



Ezekiel

In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Ezekiel is acknowledged as a Hebrew prophet. In Judaism and Christianity, he is also viewed as the 6th-century BCE author of the Book of Ezekiel, which includes prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jews' restoration to the land of Israel.

The name Ezekiel means "God is strong" or "God strengthens". Prophet, Priest

Born: possibly 622 BCE

Died: possibly 570 BCE (aged 51-52) Babylon

In the Bible

The author of the Book of Ezekiel presents himself as Ezekiel, the son of Buzi, born into a priestly (kohen) lineage. Apart from identifying himself, the author gives a date for the first divine encounter which he presents: "In the thirtieth year". Ezekiel describes his calling to be a prophet by going into great detail about his encounter with God and four "living creatures" with four wheels that stayed beside the creatures.

Buzi was the father of Ezekiel and priest of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1:3). Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, is said to have been a descendant of Joshua by his marriage with the proselyte Rahab.

Living in Babylon

According to the Bible, Ezekiel and his wife lived during the Babylonian captivity on the banks of the Kebar Canal in Tel Abib near Nippur with other exiles from the Kingdom of Judah. There is no mention of him having any offspring.

Chronology

Ezekiel's "thirtieth year" is given as the fifth year of the exile of Judah's king Jehoiachin by the Babylonians, counting the years after the exile in 598 BCE, that is from 597 to 593 BCE. The last recorded prophecy of Ezekiel dates to April 571 BCE, sixteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE. On the basis of dates given in the Book of Ezekiel, his span of prophecies can be calculated to have occurred over the course of about 22 years, starting in 593 BCE.

Targum was an originally spoken translation of the Hebrew Bible that a professional translator would give in the common language of the listeners when that was not Hebrew. This had the common language of the listeners when that was not Hebrew. This had become necessary near the end of the first century BC, as the common language was Aramaic and Hebrew was used for little more than schooling and worship. The translator frequently expanded his translation with paraphrases, explanations and examples, so it became a kind of sermon.

The Aramaic Targum on Ezekiel 1:1 and the 2nd century rabbinic work. Seder Olam Rabba (chapter 26) both say that Ezekiel's vision came "in the thirtieth year after Josiah was presented with a Book of the Law discovered in the temple", the latter taking place about the time of Josiah's reforms in 622 BCE, shortly after the call of Jeremiah to prophetic ministry around 626 BCE. If the "thirtieth year" of Ezekiel 1:1 instead refers to Ezekiel's age, then he was born around 622 BCE and was fifty years old when he had his final vision.

Jewish Tradition

According to Jewish tradition, Ezekiel did not write his own book, the Book of Ezekiel, but rather his prophecies were collected and written by the Great Assembly.

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, is said by Talmud (is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism and the primary source of Jewish religious law and Jewish theology.) and Midrash (is expansive Jewish Biblical exegesis using a rabbinic mode of interpretation prominent in the Talmud.) to have been a descendant of Joshua by his marriage with the proselyte and former prostitute Rahab. Some statements found in rabbinic literature posit that Ezekiel was the son of Jeremiah, who was (also) called "Buzi" because he was despised by the Jews.

Ezekiel was said to be already active as a prophet while in the Land of Israel, and he retained this gift when he was exiled with Jehoiachin and the nobles of the country to Babylon. Josephus claims that Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia's armies exiled three thousand people from Judah, after deposing King Jehoiachin in 598 BCE.

Rava states in the Babylonian Talmud that although Ezekiel describes the appearance of the throne of God, this is not because he had seen more than the prophet Isaiah, but rather because the latter was more accustomed to such visions; for this relation of the two prophets is that of a courtier to a peasant, the latter of whom would always describe a royal court more floridly (flowery in style) than the former, to whom such things would be familiar. Ezekiel, like

all the other prophets, has beheld only a blurred reflection of the divine majesty, just as a poor mirror reflects objects only imperfectly.

According to the midrash, it was Ezekiel whom the three pious men, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (also called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) asked for advice as to whether they should resist Nebuchadnezzar's command and choose death by fire rather than worship his idol.

