1936: 281.

<sup>694</sup> Davis 1999: 228.

<sup>695</sup> Carvalho 2015: 220.

the frequency of their occurrence suggests this was a deliberate ploy.<sup>696</sup> I have discussed the prophet's mission in terms of highlighting the presence of Yahweh for the benefit of the exiles, whose major concern, quite understandably, was the unknown future. As I have discussed with reference to the Day of Yahweh,<sup>697</sup> it seems that the prophet's rhetoric is aimed at alleviating this concern by helping them appreciate a bifurcated reality of the unseen present. It is in this endeavour, so I contend, that the recognition formula is crucial, since it is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh. Ezekiel's vocation compels him to persuade the exiles that by responding to the invitation inherent in the formula, the covenantal experience of knowing Yahweh will assure them that the future they hope for will happen, and that the divine presence they cannot see, is nevertheless very real.

For all that, the devastation will extend to Egypt's livestock, whose destruction from beside the Nile (v. 13) reflects the demise of the water dragon (v. 2). However, whereas in v. 2 the rivers are muddied as the monster stamps his feet in ineffectual and petulant pride, here (v. 13) the meaning is different. Because of the destruction, the rivers will never again be troubled by the feet of man or the hooves of beast as they drink their fill from the abundant water, once taken for granted by Egypt. Now, though, Yahweh will remove all uncleanness from the waters and restore its calm purity, an image that reflects the idea of sabbatical rest<sup>698</sup> for the land (Lev. 26:34-35).<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> הַבְּרִיחַ is found 5 times in the oracles against Judah, 13 times in the OAN and once in the oracles against Gog, and וַיִּשְׁבְּ appears 5 times in the oracles against Judah, 4 times in the OAN and once more against Judah in 33:28.

<sup>697</sup> Cf. 30:8 exegesis, p. 266.

<sup>698</sup> See translation note 'waters settle' (v. 14).

<sup>699</sup> Greenberg (1997: 658) observes that in Leviticus, Yahweh's power was affirmed through the Sabbath years enforced by devastation of the land; so too here, Yahweh's supremacy is shown in the devastation of Egypt and the enforced running of the Nile like oil.

Notwithstanding this, devoid of life, their waters will settle (v. 14).<sup>700</sup> While Wevers argues that the phrase ‘their waters’ refers to the Nile, which contrasts with the mythological sense of the waters in v. 2,<sup>701</sup> Durlesser contends that the imagery of the troubled and calm waters (vv. 2, 14) frames the narrative in an *inclusio* pattern, offering a metaphorical way of viewing the political climate in the ANE.<sup>702</sup> Read this way, the troubled waters express a belief that Egypt’s policies are in turmoil, while the clear waters are the consequence of Yahweh’s victory. Eichrodt also postulates that the clear water is a direct reference to the muddied waters of v. 2 that is reinterpreted to denote devastation of the land,<sup>703</sup> the result of which is reflected in the settled waters. However, for Sweeney, the settled waters which flow like oil (v. 14) recalls the natural cycle of the Nile that rises and recedes in spring, and which, on this occasion, will empty the land of its inhabitants.<sup>704</sup> Perhaps, though, it is a combination of these ideas that is most suitable. The removal of all uncleanness from the waters might be understood to illustrate the notion of expiation I have discerned elsewhere in these oracles. An idea, so I have suggested, is a prerequisite to the oracles of restoration that follow and could account for the placement of the OAN at this point in the book. If this is indeed the case, then the image of the undisturbed water that has been enriched with alluvial sediment flowing like oil, might support this argument, since the alluvium deposited as the Nile rises and then falls again, will bring restoration to the devastated delta. What is more, if

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<sup>700</sup> Joyce 2007: 187.

<sup>701</sup> Wevers 1982: 171.

<sup>702</sup> Durlesser 2006: 223. In fact, this forms a double *inclusio* within the oracle with the command to raise a lament over Pharaoh (vv. 2, 16) framing the whole (p. 224).

<sup>703</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 434.

<sup>704</sup> Sweeney 2013: 159. Cooke (1936: 349) observes that the comparison between the smoothly flowing stream, and oil, is found only here. But cf. Job 29:6; Psalm 55:22 (21); Prov. 5:3 where the meaning is different.

read with my argument for the projection of Israel's guilt onto the nations, then this image of restoration, if perceived by the exiles as an illustration for their benefit, might offer a glimmer of hope for their own restoration to the land. What is more, highlighted by a prophetic utterance formula,<sup>705</sup> the prophet's audience is reminded that this oracle is the word of *their* God, the Lord Yahweh (v. 14).

The judgement that was expressed in terms of the removal of all life from the rivers and the purification and restoration of the Nile, is now articulated in the strongest possible terms with reference to the land of Egypt. As Yahweh removed Israel from their land, so he will remove all life from Egypt, as it is stripped of its fullness and made desolate (v. 15). Then the Egyptians will recognise the deity and acknowledge his sovereignty.<sup>706</sup>

Thus, the basic recognition formula (v. 15),<sup>707</sup> the last in the oracles against Egypt, indicates that this disaster will reveal Yahweh as the true God.<sup>708</sup> The stress here is on the one who is in control, and whose power is active in international politics and as such, this is a familiar emphasis in the OAN.<sup>709</sup> Although the subject of עַדְיָ in this formula is the Egyptians, Joyce observes that the 'concern is not with the nations knowing or witnessing YHWH so much as with YHWH being known and witnessed'.<sup>710</sup> Joyce points out that while 'judgement on the nations plays a significant part in Ezekiel...at no point does it appear to constitute in itself the primary motive of YHWH's actions (indeed, the oracles against the nations in Ezekiel seem more about teaching lessons to Israel)'.<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> Hals 1989: 361.

<sup>706</sup> Galambush 2001: 536.

