

o6. Ezekiel 38-46



Ezekiel 38-39 Nothing can separate Israel from God's care
Blenkinsopp , page 182

'It will be seen that the author has skilfully drawn together into a consecutive narrative several major themes of prophetic eschatology. These may be set out as follows:

The enemy will attack from the north

(Jeremiah 1:13-15; 4:5-18; 6:22; Joel 2:20)

Their invasion will lead to a final war in which Yahweh fights for Israel

(Isaiah 17:12-14; Habakkuk 3:8; Zechariah 14:3-4)

This final conflict will be accompanied by earthquake and cosmic convulsions

(Isaiah 24:19-23; Nahum 1:4-5; Joel 4:15-16)

It will take place in the land of Israel (Isaiah 14:24-25),

in fact, in or near Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-5)

Following the defeat of the enemy, their weapons will be destroyed

or used as fuel (Isaiah 9:5)

God's people will celebrate with a sacrificial banquet

(Isaiah 34:5-8; Jeremiah 46:10; Zephaniah 1:7-8)

There are some indications, in both the prophetic writings and the psalms, that several of these themes may have been brought together in mythic recital and cultic celebration long before Ezekiel. If so, Ezekiel 38-39 moved a step farther by giving them a distinctly narrative form which can be seen as transitional between prophetic eschatology and the apocalyptic visions of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. Hence the importance of these chapters in the evolution of the biblical view of the tension between good and evil in human affairs and its eventual resolution.'

The word of YHWH came to me: Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of **Magog**, the chief prince of **Meshech** and **Tubal**. Prophecy against him 3and say: Thus says the Lord YHWH: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws, and I will lead you out with all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armour, a great company, all of them with shield and buckler, wielding swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Put are with them, all of them with buckler and helmet; **Gomer** and all its troops; Beth-**Togarmah** from the remotest parts of the north with all its troops—many peoples are with you.

Ezekiel 38:1-6

Table of Nations: Genesis 10:2-3



Ezekiel 38:7-9

Be ready and keep ready, you and all the companies that are assembled around you, and hold yourselves in reserve for them. After many days you shall be mustered; in the latter years you shall go against a land restored from war, a land where people were gathered from many nations on the mountains of **Israel**, which had long lain waste; its people were brought out from the nations and now are **living in safety, all of them**. You shall advance, coming on like a storm; you shall be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.

Ezekiel 38:10 - 39:10 Oracles against those who would attack Israel from the north

Ezekiel 39:17-20

As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord YHWH: Speak to the birds of every kind and to all the wild animals: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth – of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. You shall eat fat until you are filled, and drink blood until you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with warriors and all kinds of soldiers, says the Lord YHWH.

Ezekiel 39: 21-24

I will display my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them.

The house of Israel shall know that I am YHWH their God, from that day forward.

And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with me. So I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

Ezekiel 39: 25-29

Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall bear their shame, and all the treachery they have practised against me, when they live securely in their land with no one to make them afraid, when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have displayed my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am YHWH their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then gathered them into their own land. I will leave none of them behind; and I will never again hide my face from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord YHWH.

The final section of the Ezekiel scroll, comprising chapters 40-48, is in the form of a vision. It invites comparison with an earlier vision (chapters 8-11). In the earlier vision the prophet saw the departure of YHWH from the sanctuary which had become polluted. Here he sees YHWH taking possession of a cleansed temple area that surrounds the sanctuary and protects it from contamination. We are reminded of the goal of the long journey from Egypt to the Promised Land:

‘You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, YHWH, that you made your abode, the sanctuary, YHWH, that your hands have established’ (Exodus 15:17).

In the Priestly version of the Sinai narrative, Moses sees the divine glory and receives a detailed description of the tabernacle he is to construct, including its furnishings (see Exodus 24:15-18, 25-31). He is commanded to see that everything is made in accordance with the model that was revealed to him on the mountain (Exodus 25:9, 40).

Some of Ezekiel's stipulations did not win the day, as a comparison with the orthodox Priestly parts of the Pentateuch reveal. Ezekiel 45:18 attempts to establish a rule for the offering of the first month. Numbers 28:11 expresses a different rule.

There are discrepancies also in the liturgical calendar (compare Ezekiel 45:18-25; 46:1-15 with Numbers 28-29).

Similarly with Levitical territory (compare Ezekiel 45:5; 48:13-14 with Numbers 35:1-8), and laws of inheritance (compare Ezekiel 46:16-18 with Numbers 36).

If the rules in Ezekiel were tried in post-exilic Judah, Numbers indicates that they needed to change in the light of experience. What little we know of the dimensions of the temple built by Zerubbabel and Jeshua do not fit with the dimensions described in the following chapters.

