TYNDALE

CORNERSTONE
BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Ezekiel
David L. Thompson

Daniel
Eugene Carpenter

GENERAL EDITOR
Philip W. Comfort

WITH THE ENTIRE TEXT OF THE

New Living Translation

CORNERSTONE
B I B L I C A L
COMMENTARY

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* is based on the second edition of the New Living Translation (2007). Nearly 100 scholars from various church backgrounds and from several countries (United States, Canada, England, and Australia) participated in the creation of the NLT. Many of these same scholars are contributors to this commentary series. All the commentators, whether participants in the NLT or not, believe that the Bible is God's inspired word and have a desire to make God's word clear and accessible to his people.

This Bible commentary is the natural extension of our vision for the New Living Translation, which we believe is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful. The NLT attempts to communicate God's inspired word in a lucid English translation of the original languages so that English readers can understand and appreciate the thought of the original writers. In the same way, the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* aims at helping teachers, pastors, students, and laypeople understand every thought contained in the Bible. As such, the commentary focuses first on the words of Scripture, then on the theological truths of Scripture—inasmuch as the words express the truths.

The commentary itself has been structured in such a way as to help readers get at the meaning of Scripture, passage by passage, through the entire Bible. Each Bible book is prefaced by a substantial book introduction that gives general historical background important for understanding. Then the reader is taken through the Bible text, passage by passage, starting with the New Living Translation text printed in full. This is followed by a section called "Notes," wherein the commentator helps the reader understand the Hebrew or Greek behind the English of the NLT, interacts with other scholars on important interpretive issues, and points the reader to significant textual and contextual matters. The "Notes" are followed by the "Commentary," wherein each scholar presents a lucid interpretation of the passage, giving special attention to context and major theological themes.

The commentators represent a wide spectrum of theological positions within the evangelical community. We believe this is good because it reflects the rich variety in Christ's church. All the commentators uphold the authority of God's word and believe it is essential to heed the old adage: "Wholly apply yourself to the Scriptures and apply them wholly to you." May this commentary help you know the truths of Scripture, and may this knowledge help you "grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord" (2 Pet 1:2, NLT).

PHILIP W. COMFORT
GENERAL EDITOR

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

b.	Babylonian Gemara
bar.	baraita
c.	*circa*, around, approximately
cf.	*confer*, compare
ch, chs	chapter, chapters
contra	in contrast to
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
ed.	edition, editor
e.g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
et al.	*et alli*, and others
fem.	feminine
ff	following (verses, pages)
fl.	flourished
Gr.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
ibid.	*ibidem*, in the same place
i.e.	*id est*, the same
in loc.	*in loco*, in the place cited
lit.	literally
LXX	Septuagint
M	Majority Text
m.	Mishnah
masc.	masculine
mg	margin
ms	manuscript
mss	manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text
n.d.	no date
neut.	neuter
no.	number
NT	New Testament
OL	Old Latin
OS	Old Syriac
OT	Old Testament
p., pp.	page, pages
pl.	plural
Q	Quelle ("Sayings" as Gospel source)
rev.	revision
sg.	singular
t.	Tosefta
TR	Textus Receptus
v., vv.	verse, verses
vid.	*videtur*, it seems
viz.	*videlicet*, namely
vol.	volume
y.	Jerusalem Gemara

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version
ESV	English Standard Version
GW	God's Word
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
JB	Jerusalem Bible
KJV	King James Version
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCV	New Century Version
NEB	New English Bible
NET	The NET Bible
NIV	New International Version
NIrV	New International Reader's Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	The New Jewish Publication Society Translation (*Tanakh*)
NKJV	New King James Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NLT	New Living Translation
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version
TLB	The Living Bible

ABBREVIATIONS FOR DICTIONARIES, LEXICONS, COLLECTIONS OF TEXTS, ORIGINAL LANGUAGE EDITIONS

ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols., Freedman) [1992]

ANEP *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Pritchard) [1965]

ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Pritchard) [1969]

BAGD *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker) [1979]

BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich) [2000]

BDB *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Brown, Driver, Briggs) [1907]

BDF *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Blass, Debrunner, Funk) [1961]

BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Elliger and Rudolph) [1983]

CAD *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* [1956]

COS *The Context of Scripture* (3 vols., Hallo and Younger) [1997–2002]

DBI *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman) [1998]

DBT *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2nd ed., Leon-Dufour) [1972]

DCH *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (5 vols., D. Clines) [2000]

DLNTD *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Development* (R. Martin, P. Davids) [1997]

DJD *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* [1955–]

DJG *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Green, McKnight, Marshall) [1992]

DOTP *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (T. Alexander, D.W. Baker) [2003]

DPL *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Hawthorne, Martin, Reid) [1993]

DTIB *Dictionary of Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Vanhoozer) [2005]

EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (3 vols., H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET) [1990–1993]

GKC *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Gesenius, Kautzsch, trans. Cowley) [1910]

HALOT *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. Stamm; trans. M. Richardson) [1994–1999]

IBD *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (3 vols., Douglas, Wiseman) [1980]

IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols., Buttrick) [1962]

ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Bromiley) [1979–1988]

KBL *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Koehler, Baumgartner) [1958]

LCL Loeb Classical Library

L&N *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (Louw and Nida) [1989]

LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed., Liddell, Scott, Jones) [1996]

MM *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Moulton and Milligan) [1930; 1997]

NA^{26} *Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1979]

NA^{27} *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1993]

NBD *New Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed., Douglas, Hillyer) [1982]

NIDB *New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Douglas, Tenney) [1987]

NIDBA *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Blaiklock and Harrison) [1983]

NIDNTT *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 vols., C. Brown) [1975–1985]

NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols., W. A. VanGemeren) [1997]

PGM *Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri.* (Preisendanz) [1928]

PG *Patrologia Graecae* (J. P. Migne) [1857–1886]

TBD *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Elwell, Comfort) [2001]

TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols., Kittel, Friedrich; trans. Bromiley) [1964–1976]

TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (15 vols., Botterweck, Ringgren; trans. Willis, Bromiley, Green) [1974–]

TLNT *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (3 vols., C. Spicq) [1994]

TLOT *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vols., E. Jenni) [1997]

TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (2 vols., Harris, Archer) [1980]

UBS^{3} *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (3rd ed., Metzger et al.) [1975]

UBS^{4} *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th corrected ed., Metzger et al.) [1993]

WH *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Westcott and Hort) [1882]

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	Deut	Deuteronomy	1 Sam	1 Samuel
Exod	Exodus	Josh	Joshua	2 Sam	2 Samuel
Lev	Leviticus	Judg	Judges	1 Kgs	1 Kings
Num	Numbers	Ruth	Ruth	2 Kgs	2 Kings

1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Song	Song of Songs	Obad	Obadiah
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Isa	Isaiah	Jonah	Jonah
Ezra	Ezra	Jer	Jeremiah	Mic	Micah
Neh	Nehemiah	Lam	Lamentations	Nah	Nahum
Esth	Esther	Ezek	Ezekiel	Hab	Habakkuk
Job	Job	Dan	Daniel	Zeph	Zephaniah
Ps, Pss	Psalm, Psalms	Hos	Hosea	Hag	Haggai
Prov	Proverbs	Joel	Joel	Zech	Zechariah
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Amos	Amos	Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Matt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Luke	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Phlm	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

Deuterocanonical

Bar	Baruch	1–2 Esdr	1–2 Esdras	Ps 151	Psalm 151
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel	Add Esth	Additions to Esther	Sir	Sirach
Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah	Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah	Tob	Tobit
Bel	Bel and the Dragon	Jdt	Judith	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Sg Three	Song of the Three Children	1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees		
		3–4 Macc	3–4 Maccabees		
Sus	Susanna	Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh		

MANUSCRIPTS AND LITERATURE FROM QUMRAN

Initial numerals followed by "Q" indicate particular caves at Qumran. For example, the notation 4Q267 indicates text 267 from cave 4 at Qumran. Further, 1QS 4:9-10 indicates column 4, lines 9-10 of the *Rule of the Community*; and 4Q166 1 ii 2 indicates fragment 1, column ii, line 2 of text 166 from cave 4. More examples of common abbreviations are listed below.