<sup>707</sup> Category A3 Table 1, Appendix p. 329.

<sup>708</sup> Sweeney 2013: 159.

<sup>709</sup> Hals 1989: 218.

<sup>710</sup> Joyce 2010: 152.

<sup>711</sup> Joyce 2010: 152.

These lessons, underlined by the recognition formula, are taught, so I have argued, by projecting the guilt of the exiles onto the nations to illustrate their own fault before Yahweh; this vindicates his activity and invites an appropriate response to him. The lesson, like the second commandment, says Davis, leaves Israel no recourse but to orient itself exclusively to God's singular identity'.<sup>712</sup>

However, for Fishbane, the prophet's lesson for the exiles is a theological paradox: the covenantal judgement and mercy of Yahweh is inescapable and will be made known to them whether they like it or not.<sup>713</sup> As I have argued, this theological paradox is illuminated by the recognition formula which emphasises, as Davis observes, that it is the pattern of Yahweh's action that is revelatory.<sup>714</sup> As I have already noted, this pattern emerges in the wrathful scattering of Israel among the nations, but also in the merciful gathering of them.<sup>715</sup> Moreover, I suggested that it is the gathering that makes sense of the scattering, and it is the scattering that gives the gathering meaning. So, far from being a paradox, this pattern, underlined by the recognition formula, is what vindicates Yahweh's activity by illustrating that divine wrath is what gives divine mercy meaning, and it is *this* that invites a human response.

The concluding remarks focus the lament (v. 16)<sup>716</sup> on the effect of the fall of Egypt where it had initially been directed to Pharaoh (v. 2). The importance of this is underlined by Yahweh's instructions for the news to be promulgated abroad. Durlleser suggests that a dynamic function may be discerned here that seeks to arouse the emotion of the

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<sup>712</sup> Davis 1999: 229.

<sup>713</sup> Fishbane 1987: 186, 87.

<sup>714</sup> Davis 1999: 229; cf. Zimmerli 1982: 96.

<sup>715</sup> Cf. 28:25 exegesis, p. 196.

<sup>716</sup> Although termed a lament, it is not used in a technical sense to refer to the metre (Wevers 1982: 172).

audience, and it is in chanting the lament that this function becomes apparent.<sup>717</sup> It was women who usually performed the mourning chants,<sup>718</sup> and so as women were seen lamenting Tammuz (Ezek. 8:14), daughters of the nations lead the chorus that will be chanted over all Egypt. Thus, this verse (32:16) serves to summarise the chapter's main point, which encourages the hearer not to indulge in the tragic pride of Pharaoh, but rather to recognise that human history is centred upon revelation of what Yahweh is doing in the interests of his purposes.<sup>719</sup> It is a comment that adds considerable weight to my argument. And so, for the exiles, the prophet's primary audience, 'the folly of putting their trust in the kingdom of the Nile' is effectively brought home.<sup>720</sup>

### 5.6.3 Summary

The actions of the dragon represent insubordination against Yahweh and, while the prophet addresses Pharaoh directly, this oracle is for the benefit of the exiles. The destruction of the dragon decisively shows that Yahweh is sovereign, not Pharaoh. It is upon this revelation that hope and trust in Yahweh's future acts rested. I suggested that the prophet's rhetoric is aimed at alleviating the exiles' concern about the future by helping them appreciate a bifurcated reality of the unseen present. It is in this endeavour that the recognition formula is crucial, since it is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh, that bears witness to his unseen presence. The theme of removal and restoration was perceived in the image of rivers running like oil and, it was suggested, this might offer a glimmer of hope for the exiles' own restoration to the land. In this oracle, it was seen that the recognition formula reveals Yahweh as the true God and as such, it teaches lessons like the second commandment, which leaves Israel no

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<sup>717</sup> Durlleser 2006: 227.

<sup>718</sup> Yamauchi 1965; Kramer 1969: 107-33; Jacobsen 1962.

<sup>719</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 434.

<sup>720</sup> Eichrodt 1970: 421-22.

option but to return to Yahweh. It was argued that the theological paradox of Yahweh's wrathful and merciful activity is illuminated by the recognition formula. Yahweh's pattern of behaviour depicted by *Ezekiel* as scattering and gathering, reveals that far from being a paradox, this pattern, underlined by the recognition formula, is what vindicates Yahweh's activity by illustrating that divine wrath is what gives divine mercy meaning, and it is *this* that invites a human response.

## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary of the study

By arguing that the recognition formula is fundamentally a statement of the vindication of Yahweh, I have attempted to understand the theological purpose of the OAN and their position in the book of *Ezekiel*. I envisaged the OAN as a theological bridge spanning the chasm between the oracles of judgement against Israel (1-24) and those of restoration (33-39), and I noted my intention to explore how that bridge might work. To that end, I highlighted three theses, namely: the recognition formula indicates Yahweh's vindication; the recognition formula illuminates Yahweh's wrath and his mercy; and the recognition formula invites a human response.

In chapter 1, I laid a foundation for this work with a brief review of *Ezekiel* research that began with a sketch of the general academic landscape and included a consideration of the book's context and authorship. In the light of this, it was affirmed that Ezekiel's prophetic activity took place solely in Babylonia in the sixth century, and that the book which bears his name was completed at that time and is profoundly influenced by the prophet himself.

I set about my examination of the OAN by observing that as a unit these oracles are frequently overlooked in favour of other sections of the book. Consequently, the significance of the OAN is rarely included in a summary of the prophet's theology, thus highlighting the need for this study. I looked at possible backgrounds for oracles against nations as a genre and discovered that two schools of thought exist. One suggests a military background for the OAN, while the other looks to a cultic setting for the genre. However, since no setting can be conclusively shown, it is recommended that the OAN be viewed as a distinctive genre of their own that developed from many aspects of Israel's life.