At first God revealed to the prophet that they could not hope for a miraculous rescue, whereupon the prophet was greatly grieved, since these three men constituted the "remnant of Judah". But after they had left the house of the prophet, fully determined to sacrifice their lives to God, Ezekiel received this revelation:

When they went out from before Ezekiel, the Holy One blessed be He revealed Himself and said: 'Ezekiel, what do you think, that I will not stand by them? I will certainly stand by them.' That is what is written: "So said the Lord God: Concerning this too, I will acquiesce to the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 36:37). 'But leave them and do not say anything to them. I will leave them to proceed unsuspecting.'

Christian Tradition

Ezekiel is commemorated as a saint in the liturgical calendar of the Eastern Orthodox Church—and those Eastern Catholic Churches which follow the byzantine Rite—on July 21 (for those churches which use the traditional Julian Calendar, July 21 falls on August 5 of the modern Gregorian calendar). Ezekiel is commemorated on August 28 on the Calendar of Saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and on April 10 in the Roman Martyrology.

Certain Lutheran churches also celebrate his commemoration on July 21.

Saint Bonaventure interpreted Ezekiel's statement about the "closed gate" as a prophecy of the Incarnation: the "gate" signifying the Virgin Mary and the "prince" referring to Jesus. This is one of the readings at Vespers on Great Feasts of the Theotokos in the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic Churches. This imagery is also found in the traditional Catholic Christmas hymn "Gaudete" and in a saying by Bonaventure, quoted by Alphonsus Maria de'Liguon: "No one can enter Heaven unless by Mary, as though through a door. The imagery provides the basis for the concept that God gave Mary to humanity as the "Gate of Heaven" (thence the dedication of churches and convents to the Porta Coeli), an idea also laid out in the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen) prayer.

John B. Taylor credits the subject with imparting the Biblical understanding of the nature of God.



Ezekiel

Background

Ezekiel lived during a time of international upheaval. The Assyrian empire that had once conquered the Syria-Palestinian area and destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel (which fell to the Assyrians in 722-721 B.S.) began to crumble under the blows of a resurgent Babylon.

Jehoahaz, a son of Josiah, ruled Judah for only three months, after which Neco installed Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, as his royal vassal in Jerusalem (609 B.C.). In 605 the Babylonians overwhelmed the Egyptian army at Carchemish, then pressed south as far as the Philistine plain. In the same year, Nebuchadnezzar was elevated to the Babylonian throne and Jehoiakim shifted allegiance to him. When a few years later the Egyptian and Babylonian forces met in a standoff battle, Jehoiakim rebelled against his new overlord.

Nebuchadnezzar soon responded by sending a force against Jerusalem, subduing it in 597 B.C. Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin and about 10,000 Jews,

	<p>including Ezekiel, were exiled to Babylon, where they joined those who had been exiled in Jehoiakim's "third year" (Dan. 1:1). Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, on the throne in Jerusalem, but within five or six years he too rebelled. The Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem in 588, and in July, 586, the walls were breached, and the city plundered. On Aug. 14, 586, the city and temple were burned.</p> <p>Under Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, Babylon dominated the international scene until it was crushed by Cyrus the Persian in 539 B.C. The reign of the house of David came to an end; the kingdom of Judah ceased to be an independent nation; Jerusalem and the Lord's temple lay in ruins.</p>
<p>Author</p>	<p>What is known of Ezekiel is derived solely from the book that bears his name. he was among the Jews exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C., and there among the exiles he received his call to become a prophet (1:1-3). He was married (24:15-18), lived in a house of his own (3:24; 8:1) and along with his fellow exiles, though confined to Babylonia, had a relatively free existence there.</p> <p>He was of a priestly family (1:3) and therefore was eligible to serve as a priest. As a priest-prophet called to minister to the exiles (separated from the temple of the Lord with its symbolism, sacrifices, priestly</p>