CD	Cairo Geniza copy of the *Damascus Document*	1QIsa[b]	Isaiah copy [b]	4QLam[a]	Lamentations
		1QM	*War Scroll*	11QPs[a]	Psalms
		1QpHab	*Pesher Habakkuk*	11QTemple[a,b]	*Temple Scroll*
1QH	*Thanksgiving Hymns*	1QS	*Rule of the Community*	11QtgJob	*Targum of Job*
1QIsa[a]	Isaiah copy [a]				

IMPORTANT NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

(all dates given are AD; ordinal numbers refer to centuries)

Significant Papyri (𝔓 = Papyrus)

𝔓1 Matt 1; early 3rd
𝔓4+𝔓64+𝔓67 Matt 3, 5, 26; Luke 1–6; late 2nd
𝔓5 John 1, 16, 20; early 3rd
𝔓13 Heb 2–5, 10–12; early 3rd
𝔓15+𝔓16 (probably part of same codex) 1 Cor 7–8, Phil 3–4; late 3rd
𝔓20 Jas 2–3; 3rd
𝔓22 John 15–16; mid 3rd
𝔓23 Jas 1; c. 200
𝔓27 Rom 8–9; 3rd
𝔓30 1 Thess 4–5; 2 Thess 1; early 3rd
𝔓32 Titus 1–2; late 2nd
𝔓37 Matt 26; late 3rd
𝔓39 John 8; first half of 3rd
𝔓40 Rom 1–4, 6, 9; 3rd

𝔓45 Gospels and Acts; early 3rd
𝔓46 Paul's Major Epistles (less Pastorals); late 2nd
𝔓47 Rev 9–17; 3rd
𝔓49+𝔓65 Eph 4–5; 1 Thess 1–2; 3rd
𝔓52 John 18; c. 125
𝔓53 Matt 26, Acts 9–10; middle 3rd
𝔓66 John; late 2nd
𝔓70 Matt 2–3, 11–12, 24; 3rd
𝔓72 1–2 Peter, Jude; c. 300
𝔓74 Acts, General Epistles; 7th
𝔓75 Luke and John; c. 200
𝔓77+𝔓103 (probably part of same codex) Matt 13–14, 23; late 2nd
𝔓87 Philemon; late 2nd
𝔓90 John 18–19; late 2nd
𝔓91 Acts 2–3; 3rd
𝔓92 Eph 1, 2 Thess 1; c. 300
𝔓98 Rev 1:13-20; late 2nd
𝔓100 Jas 3–5; c. 300
𝔓101 Matt 3–4; 3rd
𝔓104 Matt 21; 2nd
𝔓106 John 1; 3rd
𝔓115 Rev 2–3, 5–6, 8–15; 3rd

Significant Uncials

א (Sinaiticus) most of NT; 4th
A (Alexandrinus) most of NT; 5th
B (Vaticanus) most of NT; 4th
C (Ephraemi Rescriptus) most of NT with many lacunae; 5th
D (Bezae) Gospels, Acts; 5th
D (Claromontanus), Paul's Epistles; 6th (different MS than Bezae)
E (Laudianus 35) Acts; 6th
F (Augensis) Paul's Epistles; 9th
G (Boernerianus) Paul's Epistles; 9th
H (Coislinianus) Paul's Epistles; 6th
I (Freerianus or Washington) Paul's Epistles; 5th
L (Regius) Gospels; 8th
Q (Guelferbytanus B) Luke, John; 5th
P (Porphyrianus) Acts—Revelation; 9th
T (Borgianus) Luke, John; 5th
W (Washingtonianus or the Freer Gospels) Gospels; 5th
Z (Dublinensis) Matthew; 6th
037 (Δ; Sangallensis) Gospels; 9th
038 (Θ; Koridethi) Gospels; 9th
040 (Ξ; Zacynthius) Luke; 6th
043 (Φ; Beratinus) Matthew, Mark; 6th
044 (Ψ; Athous Laurae) Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 9th
048 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 5th
0171 Matt 10, Luke 22; c. 300
0189 Acts 5; c. 200

Significant Minuscules

1 Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 12th
33 All NT except Rev; 9th
81 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 1044
565 Gospels; 9th
700 Gospels; 11th
1424 (or Family 1424—a group of 29 manuscripts sharing nearly the same text) most of NT; 9th-10th
1739 Acts, Paul's Epistles; 10th
2053 Rev; 13th
2344 Rev; 11th
f^{1} (a family of manuscripts including 1, 118, 131, 209) Gospels; 12th-14th
f^{13} (a family of manuscripts including 13, 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709—known as the Ferrar group) Gospels; 11th-15th

Significant Ancient Versions

SYRIAC (SYR)

syr^{c} (Syriac Curetonian) Gospels; 5th
syr^{s} (Syriac Sinaiticus) Gospels; 4th
syr^{h} (Syriac Harklensis) Entire NT; 616

OLD LATIN (IT)

it^{a} (Vercellenis) Gospels; 4th
it^{b} (Veronensis) Gospels; 5th
it^{d} (Cantabrigiensis—the Latin text of Bezae) Gospels, Acts, 3 John; 5th
it^{e} (Palantinus) Gospels; 5th
it^{k} (Bobiensis) Matthew, Mark; c. 400

COPTIC (COP)

cop^{bo} (Boharic—north Egypt)
cop^{fay} (Fayyumic—central Egypt)
cop^{sa} (Sahidic—southern Egypt)

OTHER VERSIONS

arm (Armenian)
eth (Ethiopic)
geo (Georgian)

TRANSLITERATION AND NUMBERING SYSTEM

Note: For words and roots from nonbiblical languages (e.g., Arabic, Ugaritic), only approximate transliterations are given.

HEBREW/ARAMAIC

Consonants

א	*aleph*	= ʾ	מ, ם	*mem*	= *m*
ב, בּ	*beth*	= *b*	נ, ן	*nun*	= *n*
ג, גּ	*gimel*	= *g*	ס	*samekh*	= *s*
ד, דּ	*daleth*	= *d*	ע	*ayin*	= ʿ
ה	*he*	= *h*	פ, פּ, ף	*pe*	= *p*
ו	*waw*	= *w*	צ, ץ	*tsadhe*	= *ts*
ז	*zayin*	= *z*	ק	*qoph*	= *q*
ח	*heth*	= *kh*	ר	*resh*	= *r*
ט	*teth*	= *t*	שׁ	*shin*	= *sh*
י	*yodh*	= *y*	שׂ	*sin*	= *s*
כ, כּ, ך	*kaph*	= *k*	ת, תּ	*taw*	= *t, th* **(spirant)**
ל	*lamedh*	= *l*			

Vowels

◌ַ	*patakh*	= *a*	◌ֹ	*qamets khatuf*	= *o*
◌ַח	*furtive patakh*	= *a*	◌ֹ	*holem*	= *o*
◌ָ	*qamets*	= *a*	◌ֹו	*full holem*	= *o*
◌ָה	*final qamets he*	= *ah*	◌ֻ	*short qibbuts*	= *u*
◌ֶ	*segol*	= *e*	◌ֻ	*long qibbuts*	= *u*
◌ֵ	*tsere*	= *e*	◌ֻו	*shureq*	= *u*
◌ֵי	*tsere yod*	= *e*	◌ֲ	*khatef patakh*	= *a*
◌ִ	*short hireq*	= *i*	◌ֳ	*khatef qamets*	= *o*
◌ִ	*long hireq*	= *i*	◌ְ	*vocalic shewa*	= *e*
◌ִי	*hireq yod*	= *i*	◌ַי	*patakh yodh*	= *a*