As for determining the function of the OAN, scholars' work can be broadly classified as having taken a diachronic or a synchronic approach, of which a variety have been attempted. Since this thesis attempts to understand the theological purpose of the OAN and their position within the book of *Ezekiel*, it consists of a synchronic study that takes the final form of the book seriously, although it is through detailed exegesis of the text that the argument is advanced. It was shown that while most scholars agree that the OAN act as a bridge, there is lack of accord when determining how the bridge works. The lack of consensus has inspired this work that contends that the recognition formula is the vehicle for *Ezekiel's* prophetic message and the function of the OAN may be discerned from the formula.

The introduction to the recognition formula included a survey of scholarship in which it was shown that issues of authenticity meant that, prior to the ground-breaking work of Zimmerli, the formula did not receive much attention. Since Zimmerli's work, however, scholars recognise the formula to be integral to *Ezekiel's* prophetic oracles. It is within this context that the theological thrust of the formula may be understood; indeed, it is only meaningful in connection with the details of the oracles, all of which invariably relate the activity of Yahweh. It was shown that this activity functions as a sign that points to Yahweh with the intention that humans should recognise him. While there is disagreement regarding the original setting of the formula, most agree that a background in oracles against foreign nations is likely. Even so, it is recognised that its application has developed to include oracles of judgement against Israel, although it is also found in oracles of restoration. Whether addressed to the nations or Israel, in judgement or restoration, the formula is viewed as a rhetorical device whose central concern is the revelation of Yahweh. However, the precise function of the formula as a statement expressing the vindication of Yahweh has, until now, not been suggested.

In chapter 2 the recognition formula was discussed in more detail, considering its use elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. I reviewed a selection from Exodus, Deutero-Isaiah and 1 Kings, the books in which scholars variously contend the background to the formula may be found. In so doing, it was demonstrated that, in the book of Exodus, the recognition formula underlines that mighty acts of Yahweh, performed in the sight of the nations, are understood as signs pointing to Yahweh's presence. This idea also runs through *Ezekiel*. In Deutero-Isaiah, the theme of deliverance for Israel is often associated with the recognition formula. While this is also evident in *Ezekiel*, Deutero-Isaiah goes beyond *Ezekiel* by portraying the nations as worshipping Yahweh. As with the book of Exodus, the formula underlines that Yahweh alone is God. The motif of *hybris* is also evident (as it is in *Ezekiel*), the humbling of which is often a cost of knowing Yahweh. In the examples I examined from 1 Kings, I showed that victories ensuing from predictions of Yahweh's activity, witnessed by the nations, that are underlined by the recognition formula, point to Yahweh as the one true God. Essentially, the formula calls attention to the way an historical event demonstrates who Yahweh says he is, and, as such, these ideas have much in common with *Ezekiel's* use of the formula.

Having defined my understanding of the basic formula and its expansions in chapter 2, I looked at this distinction in greater detail in chapter 3 where I assessed a number of examples outside the OAN in *Ezekiel*. It was noted that Yahweh's actions, which on the surface may appear destructive, have the capacity to create a renewed awareness of the divine presence. Indeed, they point in the direction of the book's climactic ending that asserts the divine presence, apprehension of which, I argue, is the substance of *Ezekiel's* prophetic aspiration. Thus, one can see that the purpose of Yahweh's actions is to inspire acknowledgement of his presence. This recognition carries with it the responsibility of witnessing among the nations to Yahweh's justice.

Instances of the basic formula point to Yahweh's vindication, as well as having the by-product of convicting the people of their rebellion. However, it is the expansions that really elucidate the meaning of the formula. For instance, verbal expansions speak of Yahweh's character being revealed by his wrathful activity, a holy manifestation of Yahweh's presence in his acts of judgement.  $\square$  plus infinitive construct developments highlight divine wrath, but at the same time, indicate that this is not endless. Participial developments reveal more of Yahweh's character—it is Yahweh who strikes, yet he is also the one who sanctifies—while nominal expansions appear to offer consolation to the exiles as they frequently include allusions to the covenant. In the related phrases that were considered, similar motifs can be discerned. I also noted that the more complicated the expansion, the greater the insight into Yahweh's character. The cumulative effect emphasises the manifestation of Yahweh's presence by his actions.

Chapters 4 and 5 comprised detailed exegesis, and it is from this work that the main conclusions have been drawn.

## **6.2 Main conclusions**

### **6.2.1 Theological purpose of the OAN**

In an attempt to present my conclusions regarding the theological purpose of the OAN, my three theses should be revisited.

#### **6.2.1.1 Thesis 1: The recognition formula indicates Yahweh's vindication**

It became apparent early in the proceedings that wherever the formula appears, the motif of Yahweh's vindication is present. Even so, until now, no other study has considered the specific significance of the formula in the OAN with reference to the position and function of the OAN in the book overall.

Ultimately, of course, *Ezekiel* appreciates that it was restoration of Israel to the land that would vindicate Yahweh in the eyes of Israel and in the eyes of the nations. In the meantime, however, the prophet employs the recognition formula in the OAN to punctuate the prophet's comprehensive treatise promoting Yahweh's vindication, several strands of which may be detected.

