

Ezekiel's Vision of God (July 31, 593 BC)

Ezekiel 1:1–3:14

Introduction

1:1 And it was in *the* thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month, and I *was* in the midst of the exiles by the Kebar River. The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

2 On the fifth *day* of the month—it was the fifth year of the exile of the king Jehoiachin—

3 the word of Yahweh came clearly to Ezekiel the son of Buzi, the priest, in the land of *the* Chaldeans at the Kebar River, and the hand of Yahweh was on him there.

The Windstorm

4 And I looked, and look! A storm wind *was* coming from the north, a great cloud, and fire flashing back and forth, and brightness around *and* within it, and from its midst *it was* like *the* outward appearance of amber stone from the midst of the fire.

The Four Living Creatures

5 And from its midst *was* the likeness of four living creatures, and this *was* their appearance: a human form,

6 and each had four faces, and each of them had four wings.

7 And their legs *were* straight legs, and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of *the* foot of a calf, and *they were* sparkling like the outward appearance of polished bronze.

8 And under their wings *were* human hands on their four sides. And their faces and their wings for the four of them *were as follows*:

9 their wings were touching one another; each of them went straight forward, without turning right or left.

10 The likeness of their faces *was the* face of a human *in front*, and *the* face of a lion on the right of each of them, and the face of an ox on the left of each of them, and *the* face of an eagle for each of them.

11 So *were* their faces; their wings *were* spread out upward; each *had* two touching one another and two covering their bodies.

12 And each went straight forward; wherever the spirit went they went, *and* they did not turn as they went.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches. *It was* moving to and fro between the living creatures, and the fire was very bright and lightning *was* going out from the fire.

14 And the living creatures were speeding to and fro like the appearance of lightning.

The Wheels

15 And I saw the living creatures, and look! A wheel was on the earth beside each of the living creatures that had four faces.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their construction *was* like *the* appearance of beryl, and they all looked alike, and their appearance and their construction *was* like a wheel within a wheel.

17 When they moved, they went toward their four sides; they did not veer at all as they went.

18 And their rims were high and awesome, and all four of their rims *were* full of eyes *all* around.

19 And at the going of the living creatures, the wheels next to them *also* went, and when the creatures were lifted from the ground the wheels *also* rose.

20 Wherever the spirit went they would go there, and the wheels rose, for the spirit of the living creatures *was* in the wheels.

21 At their going, they go, and at their standing, they stood, and at their being lifted up from on the earth, the wheels rose, for the spirit of the living creatures *was* in the wheels.

The Platform

22 Now *the* likeness above the heads of the living creatures *was* an expanse like the outward appearance of awesome ice spread out above their heads upward.

23 And under the expanse their wings *were stretched out* straight one toward the other; each had two *wings* covering them, and each had two *wings* covering their bodies.

24 And I heard the sound of their wings like *the* sound of many waters, like the voice of Shaddai, *and* when they moved *there was* a sound of tumult like *the* sound of an army; when they stood still they lowered their wings.

25 And there was a sound from above the expanse that *was* above their heads, and when they stood they lowered their wings.

The Throne

26 And from above the expanse that *was* above their heads *there was* the likeness of a throne, looking like a sapphire, and above the likeness of the throne *was* a likeness similar to *the* appearance of a human on it, *but* above it.

27 And I saw *something* like *the* outward appearance of amber, *something* like *the* appearance of fire, *with* a covering around it, from the likeness of his loins and upward. And from the likeness of his loins and downward I saw *something* like *the* appearance of fire, and it was radiant all around.

28 Like the appearance of a bow that is in the cloud on a rainy day, such *was* the radiance around it; *thus was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. And I saw, and I fell on my face, and I heard a voice speaking.

God Sends Ezekiel to be His Prophet to the Exiles

2:1 And he said to me, “Son of man, stand on your feet, so that I can speak with you.”