GREEK

α	*alpha*	= *a*	ι	*iota*	= *i*
β	*beta*	= *b*	κ	*kappa*	= *k*
γ	*gamma*	= *g, n (before* γ, κ, ξ, χ*)*	λ	*lamda*	= *l*
			μ	*mu*	= *m*
δ	*delta*	= *d*	ν	*nu*	= *n*
ε	*epsilon*	= *e*	ξ	*ksi*	= *x*
ζ	*zeta*	= *z*	ο	*omicron*	= *o*
η	*eta*	= *ē*	π	*pi*	= *p*
θ	*theta*	= *th*	ρ	*rho*	= *r* (ῥ = *rh*)

σ, ς	*sigma*	*= s*	ψ	*psi*	*= ps*
τ	*tau*	*= t*	ω	*omega*	*= ō*
υ	*upsilon*	*= u*	῾	*rough breathing mark*	*= h (with vowel or diphthong)*
φ	*phi*	*= ph*			
χ	*chi*	*= ch*			

THE TYNDALE-STRONG'S NUMBERING SYSTEM

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series uses a word-study numbering system to give both newer and more advanced Bible students alike quicker, more convenient access to helpful original-language tools (e.g., concordances, lexicons, and theological dictionaries). Those who are unfamiliar with the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek alphabets can quickly find information on a given word by looking up the appropriate index number. Advanced students will find the system helpful because it allows them to quickly find the lexical form of obscure conjugations and inflections.

There are two main numbering systems used for biblical words today. The one familiar to most people is the Strong's numbering system (made popular by the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible*). Although the original Strong's system is still quite useful, the most up-to-date research has shed new light on the biblical languages and allows for more precision than is found in the original Strong's system. The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series, therefore, features a newly revised version of the Strong's system, the Tyndale-Strong's numbering system. The Tyndale-Strong's system brings together the familiarity of the Strong's system and the best of modern scholarship. In most cases, the original Strong's numbers are preserved. In places where new research dictates, new or related numbers have been added.[1]

The second major numbering system today is the Goodrick-Kohlenberger system used in a number of study tools published by Zondervan. In order to give students broad access to a number of helpful tools, the Commentary provides index numbers for the Zondervan system as well.

The different index systems are designated as follows:

TG	Tyndale-Strong's Greek number	ZH	Zondervan Hebrew number
ZG	Zondervan Greek number	TA/ZA	Tyndale/Zondervan Aramaic number
TH	Tyndale-Strong's Hebrew number	S	Strong's Aramaic number

So in the example, "love" *agapē* [^{TG}26, ^{ZG}27], the first number is the one to use with Greek tools keyed to the Tyndale-Strong's system, and the second applies to tools that use the Zondervan system.

The indexing of Aramaic terms differs slightly from that of Greek and Hebrew. Strong's original system mixed the Aramaic terms in with the Hebrew, but the Tyndale-Strong's system indexes Aramaic with a new set of numbers starting at 10,000. Since Tyndale's system for Aramaic diverges completely from original Strong's, the original Strong's number is listed separately so that those using tools keyed to Strong's can locate the information. This number is designated with an S, as in the example, "son" *bar* [$^{TA/ZA}$10120, ^{S}1247].

1. Generally, one may simply use the original four-digit Strong's number to identify words in tools using Strong's system. If a Tyndale-Strong's number is followed by a capital letter (e.g., ^{TG}1692A), it generally indicates an added subdivision of meaning for the given term. Whenever a Tyndale-Strong's number has a number following a decimal point (e.g., ^{TG}2013.1), it reflects an instance where new research has yielded a separate, new classification of use for a biblical word. Forthcoming tools from Tyndale House Publishers will include these entries, which were not part of the original Strong's system.

Ezekiel

David L. Thompson

INTRODUCTION TO *Ezekiel*

IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL readers encounter perhaps the most striking and eccentric (some have said deranged!)[1] figure among Israel's prophets. He is also among the most theologically daring and creative of the prophets. Ezekiel survived spiritual, social, and national upheaval, as well as personal trauma. In the midst of it all he heard and saw the God of Israel in unprecedented ways. He then expressed these visions in extraordinary passages, many of which are difficult to understand.

In spite of the difficulties confronting interpreters, the book of Ezekiel addresses God's people powerfully and uniquely. Generations trying to come to terms with their role and stake in human tragedy have found instruction here. Persons seeking to contextualize the ancient faith in their own worlds have found caution and guidance. People of God struggling to make sense of the loss of everything that gave meaning and structure to their lives, and others groping for hope in their apparently dead-end situations, have heard a life-giving word here.

AUTHOR

If we identify the prophet Ezekiel as the author of this book, as has traditionally been done, we have some information about him. Ezekiel was a Zadokite priest, the son of a certain Buzi (1:3),[2] living in Judah during the decades leading up to the first conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24). From his youth, Ezekiel followed priestly Torah and imbibed priestly convictions (4:14); he had become passionately committed to Israel's whole Torah and her historic covenant faith. Along with other intelligentsia, artisans, leaders of Judah, and King Jehoiachin, he had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon and settled in a community at Tel-abib on the Kebar River near Nippur (1:1-3). In his thirtieth year—the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile (593 BC)—the Lord commissioned him as a prophet to the rebellious nation of Israel, especially to the exiled community (2:1-5; 3:15). Four and a half years later his beloved wife died (24:1, 15-18). Ezekiel continued his prophetic ministry at least through April 571 BC, the time of his last dated oracle (29:17-21). We have no information regarding the close of his ministry or the end of his life or the precise relationship between him and "his" book as it now stands, beyond what may be inferred from the book itself. The book itself does, however, offer extensive information about Ezekiel's passions, convictions, theology, and ministry.

The dominantly autobiographical character of the book of Ezekiel suggests that the prophet himself wrote substantial portions of the work (by his own hand or

through a scribe, as Jeremiah did through Baruch).[3] Repeated connection of Ezekiel with the message reception formula[4] ties massive amounts of the book directly to him, with no evidence in these oracles preventing a written connection. This remains true, even though the dates (e.g., 8:1) most likely locate the oracles that immediately follow them rather than entire segments or sections they introduce. Association of the prophet with the actual recording of at least some of what he heard and saw tends in the same direction (24:2; 43:11).

The book's pervasive first-person stance could also suggest that Ezekiel himself was responsible not simply for recording various oracles but for shaping and structuring the present book. The unusual attention to precise dating of oracles and Ezekiel's explicit connection to the chronological matters in the book could support this (24:2). Some other exilic/postexilic prophets give precise attention to dates (e.g., Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1), but the number of chronological references in Ezekiel (14), the import of this chronological flow to the unfolding structure of the book, and the interrelationships between this chronology and the prophet's experience as spokesman for the Lord are striking. The prophet's apparent connection with extensive portions of the book has also led many to attribute the whole to him, precisely because they perceived throughout the work the pervasive influence of the same person. Further, nothing in the book points necessarily to a writer and readers after the fall of the Neo-Babylonians or beyond any significant return of exiles to Judah. These and other factors allowed S. R. Driver to summarize critical opinion at the opening of the twentieth century by declaring "No critical question arises in connection with the authorship of the book [of Ezekiel], the whole from beginning to end bearing unmistakably the stamp of a single mind" (1909:279; similarly Cornill 1907:315-316).[5]

Various Views of Authorship. Identification of the prophet as the author, however, is not a foregone conclusion. Among the church fathers, Jerome questioned the link between Ezekiel and the book. Like all the prophetic books and many other biblical works, the book of Ezekiel comes to us anonymously. The book names no author or editor(s). The Talmud notes that "the men of the Great Synagogue wrote Ezekiel" (*b. Hagigah* 14b); this probably refers, however, to their work of copying (perhaps editing) rather than authorship. Specifically how much, then, of the material in the book of Ezekiel can be traced to Ezekiel's hand, and to what extent does Ezekiel's hand figure in the literary structure and logic of the book we now have?