The most obvious strand is the vindication of Yahweh's power. This is evident in all his mighty acts of judgement. These are either described in lurid detail (32:4-6), or depicted using imagery such as that of his outstretched arm (25:7, 13, 16). In the acts of judgement against Egypt, not only is their unreliability emphasised (29:6), but Yahweh's power is also highlighted as he effectively humbles the proud Pharaoh (29:3, 5). However, not only is Yahweh's power vindicated in judgement, it is also vindicated by his redemptive activity (28:24-26; 29:21). Yahweh's vindication is apparent both in the act and in its consequence. For instance, the secure and peaceful lives of his people testify to his power to restore them to the land in the eyes of the nations, and in the eyes of Israel. As well as the vindication of Yahweh's power, his justice is vindicated. This is particularly clear in cases when his sovereignty has been violated. For example, when Edom and Philistia take vengeance into their own hands, Yahweh responds by delivering vengeance by his own hand (25:14, 17). In other cases, Yahweh's justice is to the fore when the judgement of the nations reflects that which Israel has endured (e.g. 30:3; 7:7). In all these cases, the vindication of Yahweh's authority takes centre stage (cf. 25:8, 9, 11), as does his commitment to the covenant. The vindication of Yahweh's faithfulness to the covenant is particularly emphasised in cases where the formula is expanded to include an allusion to the covenant (e.g. 28:26). Elsewhere it is also made abundantly clear. The judgement of Edom by the hand of 'my people Israel' (25:14) is perhaps the most noticeable. Less obviously, covenantal allusions may be

perceived involving language that is reminiscent of the exiles' homeland (e.g. 25:4). Both the notion of the covenant and its association with the recognition formula assert the presence of Yahweh among his people in exile. This point is crucial to the prophet's rhetorical agenda (cf. 48:35) and it is the driving force behind the formula's determined repetition. The assertion of Yahweh's presence is dramatically vindicated in the oracle against Sidon which details the manifestation of Yahweh's holiness (28:22); its association with the recognition formula in that unit adds marked support for this thesis. It is there that one begins to discover that the purpose of these divine acts of power is to bring glory to Yahweh. The acts of power to judge or rescue are geared to this one primary objective (28:22). The glorification of Yahweh effectively vindicates his name, honour and reputation as an all-powerful sovereign God. However, Yahweh is also vindicated by his prophet. By not attempting to justify the word of Yahweh when it stood in contradiction to events (29:18), Ezekiel, and by extension, Yahweh, were vindicated, a point that became more apparent after the prophet's mouth was opened (29:21). *Ezekiel's* concern for Yahweh's reputation is the main theological impetus of the book, and so while this thesis is well supported by our examination of the recognition formula in the OAN, I must come back to my other theses in this quest to clarify the theological function of the OAN.

#### **6.2.1.2 Thesis 2: The recognition formula illuminates Yahweh's wrath and his mercy**

There can be little doubt that the motif of Yahweh's wrath is one that dominates *Ezekiel's* OAN. Frequently described in terms of executing judgement (28:22), these divine acts are invariably underlined by the recognition formula. Since Yahweh cannot be true to his character if he allows sin to go unpunished, his justice is a primary motivation for divine wrath. I suggested that Yahweh's decision to profane the temple (24:21) was the consequence of the people's pride in this sign of his presence, which, I argued, had

made them oblivious to the divine presence itself. From this, it was deduced that Yahweh's wrath was directed against pride. Thus, while the oracles of judgement are addressed to various entities, the object of Yahweh's wrath is the sin that these entities are indicted for, rather than the entities themselves. On the basis of *Ezekiel's* rich imagery that depicts Yahweh's wrath as a cup (23:32-34) that is poured out (22:22) and spent (5:13), the conclusion was drawn that divine wrath is not endless and indiscriminate. Once Yahweh's wrath has been satisfied (16:42), the cup is not refilled. Hence it was recognised that Yahweh's wrath is specifically directed at sin in the interests of divine justice. These acts of divine judgement (whether they be interpreted historically or rhetorically) were appreciated to have the outcome of showing that Yahweh's word is true and to be trusted: what he says will happen, happens. However, not only can wrath be experienced directly from the word and actions of Yahweh, an agent may be the secondary tool of divine wrath (25:14; 30:10). In *Ezekiel's* OAN, divine wrath can take on many forms, as the variety of judgements shows. It can be described in terms of pestilence and bloodshed (28:23), the sword (26:6), and fire (30:14). In addition, a more abstract description is prevalent. Divine wrath can be poured out (30:15) and it can be depicted as wrathful chastisements (25:17). Descriptions even extend to the cosmic plane (32:7), and the image of the Day of Yahweh (30:3). Despite this variety, however, one aspect remains constant, the idea that because Yahweh is just, judgement is unavoidable; no amount of worldly resources can stave off its wrathful onset (30:4; cf. 7:19). Even so, the recognition formula underlines that these divine acts are an occasion to acknowledge the presence of Yahweh. Indeed, the importance of the view that understands Yahweh's wrath as being a holy manifestation that testifies to Yahweh's presence in the human experience of divine judgement was acknowledged.

However, the recognition formula also emphasises that Yahweh's presence may be encountered in his acts of mercy. The passages that speak of Israel's restoration are

where this motif may be most clearly discerned (28:24; 29:21). The manifestation of Yahweh's holiness is a particularly striking image of divine mercy, made all the more so, since one finds Yahweh using the very same people who had profaned his name (22:26; 36:20) and crushed him by their wanton hearts (6:9) as vehicles for his holiness (28:25). This manifestation is witnessed in the gathering of the house of Israel from among the nations (28:25). As I observed however, the people could not be gathered if they had not been scattered (v. 25). Thus, I have argued that it is the gathering that makes sense of the scattering, and it is the scattering that gives the gathering meaning. When considered with reference to the recognition formula, it is an observation that clearly illuminates the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy. By this reasoning, it has been shown that the significance of divine wrath must always be considered with reference to Yahweh's merciful purposes. Moreover, it suggests that appreciating the relationship between divine wrath and mercy is a matter of perspective. One might even imagine that for *Ezekiel*, wrath and mercy are just two sides of the same redemptive shekel. The prophet seems to appreciate that if the coin is flipped landing wrath side up, it is simply a matter of looking underneath that surface where mercy is found supporting it. Of equal importance for *Ezekiel*, though, is the face of mercy. Once encountered, its value should be borne in mind since it comes at the cost of Yahweh's wrath. And while not immediately obvious, there is the third side, the edge, that provides the point of contact between the two, potentially discernible as the gift of life that Yahweh mercifully offers those who, having experienced his wrath, return to him (18:23; 33:11). It is this response, embodied in the image of the third side of the coin, that points us in the direction of my third thesis.