2 And *the* Spirit came into me as he was speaking to me, and it set me on my feet, and I heard the one speaking to me.

3 And he said to me, “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to nations *who are* rebelling, who rebelled against me, they and their ancestors, they transgressed against me until this very day.

4 And the children *are* impudent and stubborn, *and so* I am sending you to them, and you must say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh!’

5 And they, whether they listen or whether they fail *to listen*, for they *are* a rebellious house, they will know that a prophet was in their midst.

6 And you, son of man, you must not be afraid of them, and you must not be afraid of their words, because briars and thorns *are* with you, and you *are* sitting among scorpions. You must not be afraid of their words, and you must not be dismayed because of their looks, for they *are* a rebellious house.

7 And you must speak my words to them whether they listen or whether they fail *to listen*, for they *are* rebellious.

8 And you, son of man, hear what I *am* speaking to you: you must not be rebellious like *the* house of rebellion. Open your mouth and eat what I *am* giving to you.”

9 And I looked, and look! There was a hand stretched out to me, and look! In it *was* a scroll with writing.

10 And he rolled it out before me, and it *was* written *on the* front and back, and there *were* written on it laments and mourning and wailing.

Ezekiel and the Scroll

3:1 And he said to me, “Son of man, what you find, eat! Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.”

2 And I opened my mouth, and he gave me this scroll to eat,

3 and he said to me, “Son of man, you must give your stomach *this* to eat, and you must fill your belly *with* this scroll that I *am* giving to you.” And I ate, and it became like sweet honey in my mouth.

4 And he said to me, “Son of man, come! Go to the house of Israel, and you must speak to them with my words.

5 For you are sent to the house of Israel, not to a people of obscure speech and of a difficult language,

6 *and* not to many nations of obscure speech and a difficult language whose words you do not understand, *for* if I had sent you to them they would have listened to you.

7 And the house of Israel, they are not willing to listen to you, for they *are* not willing to listen to me, for all of the house of Israel is hard of forehead, and they *are* hard of heart.

8 *But* look, I have made your face hard against their faces and your forehead hard against their forehead.

9 Like a diamond harder than flint I have made your forehead; you must not fear them, and you must not be dismayed on account of them, for they are a rebellious house.

10 And he said to me, “Son of man, all of my words that I shall speak to you, receive into your heart and hear with your ears.

11 And come, go to the exiles, to the children of your people, and you must speak to them, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh!’ whether they listen or whether they fail *to listen*.”

12 And the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the sound of a great earthquake when the glory of Yahweh rose from its place.

13 And *it was* the sound of the wings of the living creatures touching lightly one against the other, and the sound of the wheels beside them and *the* sound of a great earthquake.

14 And *the* Spirit lifted me and took me, and I went *in* bitterness in the heat of my spirit, and the hand of Yahweh *was* strong on me.

Ezekiel Appointed as Watchman for Israel (August 6, 593 BC)

Ezekiel 3:15–27

15 And I went to the exiles *at* Tel Abib, who *were* dwelling near the Kebar River, and I sat *where* they *were* dwelling. I sat there seven days in the midst of them, stunned.

16 And then it happened at *the* end of seven days, the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

17 “Son of man, I have appointed you *as* a watchman for the house of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, then you must warn them from me.

18 When I say to the wicked, ‘Surely you will die,’ and you do not warn him and you do not speak to warn *the* wicked from his wicked way so that he may live, that wicked *person* will die because of his guilt, and from your hand I will seek his blood.

19 And you, if you do warn *the* wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness and from his wicked way, on account of his guilt he will die, and you yourself will have saved your life.

20 And when the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, and I place a stumbling block before him, he will die, for you did not warn him. Because of his sin he will die, and his righteousness that he did will not be remembered, and his blood I shall seek from your hand.

21 And if you warn him, the righteous, not to sin, and *the* righteous does not sin, surely he will live, for he heeded a warning. And you will have saved your life.”