As early as 1756, Oeder questioned the literary integrity of the book, regarding chapters 40–48 as a spurious addition to Ezekiel's work of chapters 1–39 (Pfeiffer 1941:525-526). In 1792, Corrodi reckoned that chapters 33–39 did not come from the prophet either (Pfeiffer 1941:526). Against the majority opinion in nineteenth-century critical scholarship, already in the 1830s, Zunz (followed by Seinecke in the 1880s) concluded that the book of Ezekiel was actually pseudepigraphic, composed by an unknown writer centuries after Ezekiel.[6] Convinced of the structural and stylistic unity of the book, once they had separated it from Ezekiel on other grounds, they found it necessary to attribute the whole to later, unknown hands. Still, the majority of scholars were not persuaded to set aside the book's apparent connection of the prophet with substantial materials in the book, if not with the

book as a whole. Again in the 1930s C. C. Torrey championed a "Pseudo-Ezekiel," with its core written around 230 BC, but he failed to convince many (Eissfeldt 1965:366, 369).

Kraetzschmar introduced the idea of multiple recensions as a key to the book's composition (1900). Focusing on parallel texts and doublets found in the book, Kraetzschmar thought two recensions by Ezekiel himself, one in the first person and a shorter recension in the third person, were later joined by a redactor. Many credit G. Hölscher's 1924 work, *Hesechiel: Der Dichter und das Buch* (*Ezekiel: The Poet and the Book*), with providing the main impetus for opening these questions to critical study (Childs 1979:357). Analyzing the book's style, Hölscher assigned to Ezekiel only those portions of the book he regarded as poetic—170 of 1,273 verses—leaving the rest to a fourth-century-BC writer who completely reshaped the prophet's work. By 1943, Irwin could lament the fact that the "newer commentaries" he read[7] on these questions could agree on little more than that the book was composite (it had not been written as a whole by Ezekiel) and that the editorial and redactional process of producing the work as we have it began with Ezekiel (Irwin 1943:23). Irwin noted the highly tentative nature of conclusions drawn and claimed the failure to reach consensus was due to the lack of "clear criteria of originality" for distinguishing the prophet's words in the present text (1943:24).[8]

Kraetzschmar, Hölscher, and others modifying and extending their research turned scholarly attention to the *process* by which the book arose, from earliest materials by the prophet or another person through successive handlings by other readers and on to the book as we have it. Study of this compositional process, eventually known as redaction criticism, entailed close examination of the history of the traditions taken up in the book and the ways in which persons handling Ezekiel's text modified it with glosses, explanations, modifications, extensions, insertions, and rearrangement of related materials (the foci of redaction criticism). Materials that an earlier generation discarded as "secondary" accretions in order to uncover the "authentic" or "genuine" words of Ezekiel were now viewed as clues to the literary journey from the prophet's writings to the book as we have it (cf. contrasting approaches of Torrey 1930:71 and Eichrodt 1970:18-22).

Walther Eichrodt and Walther Zimmerli present the best recent examples of a form- and redaction-critical approach to Ezekiel. Both writers seek to discern the original text of the prophet and to explain the relationship of every other word in the text to those original writings of the prophet, aiming in the end to interpret the book as we have it. Zimmerli's commentary is widely regarded as the pinnacle of scholarly work on Ezekiel from the tradition-historical, redaction-critical perspective. Both Zimmerli and Eichrodt offer rich theological interpretations of the book. At the same time, both scholars invest major effort and space in enterprises that remain highly speculative.

In spite of his immense respect and sympathy for Zimmerli's work, Brevard Childs lodges theological and exegetical critiques against it. His objections highlight difficulties in the tradition-historical, redactional-critical approach to biblical texts. Childs retains more confidence than many in our present ability to distinguish the prophet's original writings from later additions to and alterations

of the text leading to the book as we have it. Even so, he makes the general point that Zimmerli (1979:369) makes the "original 'Grundttext'" (foundational or basic text) to which his traditio-historical work leads him the primary text for the work of exegesis. Thus, a reconstructed "original" text, not the canonical text, becomes the main text to be interpreted (1979:369). More specifically, Childs claims Zimmerli has "missed the significance of the canonical process," which not only shaped the text (as Zimmerli has seen) but brought that process to a definitive end when it fixed the canonical text. A "pre-canonical stage" in the text's development is substituted for the "normative canonical text" as the target of interpretation. Consequently, Zimmerli "runs the danger of losing the inner dynamic of the full canonical passage," reducing attention to the literary entity of the book of Ezekiel with its own integrity, not to be identified with the sum of its parts. Finally, Childs challenges the assumption that introducing the historical work of tracing the redactional-canonical process actually enhances illumination of the text in every case. Sometimes helpful, often "hypothetical and fragile," the value of the observations seems overestimated (1979:370).

Critiques of this sort have produced significant responses in the most recent interpreters of Ezekiel. Moshe Greenberg has developed what he calls a "holistic" approach to interpretation, seen in his Anchor Bible Commentary on Ezekiel (1983 and 1997). First, Greenberg begins with the Masoretic Text as the "least shaky foundation" for the study of the book of Ezekiel that we possess (1983:20). In one way or another, it must ultimately go back to the prophet himself. Removed at least eight centuries from the prophet himself, the Masoretic Text cannot be regarded as a "verbatim record" of Ezekiel's publication, Greenberg reasons, because of the changes known to occur in the course of extended scribal transmission. Nevertheless, it serves as our primary source for the study of this prophetic book "until proved unreliable by anachronism (linguistic, historical, or ideational), or indubitable [textual] corruption, or intolerable variations in style or texture" (1983:19). In the case of Ezekiel, the ancient versions provide only limited access to stages preceding the Masoretic Text, and help from Qumran texts is sparse. Second, Greenberg is thoroughly skeptical of scholarly attempts to reconstruct an "original" Ezekiel and track the development of the present book from that reconstruction. He considers such endeavors often flawed by the imposition of modern and often unexamined assumptions regarding composition and style that fail to hear the ancient text on its own terms (1983:20-21). Even where the Septuagint presents sufficient divergence as to raise the question of another layer in the literary development of the book, Greenberg is inclined to suggest Ezekiel as his own first editor, leading to such a *Vorlage* for the Septuagint (1997:396). Finally, Greenberg tries to immerse himself in the text of Ezekiel as a piece of ancient literature with its own compositional conventions, shaping, and patterning often quite at odds with modern intuitions. He proceeds with the working assumption that "the present book of Ezekiel is the product of art and intelligent design," the product of "an individual mind of powerful and passionate proclivities." In the book "a coherent world of vision" emerges, "contemporary with the sixth-century prophet and decisively shaped by him, if not the very words of Ezekiel himself" (1983:26-27).