### **6.2.1.3 Thesis 3: The recognition formula invites a human response**

By emphasising the presence of Yahweh in the experience of his wrath and his mercy, the recognition formula invites the exiles (the formula is not found in the context of

deliverance for the nations) to respond to Yahweh by acknowledging their shortcomings and returning to him.

The OAN are themselves a response to the gloating of the nations. Within the unit, the recognition formula, so I have argued, continually invites the exiles to respond to Yahweh who reveals his presence among them by his activity in judgement and restoration. The formula is the link between divine action and human response. Indeed, the purpose of underlining Yahweh's activity with the formula is to elicit an appropriate human response. I have already indicated that, for *Ezekiel*, what constitutes an appropriate response for Yahweh is the return of his people to him so that they might live. *Ezekiel's* prophetic endeavour is motivated by this concern. I have shown that through the careful choice of language, the prophet evokes recollection of the Promised Land (25:4), and the theme of the covenant that is associated with the recognition formula is a perpetual presence simmering below the surface of the text, functioning as a constant reminder of the peace and security that the covenantal relationship calls to mind (28:26).

*Ezekiel* seems to appreciate that restoration to the land is dependent on reconciliation with Yahweh, and this relies on the acknowledgement not just of his presence, but of the exiles' rebellion that created a barrier to their perception of that presence in the first place (33:10). According to *Ezekiel*, it was the people's rebellion that provoked the exile, an event that inspired the prophet's theological ruminations, ones which reveal his understanding of this experience: it is the pattern of Yahweh's activity that is revelatory. So while some have discerned a theological paradox when considering the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy, my conclusion regarding the theological purpose of the OAN is that this pattern, underlined by the recognition formula, is what

vindicates Yahweh, by illustrating that divine wrath is what gives divine mercy meaning, and it is *this* that invites a human response.

### **6.2.2 Theological means in the OAN**

Having reached this conclusion regarding the theological purpose of the OAN, my understanding of how this is accomplished should be reviewed. Several ways have been detected.

First, despite being addressed to foreign nations, these oracles are generally acknowledged to be rhetorical, with Ezekiel's primary audience being his fellow exiles. Thus, my conclusion that the OAN are an illustration given by Ezekiel to make his point and so fulfil his prophetic mandate, makes sense.

Second, I have consistently argued that since it was the pride of the people that precipitated Yahweh's destruction of the temple (24:21), *Ezekiel* considered the essence of the *exiles'* sin to be *hybris*. This observation led me to propose that, rather than presenting *hybris* as the quintessential sin of the nations, these oracles are an illustration designed to show the exiles the nature and extent of their *own* rebellion against Yahweh, which the prophet accomplished by casting the nations in the same light as the exiles. Examples of this include Moab's assertion that the house of Judah is like the other nations (Ezek. 25:8). This reflects the desire expressed by the house of Israel to be like the nations (20:32), which invokes the wrath of Yahweh (v. 33). Indeed, much of the language used to describe the judgement of the nations in the OAN echoes that found in passages that speak of Israel's judgement. For instance, the imagery of the scattering and dispersion of Egypt (29:12) is applied to Israel as well (6:8). What is more, I drew attention to an interpretation that construed the judgement against Israel being transferred to Edom and the nations. By means such as these, I have argued that

the prophet effectively projected the guilt of the exiles onto the nations. The point of this rhetorical ploy was to inspire the exiles' return to Yahweh, a response that would contribute to his vindication.

Third, it has been suggested that Edom has a representative role (Woudstra), which some (such as Müller) advocate applies to all the nations, and this allowed to me to conceive of the unit as a whole in this way.

Fourth, I have highlighted throughout this discussion the important principle of purging and cleansing. This was shown to be borne out in many ways, the exile itself being the dominant example. Having polluted the land and themselves with bloodshed (9:9) and idolatry (23:49), the Israelites were removed from the land so that it could be purified prior to their restoration to it (28:25). The temple itself was removed and replaced in exile with Yahweh himself as a sanctuary in some measure (11:16). Additionally, Yahweh promised to remove the people's hearts of stone and replace them with hearts of flesh (36:26). Imagery in the OAN also bears witness to this principle. For instance, Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, is removed and replaced with peaceful serenity as the countryside is restored to camel pasture (25:5). Once the impurity that troubled the waters of the Nile is removed, they run like oil, laden with restorative alluvium (32:14). And then most significantly is the removal of the 'briars and thorns' (28:24). Having projected the exiles' guilt onto the nations, their removal functioned, so I have argued, as a rhetorical ruse that accords rather well with a cultic theology of expiation. Thus, the vexed question of how the exiles' guilt could be purged in the absence of the temple, could be resolved in a way that would allow for the prospect of their restoration.

Fifth, with reference to Edom's representative role, I discussed the expiatory *asham* sacrifice in which blood is not applied to the altar, but restitution is made by

compensation to the injured party. This bolstered my proposal that, having projected the guilt of the exiles onto the nations, *Ezekiel's* rhetorical removal of the nations illustrates the principles of expiation metaphorically as a theological ruse in order to make way for the oracles of restoration that follow. The theme of compensation that characterises the *asham* was also discerned in the oracle in which Yahweh gives Egypt as compensation for Tyre to Nebuchadrezzar (29:20). The destruction of Egypt meant that Israel would not have their support (cf. 29:6), thus contributing to the inevitability of exile. Since *Ezekiel* appreciated the exile to be part of the journey to restoration, Egypt's destruction is effectively what enabled Israel's renewal. Consequently, this passage could be understood as a case of a nation compensating for a nation (cf. Isa. 43:3-4). As such, it is a development of the principle of *lex talionis*, which is evident throughout the text, one that likely provided at least part of the motivation for Ezekiel's prophetic endeavours (3:18; 33:6).