	<p>ministrations and worship rituals), his message had much to do with the temple (Chapters 8—11: 40—48) and its ceremonies.</p> <p>Ezekiel was gifted with a powerful intellect and was capable of grasping large issues and of dealing with them in grand and compelling images. His style is often detached, but in places it is passionate and earthy (Chapters 16; 23).</p> <p>More than any other prophet he was directed to involve himself personally in the divine word by acting it out in prophetic symbolism.</p>
<p>Occasion, Purpose and Summary of Contents</p>	<p>Though Ezekiel lived with his fellow exiles in Babylon, his divine call forced him to suppress any natural expectations he may have had of any early return to undamaged Jerusalem. For the first seven years of his ministry (593-586 B.C.) he faithfully relayed to his fellow Jews the stern, heart-rending, hope-crushing word of divine judgment. Because of all her sins, Jerusalem would fall (1—24). The fact that Israel was God’s covenant people and that Jerusalem was the city of his temple would not bring their early release from exile or prevent Jerusalem from being destroyed (Jer. 29-30). The only hope the prophet was authorized to extend to his hearers was that of living at peace with themselves and with God during their exile.</p>

	<p>After being informed by the Lord that Jerusalem was under siege and would surely fall (24:1-14), Ezekiel was told that his beloved wife would soon die. The delight of his eyes would be taken from him just as the temple, the delight of Israel's eyes, would be taken from her. He was not to mourn openly for his wife, as a sign to his people not to mourn openly for Jerusalem (24:15-27). He was then directed to pronounce a series of judgments on the seven nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon and Egypt (Chapters. 25-32). The day of God's wrath was soon to come, but not on Israel alone.</p> <p>Once news was received that Jerusalem had fallen, Ezekiel's message turned to the Lord's consoling word of hope for his people—they would experience revival, restoration and a glorious future as the redeemed and perfected kingdom of God in the world (Chapters 33-48).</p>
<p>Themes</p>	<p>The O.T. in general and the prophets in particular presuppose and teach God's sovereignty over all creation, over people and nations and the course of history. And nowhere in the Bible are God's initiative and control expressed more clearly and pervasively than in the book of Ezekiel. From the first chapter, which graphically describes the overwhelming invasion of the divine presence into Ezekiel's world, to the last phrase of Ezekiel's vision (:The</p>

Lord is there”) the book sounds and echoes God’s sovereignty.

This sovereign God resolved that he would be known and acknowledged.

Approximately 65 occurrences of the clause (or variations) “Then they will know that I am the Lord” testify to that divine desire and intention. (6:7).

Overall, chapters. 1—24 teach that God will be revealed in the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple; chapters 25—32 teach that the nations likewise will know god through his judgments; and chapters 33—48 promise that God will be known through the restoration and spiritual renewal of Israel.

God’s total sovereignty is also evident in his mobility. He is not limited to the temple in Jerusalem. He can respond to his people’s sin by leaving his sanctuary in Israel, and he can graciously condescend to visit his exiled children in Babylon.

God is free to judge, and he is equally free to be gracious. His stern judgments on Israel ultimately reflect his grace. He allows the total dismemberment of Israel’s political and religious life so that her renewed life and his presence with her will be clearly seen as a gift from the Lord of the universe.

Furthermore, as God’s spokesman, Ezekiel’s “son of man” status (2:1) testifies to the sovereign God he was commissioned to serve.

Literary Features

The three major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and Zephaniah all have the same basic sequence of messages: (1) oracles against Israel, (2) oracles against the nations, (3) consolation for Israel. In no other book is this pattern clearer than in Ezekiel.

Besides clarity of structure, the book of Ezekiel reveals symmetry. The vision of the desecrated temple fit for destruction (Chapters 8—11) is balanced by the vision of the restored and purified temple (Chapters 40—48). The God presented in agitated wrath (Chapter 1) is also shown to be a God of comfort (“the Lord is there,” 48:35). Ezekiel’s call to be a watchman announcing divine judgment (Chapter 3) is balanced by his call to be a watchman.

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in a case-law type of sentence (compare 3:19, "If you do warn the wicked. . .," with Ex. 21:2, "If you buy a Hebrew servant . . .").

The book contains four major visions, symbolic acts. Five messages are in the form of parables (Chapters 15-17; 19;23).