Leslie Allen sees his work on Ezekiel in the Word Biblical Commentary as something of a "rapprochement" between Zimmerli and Greenberg, between a mainly historical-critical inquiry and a primarily literary approach (1994:xxiv). Allen finds no reason to deny substantial tracts of the book and much of its design to Ezekiel. The prophet had plenty of time to commit his prophetic reports to writing, and the messenger formula consistently ties Ezekiel to the oracles that inaugurate literary units. Working with "redaction criticism of a moderate kind" (1994:xxiii), Allen also sees indication that others have amplified the prophet's own work, "equally partaking of prophetic authority by continued use of Ezekiel's messenger formula." Regularly throughout the text Allen sees literary units composed of "three layers: (1) a basic oracle, (2) a continuation or updating that stays relatively close to the basic oracle, and (3) a closing oracle that stands apart from the earlier two pieces." He concludes that the first two layers belong to Ezekiel, while the third comes from "heirs of his work . . . concerned to preserve it and adapt it to the needs of a succeeding generation" (1994:xxv). All of this has happened by perhaps the early 540s BC, for the book shows no signs either of the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire nor of a return of exiles to Judah (1994:xxv-xxvi; so also Greenberg 1983:15). Allen avoids Zimmerli's pitfall of making a reconstructed text the basis of his reading by reversing Zimmerli's reading strategy. Zimmerli stands beside the Ezekiel he has reconstructed and reads looking forward through the trail of redactional commentary to the book as a whole. Allen proposes to read from the present text back to Ezekiel, with the emphasis on reading the edited text (i.e., the canonical text) as an early "re-reading" of the prophetic record "from a later standpoint" (1994:xxvi).

Daniel Block argues that very little of the scribal, compositional, and editorial work entailed in producing the book of Ezekiel need be removed from the prophet's own hand (1997:17-23). Conceding some "editorial clarifications by later hands" such as 1:2-3, he nevertheless sees no evidence to demand extending the "chronological, geographic, and temperamental distance between prophet and book" common in the history of the critical study of Ezekiel (1997:23). This commentary will proceed mainly along the lines of Greenberg and Block. Theologically and theoretically I have no serious quarrel with Allen's moderate redaction criticism. But I lack confidence in our ability (especially my own!) to consistently delineate various layers of redaction in documents like Ezekiel. Where editorial and redactional work seems clearly present, I will use it to illuminate the reading of the Masoretic Text as it now stands. For convenience, I will refer to Ezekiel as the author, without reentering debate about the precise stages of the composition of the book.

The Author Himself: The Priest and Prophet. Having tied the prophet Ezekiel closely to the composition of the book of Ezekiel, we may return once more to the brief notes about his identity. Ezekiel was clearly a prophet, this "sentinel" status emphasized by including the prophet's commission and instruction among introductory theological concerns. But the first vocational designation of Ezekiel in the book is as a priest. The Masoretic Text and the New Living Translation are ambiguous as to whether the title "priest" (1:3) modifies Ezekiel or his father. The Septuagint takes it to describe Ezekiel (*Iezekiēl huion Bouzi ton hierea*; "priest" is marked by accusative case, agreeing with "Ezekiel" and "son"), which is the perspective I take

OUTLINE

I. Introduction to the Visions and Book of Ezekiel (1:1-3)
II. The Prophet's Commission to the House of Israel (1:4–3:27)
  A. Visions of God: The Speaking Glory (1:4-28)
  B. Ezekiel Sent as a Sentinel Prophet to Rebels (2:1–3:15)
  C. Ezekiel, a Watchman for Israel (3:16-27)
III. Enactments, Visions, and Oracles of Jerusalem's Coming Doom (4:1–24:27)
  A. Watchman's Warning of Israel's End (4:1–7:27)
    1. Enactments of Jerusalem's destruction and exile (4:1–5:4)
    2. Wrath and reproach for Jerusalem's abominations (5:5-17)
    3. Sword, famine, and plague for Jerusalem (6:1-14)
    4. "The end has come!" (7:1-27)
  B. The Glory of the God of Israel Driven from Temple and City (8:1–11:25)[44]
    1. Vision of abominations in the Temple (8:1-18)
    2. Marked foreheads spared (9:1-11)
    3. The Lord's glory at the Temple's east gate (10:1-22)
    4. The Lord's glory leaves doomed Jerusalem (11:1-25)
  C. False Hopes Demolished (12:1–14:23)
    1. The certainty of Israel's deportation (12:1-20)
    2. Refutation and rejection of false prophets (12:21–13:23)
    3. No righteous hero could save Israel (14:1-23)
  D. Pictures of Jerusalem's Doom (15:1–19:14)[45]
    1. Allegory of the useless vine (15:1-8)
    2. Allegory of Jerusalem, the orphan harlot (16:1-63)
    3. Allegories of eagles and a vine (17:1-24)
    4. The one who sins dies (18:1-32)
    5. Lamentation riddles: the lioness and the vine (19:1-14)
  E. The Lord Draws His Sword (20:1–24:27)
    1. The Lord rejects an inquiry from the elders of Israel (20:1-44)
    2. The Lord's sword drawn and polished (20:45–21:32 [21:1-37])
    3. Jerusalem's abominations cataloged and requited (22:1-31)
    4. The harlots Samaria and Jerusalem punished (23:1-49)
    5. The delightful one's death not mourned (24:1-27)
IV. Oracles against Israel's Neighbors (25:1–32:32)
  A. Oracles against Immediate Neighbors (25:1-17)
    1. Oracle against Ammon, who celebrated the Temple's defilement (25:1-7)
    2. Oracle against Moab, who ridiculed Judah's distinction (25:8-11)
    3. Oracle against Edom, who acted vengefully against Judah (25:12-14)
    4. Oracle against Philistia, who perpetuated animosity (25:15-17)

ENDNOTES

1. As Weiser bluntly puts it, "His numerous visions . . . his states of ecstasy and trance . . . and his symbolic actions show an inclination to the bizarre which is expressed in grotesque and in part repulsive forms bordering on the pathological" (1961:223).
2. Ezekiel's father, Buzi, is known only from 1:3.
3. Only two passages in the book as we have it refer to Ezekiel in the third person, 1:2-3 and 24:24. Jeremiah 36:4-18 tells of Baruch writing down Jeremiah's oracles under his

COMMENTARY ON

Ezekiel

◆ I. Introduction to the Visions and Book of Ezekiel (1:1–3)

On July 31* of my thirtieth year,* while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. 2This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. 3(The LORD gave this message to Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians,* and he felt the hand of the LORD take hold of him.)

1:1a Hebrew *On the fifth day of the fourth month*, of the ancient Hebrew lunar calendar. A number of dates in Ezekiel can be cross-checked with dates in surviving Babylonian records and related accurately to our modern calendar. This event occurred on July 31, 593 B.C. **1:1b** Or *in the thirtieth year.* **1:3** Or *Chaldeans.*

NOTES

1:1 ***July 31 of my thirtieth year.*** The NLT understands the MT's "in the thirtieth" year as referring to the prophet's age, as Origen first suggested (so also Allen 1994:21; Blenkinsopp 1990:16; Block 1997:82). Undefined as it is, the reference has occasioned diverse interpretations. Some have taken the "thirtieth" to refer to: (1) the reign of a king—Nabopolassar, Jehoiachin, or even Manasseh (see Allen 1994:20-21, for details and bibliography); (2) the time since Hilkiah's discovery of the Book of the Law (2 Kgs 22:8; so the Targum, Jerome); (3) a year in a Jubilee chronology, making the year of Jehoiachin's deportation the midpoint in a 50-year cycle, or the deportation of Jehoiachin the start of a symbolic Jubilee cycle, either one related to the "twenty-fifth year" date in 40:1 (Kimchi, Hitzig, in Zimmerli 1979:113), or a garbled editorial dating related originally to 1:2-3 (Zimmerli 1979:114, citing Fohrer 1952). The NLT reading requires the fewest extratextual assumptions and does justice to the text as we have it. This date and others throughout the book reference the ancient Hebrew lunar calendar (see NLT mg; see Freedy and Redford 1970, and Kutsch 1985, for definitive treatments).

while I was with. Whereas most prophetic books begin with title-like superscriptions (cf. MT in Isa 1:1; Jer 1:1-2; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1; Mic 1:1; Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1; Zeph 1:1; and Mal 1:1), Ezekiel begins with a first-person narrative report, which is characteristic of the entire book (similar to Jonah 1:1; Hag 1:1; and Zech 1:1).

the Judean exiles. Heb., *haggolah* [TH1473, ZH1583]. In Ezekiel, *haggolah* refers either to the community of deportees from Jerusalem and Judah, as it does here, or to the experience of being exiled (as in 12:3-4, 11; 25:3). It can refer to the entire exilic community in Babylon (1:1; 3:11) or to the specific enclave of exiles at Tel-abib (3:15; 11:24-25).

the Kebar River in Babylon. The NLT adds "in Babylon" (i.e., modern-day Iraq) to make the location explicit. Cuneiform evidence links the Kebar River with a canal, *nar Kabari*, in the vicinity of Nippur, not the more important artery, Shatt en-Nil, as was once thought (Greenberg 1983:40).