Sixth, the placement of the unit within the book just after the announcement that the temple will be destroyed (24:21) and just before the news that it has been (33:21), points to the purpose of the OAN. Clues for this purpose may be found when a theological relationship between the judgement of the nations and Israel's restoration is discerned. My conclusion is that this relationship is revealed when the OAN are appreciated as an illustration, informed by Ezekiel's priestly background, that highlights the exiles rebellion by projecting their *hybris* against Yahweh onto the nations whose removal metaphorically expiates the exiles' guilt, thus allowing for the prospect of restoration to the land, and renewal of the covenantal relationship. I contend that the phrase found straight after the OAN contributed to the placement of the unit: 'Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' (Ezek. 33:10). Notwithstanding the fact that many of the OAN presuppose the fall of Jerusalem which is only described at the end of the unit (33:21), it seems that those

responsible for the final editing of the book perceived a relationship, or sought to create the impression of one, between the OAN and the acknowledgement of the people's sin. I conclude that having 'entered into judgement' with the exiles in the wilderness of the peoples (20:35), Yahweh's mode of vindication that is underlined by the recognition formula throughout the OAN, has been acknowledged. Having tarred the nations with Israel's *hybristic* brush, it seems that that removal of the nations has had the desired effect on the exiles. The implicit judgement, inherent in the OAN, appears to have succeeded where direct judgement failed. The carrot seems to have been more effective than the stick. Thus, appropriately shriven, the exiles can anticipate restoration to the land and a new life (33:11) knowing Yahweh.

### **6.2.3 What it means to know Yahweh according to *Ezekiel***

But what, according to *Ezekiel*, does it mean to know Yahweh? Two broad distinctions can be made: what it means for the nations, and what it means for the exiles. Despite the recognition formula's emphasis on the nations knowing Yahweh in the OAN, their experience is somewhat limited compared to that anticipated for the exiles. While no reason is given why the nations should not respond in faith, no indication is given that they have. Accordingly, one must conclude that in *Ezekiel's* OAN, their experience of Yahweh is restricted to acknowledgement of his sovereignty. For the exiles, however, the idea of knowing Yahweh is very different. I have argued that the purpose of the emphasis on Yahweh's presence connoted by the recognition formula, perceived by his acts of wrath and mercy, is to inspire the exiles' wholehearted return to Yahweh so that they might live. Accordingly, eight dimensions to knowing Yahweh may be distinguished in *Ezekiel's* OAN, all of which promote his vindication.

The first dimension is temporal: the value of knowing Yahweh is experienced in the present. I argued that the motif of the Day of Yahweh could be understood to function

rather like science fiction does today. The point of the image of the Day is not to convey a detailed prediction of the future, but rather to describe an imaginary future in which a visionary space is created for the exiles. By reflecting on their current circumstance through the lens of the Day, I suggested that the exiles might recognise the freedom offered by the actuality of Yahweh's presence in the present. Thus, I argued that the prophet is encouraging the exiles to quite literally seize the day.

The second dimension is rational: knowing Yahweh involves exerting mind over matter. Knowledge of the relationship between divine wrath and divine mercy, discerned by recognising that the gathering makes sense of the scattering, and the scattering gives the gathering meaning, informs a rational perspective of the current circumstance that alleviates concern about the future, allowing an appreciation of the unseen present.

Third, there is a moral dimension to knowing Yahweh. The recognition formula's intrinsic invitation to respond to Yahweh involves accepting and following his statutes and ordinances (cf. 20:11). The dominant failing of Israel (and the nations) is portrayed as being *hybris*, their attempt to usurp Yahweh that expresses opposition to his purposes. This is characterised in various ways: for instance, this transgression is described as rebellion (2:3), and the stumbling block of idolatry (14:3) that crushed Yahweh (6:9). *Ezekiel* attempts to remove such troublesome religious connections by depicting, for example, the destruction of Egyptian idols (30:13). As for the exiles' rebellion, if, as I contend, the guilt of the exiles is projected onto the nations, then the indictments of the nations may be construed as being applicable to the exiles. By implication, then, in the OAN, the exiles are guilty of the contempt for Yahweh attributed to the nations (25:8). By contrast, knowing Yahweh involves acknowledging his sovereign presence and responding to that awareness appropriately (28:26; cf. 36:28).

Whereas the moral dimension to knowing Yahweh involves a human response to him, the fourth dimension to knowing Yahweh is an ethical response to other people. The most obvious way that *Ezekiel* portrays this is by the polemic aimed at bloodshed (9:9) and violence (8:17). Not only is this aimed directly at Israel but also indirectly through the accusations levelled at the nations (25:12, 15; cf. 35:6). Additionally, awareness of Yahweh's presence (28:26) carries with it an implicit ethical responsibility to act in accordance with this knowledge (25:8; cf. 18:28).

The fifth dimension is vocational. As I have noted, it is life that *Ezekiel* perceives Yahweh is calling his people to (18:23; 33:11), and this vocation is depicted by *Ezekiel* as being one of peaceful security that is portrayed as building houses and planting vineyards (28:26). This scene is underlined by a recognition formula that is expanded to include a covenant allusion 'their God', the fuller phrase being 'you shall be my people and I will be your God' (36:28). Hence, I observed that the life envisioned for Yahweh's people is one of relationship, because, as *Ezekiel's* priestly background would doubtless inform him, it is only in relationship with Yahweh as their God that the people would live secure and peaceful lives. This lifestyle is a dynamic way of being, a lifestyle of worship that testifies to Yahweh's presence in a way that also vindicates his activity. Thus, by this vocational dimension, Yahweh's vindication could potentially become self-perpetuating.