Blenkinsopp (page 197) offers the following advice:

‘There are enough allusions in chapters 40-48 of a mythic-symbolic and idealistic kind to rule out the suggestion that a literal program or blueprint for the future was intended.’

These chapters are seen as the fulfilment of the promises made by YHWH and included in chapters 34-37. Among these promises a special place is held by Ezekiel 37:26-28.

‘For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord YHWH, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred things. As a pleasing odour I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. You shall know that I am YHWH, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your ancestors’ (Ezekiel 20:40-42).

As with the rest of the Ezekiel scroll, so here in chapters 40-48, there are signs of updating, explanations and clarifications added by the Ezekiel School to help later generations grasp the intended message of the vision granted to the prophet. This is clear in the first section (chapters 40-42) which describe the layout of the new temple.

Ezekiel 40:1-4

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile (573BC), at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of YHWH was upon me, and he brought me there. He brought me, in visions of God, to the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south.

When he brought me there, a man was there, whose appearance shone like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. The man said to me, “Son of man, look closely and listen attentively, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the house of Israel.”

Instructions forbidding of:

1. The Wall surrounding the temple (40:5)
2. The outer east gate (40:6-16)
3. The outer courtyard (40:17-18)
4. The distance between the outer and the inner gate (40:19)
5. The outer north gate (40:20-23)
6. The outer south gate (40:24-27)
7. The inner south gate (40:28-31)
8. The inner east gate (40:32-34)
9. The inner north gate (40:35-37)

Insert 1. The furnishings at the inner north gate for preparing sacrifices (40:38-43)

Insert 2. The rooms for the priests (40:44-46)

10. The inner courtyard and the altar of sacrifice (40:47)
11. The temple vestibule (40:48-49)
12. The temple (41:1-2)
13. The inner sanctuary (41:3-4)
14. Details of the temple and the adjacent areas (41:5-15)

Supplement 1 - wall decoration and interior furnishing (41:15-16)

Supplement 2 - rooms where the priests vest (42:1-14)

15. Concluding measurement (42:15-20)

Ezekiel 43:1-6

Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east. And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory. The vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. As the glory of YHWH entered the temple by the gate facing east, the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of YHWH filled the temple. While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me out of the temple.

Ezekiel 43:10-12

He said to me: Son of man describe the temple to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern; and let them be ashamed of their iniquities. When they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, and its whole form – all its ordinances and its entire plan and all its laws; and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances. This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. This is the law of the temple.

The main point of this law (torah) is to ensure that the holy is not contaminated by anything unholy

16. Dimensions of the altar for the burnt offering (43:13-17)
17. Dedication of the altar (43:18-27)
18. The closed outer eastern gate (44:1-3)

Ezekiel 44:4-5

Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of YHWH filled the temple of YHWH; and I fell upon my face. YHWH said to me: Son of man, mark well, look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of YHWH and all its laws; and mark well those who may be admitted to the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary.

Ezekiel 44:15-16

The levitical priests, the descendants of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me; and they shall attend me to offer me the fat and the blood, says the Lord YHWH. It is they who shall enter my sanctuary, it is they who shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge.

Priests who could not establish that they were descended from David's priest, Zadok, were reduced to being Levites.

Ezekiel 44:17-31 - Instructions for the priests

Ezekiel 44:28

This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no holding in Israel; I am their holding.

Ezekiel 45:1-8

Priests cannot own land, but they can have use of a house and they can enjoy the fruits of the land.

Ezekiel 45:9 - political leaders are admonished

Ezekiel 45:10-12 - laws governing right measures

Ezekiel 45:13-17 - laws governing offerings

Ezekiel 45:18-25 - laws governing pilgrimage festivals

Ezekiel 45:1-15 - laws governing gates, sabbath and new moon offerings

Ezekiel 46:16-24 - laws governing royal offerings and property

Ezekiel 46:19-24 - laws governing royal chambers
and kitchens for sacrifice

Ezekiel 47:1-12 - healing from the sanctuary

Ezekiel 47:7-12 Healing from the sanctuary

He led me back along the bank of the river. As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the Sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-ge-di to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

Ezekiel 47:13 – 48:29 Allocation of tribal lands

Ezekiel 47:21-23

You shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe aliens reside there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord YHWH.

Ezekiel 48:8-22 - Consecrated land set aside for YHWH

(priests and levites)

Ezekiel 48:30-35 - the city gates

Final words of Ezekiel

The name of the city from that time on shall be, YHWH is There.