1:2 ***This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity.*** This note synchronizes 1:1 and 1:3, tying the unspecified 30th year of 1:1 to a specific time in the Exile assumed by 1:3. Verse 2 should perhaps be included in the parenthesis with 1:3, parallel to the syntax of Hag 1:1 and Zech 1:1. See also the Introduction on "Date and Occasion of Writing."

1:3 ***The LORD gave this message to Ezekiel.*** Lit., "the word of the LORD was/came unto Ezekiel." This standard rubric frequently introduces prophetic oracles. It occurs 48 times beyond this occurrence in Ezekiel, all of them in the first person ("This message came to me from the LORD"; cf. 3:1, 16; 6:1; 7:1). The NLT places all of 1:3 in parenthesis, recognizing the way this normally introductory rubric seems to interrupt the flow of the opening lines of the book as we now have it. The third-person reference may indicate that it is an editorial note intended to bring the book's opening lines more into conformity with the superscriptions of other prophetic books (cf. Jer 1:3; Jonah 1:1; Zech 1:1).

a priest. Although Ezekiel's father was also a priest if Ezekiel was (and vice versa), the parallel syntax in Zech 1:1 supports taking "a priest" to refer to Ezekiel (Zimmerli 1979:111). That is, the text flags the priestly identity of Ezekiel, not of his father.

he felt the hand of the LORD take hold of him. Six times Ezekiel uses this rubric to describe the Lord's apprehension of him in a major spiritual transport or direction (also 3:14, 22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1-2). "Take hold of" translates MT's "was upon," conveying the potent divine engagement involved in the expression. Because the other five occurrences of this rubric are all first-person references, some, with support of the LXX, Syriac, and some Hebrew mss, emend to a first-person reading here (Allen 1994:3-4). (The third-person reference here may depend on the other notes for its language.) In the occurrence of this phrase at 1:3, the MT includes "there," locating the event emphatically in Babylon, outside the sacred precincts of Jerusalem (cf. 8:1) and forming an inclusio with the final word of the book, naming the city *yhwh shammah* [TH3068/8033, ZH3378/9004], "Yahweh Is There!"

COMMENTARY

Strictly speaking, the opening three verses as they now stand introduce not the book as a whole but the first vision of the enthroned glory of the Lord (1:4–3:15). This vision presents the call and commission of Ezekiel as a prophet to the nation of Israel. It locates this vision temporally in the year that Ezekiel would have become a priest, and geographically and socially in south Babylon among Judean exiles, who had been carried away from Jerusalem with King Jehoiachin five years earlier (March 597 BC). They had been settled along one of the small irrigational and navigational canals lacing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers' floodplain (see notes on 1:1).

At the same time, because of its location, the paragraph serves practically as an introduction to the book as a whole. These lines emphasize God's sovereign and gracious initiative in opening the divine theater and granting Ezekiel sight of realities totally beyond his normal purview. They place one immediately in a visionary experience, visions intended as "message"—that is, being and containing "message" content. They couch the presentation in Ezekiel's distinctively autobiographical stance. Paradoxically, here as through the book, they focus primary attention on God himself as the subject of the disclosures. They introduce "the hand of the LORD [taking] hold" of Ezekiel as the hallmark metaphorical description of God's seizure of Ezekiel in powerful spiritual experiences of transport and revelation. All of these prepare the reader, not only for chapter 1, but also for the book.

◆ II. The Prophet's Commission to the House of Israel (1:4–3:27)
A. Visions of God: The Speaking Glory (1:4-28)

4As I looked, I saw a great storm coming
from the north, driving before it a huge
cloud that flashed with lightning and shone
with brilliant light. There was fire inside the
cloud, and in the middle of the fire glowed
something like gleaming amber.* 5From the
center of the cloud came four living beings
that looked human, 6except that each had
four faces and four wings. 7Their legs were
straight, and their feet had hooves like
those of a calf and shone like burnished
bronze. 8Under each of their four wings I
could see human hands. So each of the four
beings had four faces and four wings. 9The
wings of each living being touched the
wings of the beings beside it. Each one
moved straight forward in any direction
without turning around.

10Each had a human face in the front,
the face of a lion on the right side, the face
of an ox on the left side, and the face
of an eagle at the back. 11Each had two
pairs of outstretched wings—one pair
stretched out to touch the wings of the
living beings on either side of it, and the
other pair covered its body. 12They went in
whatever direction the spirit chose, and
they moved straight forward in any direc-
tion without turning around.

13The living beings looked like bright
coals of fire or brilliant torches, and light-
ning seemed to flash back and forth
among them. 14And the living beings dart-
ed to and fro like flashes of lightning.

15As I looked at these beings, I saw four
wheels touching the ground beside them,
one wheel belonging to each. 16The wheels
sparkled as if made of beryl. All four
wheels looked alike and were made the
same; each wheel had a second wheel
turning crosswise within it. 17The beings
could move in any of the four directions
they faced, without turning as they
moved. 18The rims of the four wheels were
tall and frightening, and they were cov-
ered with eyes all around.

19When the living beings moved, the
wheels moved with them. When they
flew upward, the wheels went up, too.
20The spirit of the living beings was in the
wheels. So wherever the spirit went, the
wheels and the living beings also went.
21When the beings moved, the wheels
moved. When the beings stopped, the
wheels stopped. When the beings flew
upward, the wheels rose up, for the spir-
it of the living beings was in the wheels.

22Spread out above them was a surface
like the sky, glittering like crystal. 23Beneath
this surface the wings of each living being
stretched out to touch the others' wings,
and each had two wings covering its body.
24As they flew, their wings sounded to me
like waves crashing against the shore or like
the voice of the Almighty* or like the shout-
ing of a mighty army. When they stopped,
they let down their wings. 25As they stood
with wings lowered, a voice spoke from be-
yond the crystal surface above them.

26Above this surface was something that
looked like a throne made of blue lapis la-
zuli. And on this throne high above was a
figure whose appearance resembled a man.
27From what appeared to be his waist up,
he looked like gleaming amber, flickering
like a fire. And from his waist down, he
looked like a burning flame, shining with
splendor. 28All around him was a glowing
halo, like a rainbow shining in the clouds
on a rainy day. This is what the glory of the
LORD looked like to me. When I saw it, I fell
face down on the ground, and I heard
someone's voice speaking to me.

1:4 Or *like burnished metal;* also in 1:27. **1:24** Hebrew *Shaddai.*

NOTES

1:4 ***gleaming amber.*** Precise identification of the MT's *khashmal* [TH2830, ZH3133], translated "amber," is uncertain (also 1:27; 8:2; HALOT 1.362). The LXX and Vulgate understand it

as an alloy of gold and silver. This and "amber," with its brownish gold beauty, fit the fiery context. Among possible cognates Greenberg favors Akkadian *elmeshu*, found in mythical contexts, associated at least once with a deity's face, flashing "like lightning," and argued by Landsberger to mean "amber" (1983:43; cf. NIDOTTE 2.316-317). The color and brilliance of this radiant material glowed from the heart of the flashing storm.