Sixth, a political dimension to knowing Yahweh is apparent in the OAN. *Ezekiel* goes to considerable lengths to polemicise against Israel's tendency to idolise human establishments; even the Jerusalem temple is idolised (24:21). However, this dimension is particularly evident in the oracles against Tyre and those against Egypt. It seems that an awareness of the presence of Yahweh is obscured when Israel's attention is deflected from Yahweh. Thus, knowing Yahweh means refusing to be distracted by a fascination with other political institutions.

Seventh, a sacramental dimension is evidently a key element of knowing Yahweh. I discussed the significance of signs and their referents and saw that the exiles were guilty of confusing the direction of reference. Rather than allowing the temple, as a sign of Yahweh's presence, to direct them to the referent, the temple had become the delight of their eyes and the pride of their power (Ezek. 24:21). However, in *Ezekiel*, the sign *exemplifies* the character of Yahweh. For example, to recognise Yahweh's vengeful activity (the 'sign') is to recognise Yahweh, and to recognise Yahweh is to recognise his activity (25:14). Thus, even in their despondency, the nature of Yahweh's vengeful activity, or the recollection of such signs that are attached to the recognition formula, had the capacity to reassure the exiles of Yahweh's presence. Therefore, in the OAN, the sacramental dimension is key, since the sign always points to the referent, and, for the priestly prophet, the referent is always Yahweh.

Eighth, a global dimension may also be identified. *Ezekiel's* emphasis on the vindication of Yahweh's name that has been profaned (36:20) speaks of a concern for the universal honour and glory of Yahweh's name (20:9; 36:21). Despite being rhetorical, the fact that these oracles were addressed to foreign nations shows that, for the prophet, vindication of Yahweh's name was not a parochial or even a nationalistic concern, but a global one.

### **6.3 Areas for further research**

During the research for this thesis, I spent considerable time looking at the oracles within *Ezekiel's* OAN in which the recognition formula does not appear. It was my original intention to include this work so that a comparison could be made between those oracles that do witness the formula, and those that do not. However, there was not sufficient space to do that justice. In addition, part of my studies involved looking at all instances of the recognition formula not only in *Ezekiel*, but elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. My

research in those areas has produced material amounting to 75,000 words, sufficient to develop the arguments made here into a second thesis. This project has also raised questions regarding the significance of other formulae (e.g. **נאם אדני יהוה** 'declares the Lord Yahweh') that are found with some regularity in *Ezekiel*, and a study of those would produce a helpful comparison. As well as this potential work on *Ezekiel*, a synoptic study of all the OAN in the Hebrew Bible, while being an enormous undertaking, would be useful.



**APPENDIX:**

**CATEGORISING THE RECOGNITION FORMULA IN THE HEBREW BIBLE**



Table 1

THE NATIONS SHALL KNOW THAT 'I AM YAHWEH' WHEN ...

| Basic Formula                  |                                      | Developed formula                   |                                     |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Yahweh punishes the nations    |                                      | Yahweh punishes the nations         |                                     |
| A1. 2nd person (sing.)         | A3. 3rd person (plu.)                | B1. 2nd person (sing.)              | B2. 3rd person (plu.)               |
| Exod. 7:17 (J)                 | Ezek. 25:11; 26:6; 28:23; 29:9;      | Exod. 8:18 (22) (J)                 | Exod. 7:5 (P)                       |
| Ezek. 25:7; 35:4               | 30:19, 26; 32:15; 35:15; 38:23; 39:6 | Ezek. 35:12                         | Ezek. 25:17; 28:22; 29:6, 16; 30:8, |
| 25                             |                                      |                                     |                                     |
| A2. 2nd person (plu.)          |                                      |                                     |                                     |
| Ezek. 25:5; 35:9               |                                      |                                     |                                     |
| Yahweh delivers the nations    |                                      | Yahweh delivers the nations         |                                     |
| C1. 2nd person                 | C2. 3rd person                       | D1. 2nd person                      | D2. 3rd person                      |
| Yahweh punishes Israel         |                                      | Yahweh punishes Israel              |                                     |
| E1. 2nd person                 | E2. 3rd person                       | F1. 2nd person                      | F2. 3rd person                      |
| Yahweh delivers Israel         |                                      | Yahweh delivers Israel              |                                     |
| G1. 2nd person                 | G2. 3rd person                       | H1. 2nd person                      | H2. 3rd person (plu.)               |
|                                |                                      | Isa. 45:3                           | Isa. 49:26                          |
|                                |                                      | Ezek. 17:24; 36:23, 36; 37:28; 39:7 |                                     |
| Yahweh gains glory for himself |                                      | Yahweh gains glory for himself      |                                     |
| J1. 2nd person                 | J2. 3rd person                       | K1. 2nd person                      | K2. 3rd person (plu.)               |
|                                |                                      | Exod. 14:4 (P), 18 (P)              |                                     |

ISRAEL SHALL KNOW THAT 'I AM YAHWEH' WHEN ...

Basic Formula

Developed formula

Yahweh punishes the nations

Yahweh punishes the nations

L1. 2nd person plural

L2. 3rd person

M1. 2nd person

M2. 3rd person

Exod. 10:2 (J)

Isa. 49:23

Yahweh delivers the nations

Yahweh delivers the nations

N1. 2nd person

N2. 3rd person

O1. 2nd person (sing.)

O2. 3rd person

Yahweh punishes Israel

Yahweh punishes Israel

P1. 2nd person (sing.)

P3. 3rd person (plu.)

Q1. 2nd person (sing.)

Q3. 3rd person (plu.)