22 And the hand of Yahweh was on me there, and he said to me, “Rise up, go out to the valley, and there I will speak with you.”
 23 And I rose up, and I went to the valley, and, look, there the glory of Yahweh was standing, like the glory that I saw near the Kebar River, and I fell on my face.
 24 And *the* Spirit came into me, and it made me stand on my feet, and he spoke with me and said to me, “Come, shut yourself inside your house,
 25 and you, son of man, look, they will place cords on you, and they will tie you up with them. Then you will not go out into the midst of them.
 26 And I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, and you will be silenced, and you will not be a reproving man for them, for they are a rebellious house.
 27 And when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you must say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh: “The *one* hearing him, let him hear, and the *one* failing to hear, let him fail,” ‘ for they are a rebellious house.

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Chronological Notes

1) Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon with king Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:10–17; 2 Chr 36:10; Ezek 1:1–3) and his prophecies show a genuine concern to date the significant events he lived through. He measured these dates in terms of the captivity of Jehoiachin (Ezek 1:2).¹ The following dates are given:²

- 5th year, 4th month, 5th day (July 31, 593) – Ezek 1:2.
- 6th year, 6th month, 5th day (September 17, 592) – Ezek 8:1.
- 7th year, 5th month, 10th day (August 14, 591) – Ezek 20:1.
- 9th year, 10th month, 10th day (January 27, 589) – Ezek 24:1.
- 11th year, ? month, 1st day (September 18, 587) – Ezek 26:1.³
- 10th year, 10th month, 12th day (January 17, 588) – Ezek 29:1.⁴
- 27th year, 1st month, 1st day (April 26, 571) – Ezek 29:17.
- 11th year, 1st month, 7th day (April 29, 587) – Ezek 30:20.
- 11th year, 3rd month, 1st day (June 21, 587) – Ezek 31:1.
- 12th year, 12th month, 1st day (March 15, 586) – Ezek 32:1.
- 12th year, 12th month, 15th day (March 29, 586) – Ezek 32:17.
- 12th year, 10th month, 5th day (January 19, 586) – Ezek 33:21.⁵
- 25th year, 1st month, 10th day (November 2, 574) – Ezek 40:1.⁶

¹ The single exception to this rule is found in Ezekiel 1:1 in which Ezekiel makes reference to “the thirtieth year.” Block comments: “the explanation Origen proposed long ago remains the most likely: the *terminus a quo* is the year of the prophet’s own birth” (Daniel I. Block, “The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24,” *NICOT*, 82). However, I believe Hoeh makes an insightful suggestion when he says: “The original Hebrew expression is not a reference to the age of the prophet Ezekiel, but to the fifth year of the captivity of the king (593–592) would clearly be the thirtieth year of the renewal of the covenant which occurred, in the eighteenth year (622–621) of Josiah (2 Chr 34:8–33)” (Herman L. Hoeh, “When Did Nebuchadnezzar Conquer Jerusalem?” This paper was delivered at the Symposium of “Frontiers of Knowledge” at Ambassador College, Pasadena, California, 1976).

² All Julian dates are based on the computation of R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 75*, BUS 19 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), p. 28. See also the online Babylonian Calendar Converter available at http://www.staff.science.uu.nl/~gent0113/babylon/babycal_converter.htm#converter.

³ The month is assumed to be the first month of the 11th year.

⁴ This is the first deviation from strict chronological order in the book of Ezekiel.

⁵ See the details of Rules 1, 3 and 7 in Rodger C. Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” *JETS* 47.1 (Mar 2004): 26–27 where the length of time between Jerusalem’s fall and Ezekiel hearing from the fugitive is solved by the July 29, 587 date (it would be 18 months with the 586 date which commentators agree is too long [cf. Block]).

⁶ For confirmation that Ezekiel used the Tishri calendar and that the fall of Jerusalem is correctly dated to July 29, 587, see the following articles: Rodger C. Young, “Ezekiel 40:1 As a Corrective for Seven Wrong Ideas in Biblical Interpretation,” *AUSS*, Vol. 44, 265–283; Rodger C. Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” *JETS* 47.1 (Mar 2004): 21–38.