1:5-9 ***four living beings that looked human, except.*** These four composite figures emerged from the storm. Though predominantly humanoid, each had four different faces, only one of them human. Each of the living beings had four wings, human hands, straight (i.e., standing) legs and feet with hooves like a calf. No precise analogues are known from the ancient Near East, but such composite figures commonly appear in Mesopotamian and Syrian art representing deities or figures bearing deities or the sky. In Scripture, the Lord mounts a cherub and soars on the wings of the wind (Ps 18:10 [11]; cf. Ps 104:3), is "enthroned between the cherubim" (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 99:1) and speaks from there (Exod 25:22). For photos of similar figures from Israel's environment, consult ANEP (and supplement), pictures 472-474, 486, 500, 501, 531, 534, 537, 830, and 835. Though the elements are "traditional," this portrayal is uniquely Ezekiel's. The four figures are arrayed in a square ready to go in any direction without turning (Greenberg 1983:54).

1:10 ***human face in the front, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle at the back.*** Rather than presenting four figures, each with a different face (so Calvin 1948:65), the text is best understood as describing each of the four figures having four different faces, probably representing the major realms of creation (humankind, wild creatures, domesticated animals, and birds).

1:15-16 ***four wheels . . . one wheel belonging to each. . . . a second wheel turning crosswise within it.*** Each of the four living beings stands in a chariot. Throughout the chapter various aspects of their association with chariot imagery become known, and attention shifts from their amazing mobility to their function as a throne-bearing chariot or to creatures in a chariot whose function is to carry the enthroned deity. The NLT renders the MT and LXX phrase "a wheel within a wheel" as a complex with the inner wheel oriented perpendicular to the outer wheel, stressing the figure's ability to move straight ahead in any direction. Others understand the phrase as indicating wheels with hubs or rims in concentric circles, reminiscent of a throne chariot known from Assyrian art (Brownlee 1986:12-13; Greenberg 1983:57 and bibliography there).

1:16 ***beryl.*** This is a lustrous crystal, aquamarine or yellow, likely golden topaz, known from its ancient association with Spain—in the MT known as *tarshish* [TH8658, ZH9577] (HALOT 4.1798; NIDOTTE 4.33-34).

1:22 ***a surface like the sky, glittering like crystal.*** The MT's *raqia'* [TH7549, ZH8385], as in Gen 1:6, names the sky, in its appearance from earth, as a bowl-shaped canopy in which and above which beings and objects could be found.

crystal. The MT's *qerakh* [TH7140, ZH7943] can also mean "ice" (Job 6:16; 37:10), or "frost" (Gen 31:40, KJV), but the NLT, like the LXX *krustallos* [TG2930, ZG3223] (crystal), has captured the writer's predilection for images of precious stones. This and other features of the entire vision provide inspiration for John the Revelator's first vision of the heavenly throne room (Rev 4, summarized well in Brownlee 1986:17).

1:26 ***blue lapis lazuli.*** The MT has the loan word *sappir* [TH5601, ZH6209], derived from the Greek word *sappheiros* [TG4552, ZG4913] (sapphire). Ugaritic evidence suggests the Heb. *sappir* may name the precious stone lapis lazuli. A brilliant blue, and more easily worked than true sapphire because of its softness, it was prized throughout the ancient Near East as a

jewel often used for decorating sacred or precious objects (as in the heavenly throne room, Exod 24:10; the high priest's breastplate, Exod 28:18; 39:11; the king of Tyre's vestment, 28:13). The Hebrew association of the word with *tahor* [TH2889, ZH3196] ("clear"; see Exod 24:10), however, makes one suspect Heb. *sappir* could also mean "sapphire," since lapis lazuli is not "clear" (see HALOT 2.764; NIDOTTE 3.281).

a figure whose appearance resembled a man. Lit., "a thing like (*demuth* [TH1823, ZH1952]) resembling (*ke*-[TH3509.1, ZH3869]) the appearance of (*mar'eh* [TH4758, ZH5260]) a human." Here we have the penultimate culmination of a series of emphatic comparative expressions (1:4-28), which five times also includes *ke'en* [TH5869, ZH6524] (lit., "like the eye of"), meaning "like the appearance of." The noun *demuth*, "a likeness," and the particle *ke*, "like, resembling," preceding the noun *mar'eh*, "appearance," underscore by repetition and redundancy the distance between the things seen by Ezekiel and their actual substances or realities. The ultimate climax of this visionary distancing occurs in 1:27-28 with seven occurrences of *mar'eh*, together with *ke'eyn*, "like the appearance of," and ending with *demuth* and *mar'eh* occurring in construct, lit., "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD" (1:28).

1:28 ***the glory of the LORD.*** This is "the divine Majesty," as Greenberg puts it (1983:80), the Shekinah of postbiblical piety, manifesting radiantly the very presence of the "God of Israel" (10:20). Cf. Introduction, endnote 43.

I heard someone's voice speaking to me. The NLT follows the MT's *setumah* (a reading break), as do most versions. Some make the unit break at 1:28b, resuming with "Then I heard the voice of one speaking 2:1 and he said . . ." (Block 1997:115; Greenberg 1983:61; Zimmerli 1979:89). Others even place it before Ezekiel's fall to the ground in 1:28 (REB). Following the traditional break seems wise in view of the lack of criteria upon which to interrupt the series of consecutively linked verbs that span the chapter break here. The NLT, the majority of versions, and modern interpreters follow the LXX in discerning the syntax of the clause (versus JB, NAB, NASB, in forms of "I heard a voice speaking."). The "someone" must be identified from context as the figure, the Majesty himself (2:1; cf. 10:20).

COMMENTARY

In this section Ezekiel reports his inaugural vision, moving from a huge storm cloud on the distant, north horizon to a spectacular view of the enthroned Glory. The account moves from general to specific throughout, as though from the view of a distant storm to a 360-degree close-up, filling the whole sky and drawing the readers' gaze upward to the splendor now looming overhead. Ezekiel's[1] language here is repetitive and disjointed at points. Textual evidence suggests this may have come in part from repeated attempts to edit and clarify the text. It may also stem from powerful disruptions of Ezekiel's thoughts during his encounter with the God of Israel.

Israelite tradition and Canaanite culture alike held appearances from the north to be of special portent (Block 1997:92 versus Greenberg 1983:42). Whether Ezekiel thought in these terms or simply saw another storm coming from the north, the cloud quickly mushroomed into a dazzling and fiery display. Already amidst brilliant flashes of lightning, there shone in this cloud an amber-colored gleam that, upon closer view, proved to be the radiance of the glory of the God of Israel (1:4, 27).

Four composite creatures emerged from the cloud. The living beings (1:5-14), something like humans but with hooved feet, four wings, human hands, and four

faces, "look" strange to moderns. But Ezekiel almost surely would have recognized them either as deities or as the bearers of a god. Each being had four faces, perhaps representing the four major realms of creation over which the God of Israel sat enthroned. Jewish midrash captured this in *Exodus Rabbah*: "Four kinds of proud beings were created in the world: the proudest of all—man; of birds—the eagle; of domestic animals—the ox; of wild animals—the lion; and all of them are stationed beneath the chariot of the Holy One" (*Exodus Rabbah* 23:13, cited by Block 1997:96 and Greenberg 1983:56).