Ezek. 22:16

Ezek. 6:14; 7:27; 12:16; 24:27

Ezek. 5:13; 6:10; 12:15; 20:26; 21:10

P2. 2nd person (plu.)

Q2. 2nd person (plu.)

(5); Ezek. 33:29

Ezek. 6:7; 7:4; 11:10; 12:20; 13:14,

Ezek. 6:13; 7:9; 11:12; 13:9; 15:7;

21, 23; 14:8; 20:38

17:21; 22:22; 23:49; 24:24

Yahweh delivers Israel

Yahweh delivers Israel

R1. 2nd person (sing.)

R3. 3rd person (plu.)

S1. 2nd person (sing.)

S3. 3rd person (plu.)

1 Kings 20:13; Ezek. 16:62

Ezek. 29:21; 36:38

Exod. 29:46 (P); Isa. 49:26; 60:16;

R2. 2nd person (plu.)

S2. 2nd person (plu.)

Ezek. 20:12; 28:24, 26; 34:27, 30;

1 Kings 20:28; Ezek. 20:44; 36:11;

Exod. 6:7 (P); 16:12 (P); 31:13 (P);<sup>1</sup>

39:22, 28

37:6

Deut. 29:5 (6); Joel 2:27; 4:17 (3:17);

Ezek. 20:20, 42; 37:13, 14

Yahweh gains glory for himself

Yahweh gains glory for himself

T1. 2nd person

T2. 3rd person

U1. 2nd person

U2. 3rd person

<sup>1</sup> 2 m.pl. from context (qal.infin.constr.); cf. Ezek. 20:20; S3. Ezek. 20:12, 3 m.pl. from context.

Table 2

THE NATIONS SHALL KNOW THAT 'I AM YAHWEH' WHEN ...

Phrases Related to the Recognition Formula

Yahweh punishes the nations

**A1. 1st person (sing.)**

Ezek. 35:11

**A2. 2nd person (sing.)**

Exod. 8:6 (10) (J); 9:14 (J); 9:29 (J); 11:7 (J)

**A4. 3rd person (sing.)**

Isa. 19:21; Ps. 98:2

**A3. 2nd person (plu.)**

Ps. 46:11 (10)

**A5. 3rd person (plu.)**

1 Sam. 17:46a;<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 18:37; Isa. 64:2;<sup>2</sup> Ps. 83:19 (18); Ezek. 25:14; 39:21

**B1. 1st person (sing.)**

2 Kings 5:15

**B2. 2nd person (plu.)**

Ps. 100:3

**B3. 3rd person (sing.)**

2 Kings 5:8

**C1. 1st person**

Yahweh punishes Israel

**C2. 2nd person**

Jonah 1:10; Ezek. 39:23

**C3. 3rd person (plu.)**

**D1. 1st person (sing.)**

Ezek. 20:9a

**D2. 2nd person (sing.)**

Zech. 2:15 (11); 4:9

**D4. 3rd person (sing.)**

1 Kings 18:36; 2 Chron. 33:13

**D3. 2nd person (plu.)**

Zech. 6:15

**D5. 3rd person (plu.)**

Josh. 4:24a; 1 Kings 8:43a, 60a; 2 Kings 19:19a; Isa. 37:20a; 41:20a; 2 Chron. 6:33a; Ezek. 38:16

**E1. 1st person**

Yahweh gains glory for himself

**E2. 2nd person**

**E3. 3rd person**

<sup>1</sup> Some references, differentiated by a/b, appear twice on the chart since they fall into more than one category.

<sup>2</sup> 3 m.pl. from context (hif.infin.constr.); cf. D5. Josh. 4:24 (qal.infin.constr.); J2. Deut. 4:35 (qal.infin.constr.) 2 m.s. from context.

**ISRAEL SHALL KNOW THAT 'I AM YAHWEH' WHEN ...**

**Phrases Related to the Recognition Formula**

**Yahweh punishes the nations**

**F2. 2nd person (sing.)**

Jer. 28:9

**F4. 3rd person (sing.)**

Isa. 41:23

**F3. 2nd person (plu.)**

Zech. 2:13 (9)

**F5. 3rd person (plu.)**

1 Sam. 17:46b; Ezek. 39:21

**Yahweh delivers the nations**

**G2. 2nd person**

**G3. 3rd person**

**G1. 1st person (sing.)**

Jonah 4:2

**Yahweh punishes Israel**

**H2. 2nd person (sing.)**

**H4. 3rd person (sing.)**

Jer. 9:23 (24); Hab. 2:14

**H1. 1st person**

**H3. 2nd person (plu.)**

Num. 16:30; Jer. 44:29; Ezek. 14:23

**H5. 3rd person (plu.)**

Isa. 45:6; Ezek. 2:5; 21:4 (20:48); 10 (21:5); 33:33

**Yahweh delivers Israel**

**J2. 2nd person (sing.)**

Exod. 16:6 (P); Deut. 4:35, 39; 7:9; 9:3, 6; Hos. 2:22 (20), 13:4; Mic. 6:5; Zech. 2:15 (11); Ps. 100:3

**J4. 3rd person (sing.)**

1 Kings 18:36; Isa. 52:6

**J1. 1st person (sing.)**

Exod. 18:11 (J); 33:13 (J); Ezek. 20:5, 9b

**J3. 2nd person (plu.)**

Num. 16:28; Josh. 3:10; 23:14; Isa. 43:10

**J5. 3rd person (plu.)**

Lev. 23:43 (P); Josh. 3:7; 4:24b; 1 Kings 8:43b, 60b; 2 Kings 19:19b; Isa. 37:20b; 41:20b; Jer. 16:21; 24:7; 31:34; Ps. 89:16 (15); 106:8; 2 Chron. 6:33b

**Yahweh gains glory for himself**

**K2. 2nd person**

**K3. 3rd person (sing.)**

**K1. 1st person**

Num. 16:5

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