Arrayed in a square, with wings touching at the corners, a human face looked outward on each side, ready to move "ahead." Wheels set to the four points of the compass could move the Lord's throne chariot in any direction without need to reorient (1:15-17, 19-21). The connection between the movement of the living beings and their wheels is perfectly synchronized due to the presence of the beings' spirit in the wheels (1:20-21). Not only the wheels, but the creatures themselves, move at the behest of the spirit in them (1:12). Ezekiel's report of the vision plays on the Hebrew word *ruakh* [TH7307, ZH8120], meaning both "wind," as in 1:4 (NLT, "storm"), and "spirit" (1:12, 20-21), preparing for the following chapters (2, 3, 36, 37). Their wheels filled with eyes (1:18), the creatures have full awareness for action anywhere. They speed throughout the vision's landscape at will (1:14).

Ezekiel's vision of these creatures—later identified as cherubim (10:20-22)—trades in tradition in which cherubim sit atop the Ark of the Covenant at either end of the cover and guard the place where the God of Israel dwells, the place from which he speaks (Exod 25:17-22; Num 7:89). Solomon carried this architectural design into the Yahweh Temple in Jerusalem, where almost certainly the Ark was seen as the throne of the God of Israel, guarded by the cherubim (1 Kgs 6:23-35; 8:6-7; 2 Kgs 19:15, assuming Ezekiel's view in 43:3-7 reflects earlier interpretations of the Solomonic Temple). While Ezekiel reflects this earlier iconography, he also adapts it. The earlier cherubim have one face, not four, so far as we know, and they are not associated with wheels or chariots; at these points Ezekiel reflects his Mesopotamian setting. As the vision unfolds, we discover these heavenly beings actually carry above them the throne of the Glorious One (1:26-28). They ride in a chariot throne, transporting God's glory.

The vision engages Ezekiel with a startling sensory experience. Awareness of the grip of the Lord in an unsolicited divine vision frames the whole. The storm flashes with lightning and a brilliant glow (1:4), ablaze inside with the look of gleaming amber (1:4). From the cloud come beings shining like burning coals or blazing torches (1:13). Darting around, they themselves look like lightning (1:14). Their wheels sparkle with fiery colors like beryl (1:16), while the sky above glitters like crystal (1:22). Deafening noise as though from a shouting army or breakers crashing on a rocky shore, or like the voice of the Almighty himself (i.e., like thunder; 1:24), presages movement to the climax of the vision. The barrage of sound emphasizes by contrast the silence of the creatures when their wings come to rest (1:24-25). There at the apex, a throne of gorgeous, blue lapis lazuli or sapphire carries one who himself seems ablaze (1:27). He stands wrapped about

with splendor refracted in dazzling colors of a rainbow (1:28) and speaks from the stunning silence.

A triad of events climaxes the vision to this point: Ezekiel's sight of the Glorious One, his prostration before that sight, and the sound of the Majesty speaking. At the founding of the people Israel, Yahweh's glory appeared in a cloud (Exod 16:7, 10). Moses ascended Sinai into the cloud of God's glory (Exod 24:15-18), but he did not see Yahweh's "face" (Exod 33:20, 23). Isaiah saw the Lord enthroned but only *heard* of the glory of the Lord via the song of the seraphim (Isa 6:1-4). Jeremiah implies he saw the Lord (Jer 1:9). Ezekiel sees the glory of Yahweh, sees the enthroned figure, though in semblance, and hears its voice speaking. The speaking voice in 2:1 becomes a commissioning voice, moving almost seamlessly to the call and commission, with which the opening visions of God "form an indissoluble unity" (Rendtorff 2005:234). Not only is the God of Israel present in the land of captivity, but he is prepared to speak new realities into existence there. And yet the mystery of the God of Israel is preserved, for throughout we are told of images that "resemble" realities, revealing—while at the same time concealing—the God who eludes full comprehension.

This vision of God enthroned upon the cherubim opens a theme that structures the entire book by providing a visual movement parallel to the logical movement of Ezekiel's message. In this inaugural vision, Ezekiel sees the Lord gloriously present in the land of his people's exile. In chapters 8–11 Ezekiel sees this same Glorious One back in the Jerusalem Temple (8:3) and then watches its dramatic departure toward the east (9:3; 10:1-5, 20-22; 11:22-24). The Lord no longer inhabits his house! Its ruin cannot be far away. Then, at the conclusion of the book, Ezekiel, having been directed to proclaim hope to despairing exiles, is given a vision of the Shekinah returning to the new Temple (43:1-5; 44:1-4). God takes up his residence and rule again among his people (cf. 37:24-28).

John the Revelator adapts this imagery to interpret life under Roman rule to believers at the end of the first Christian century when he sees the divine throne (Rev 4). The one seated on it and the whole scene sparkles with the beauty of brilliant gemstones, flashing with lightning and resounding with thunder, all reminiscent of the theophany in chapter 1 (Rev 4:1-6a). On each side of the divine throne in heaven, John sees "living beings" (*ta zoa* [TG2226, ZG2442], as in LXX of Ezek 1) standing, the first having the form of a lion, the second the form of an ox, the third that of a human, and the fourth that of an eagle (Rev 4:6b-7). Each has six wings, covered with eyes (Rev 4:8). Throughout the book of Revelation, these creatures attend the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). John draws a nearly straight line from Ezekiel's vision of the enthroned Glory of God to the God and Father of Jesus, gloriously enthroned in the heavens and sovereign in the affairs of this earth, even in the face of imperial Rome.

ENDNOTE

1. I will refer throughout to Ezekiel as the writer for convenience, without intending to beg questions of editorial or recensional activity, treating editorial, redactional, and recensional matters only when germane to the interpretation of the text as it now stands. See the Introduction on "Author."

Daniel

EUGENE CARPENTER

INTRODUCTION TO *Daniel*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL fascinates people and rightly so. It is *sui generis* in the Old Testament and even among its noncanonical competitors (Knibb 2001:34). But that assertion must be defined and qualified in various ways, for it is also like other books in the Old Testament: The Joseph narrative in Genesis and portions of Esther are similar to the first six chapters of Daniel; certain prophetic passages (e.g., Isa 24–27; Zech 9–14) have the ambiance and style (basic genre) of chapters 7–12 of Daniel and may be termed protoapocalyptic. In general, it can be said that Daniel combines features found in these other books in a new and powerful presentation and adds much more.

As noted, the book contains stories reminiscent of the stories about Joseph and Esther as well as visions such as were seen by the prophets, but in Daniel, these are narrated in an unprecedented way. The book combines history, court tales (historical, but crafted in a certain way), wisdom illustrations, declarations (of the mantic variety as well as practical),[1] prophecy (he does foretell the future, 2:28; 10:14; and declare words of judgment to the kings in the present, 4:27 [24]; 5:26-27), and apocalyptic visions and dreams into a powerfully crafted presentation of God's intentions and interaction with history and history's response and interaction with the heavenly world. The book speaks theologically and practically to a people that had and would again experience siege, attack, and oppression in order to give them hope.

The wisdom and prudence of Daniel as a witness for Israel's God, even in the court of the great king Nebuchadnezzar, stands out in this dynamic and intriguing document. The heroic stories of Daniel and his contemporaries (chs 1–6) standing firm in the face of death as witnesses for the Lord in a pagan, idolatrous culture are a great example for God's people of all generations. Daniel's visions of the crumbling kingdoms of this world (chs 7–12) as they move inexorably toward destruction and his vision of the everlasting Kingdom of God ruled by the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High God provide a spectacular and awesome background for the New Testament revelation of the Kingdom of God ruled by Jesus Christ. Daniel's visions also prepare the way for an understanding of two resurrections—one that leads to judgment and one that leads to everlasting life—a truth that became central to the message of the book for many who read it in the intertestamental period and for those who would later read it as a part of the Christian canon.

AUTHOR

The author-compiler (hereafter "author" means author-compiler unless specifically qualified) of the final form of this book could have been Daniel (he certainly

authored large portions of the book), but it was more likely another person of the Judahite royal family or other noble families (1:3, 6) based on the compositional indicators in the book. It is clear that several Jewish young men were trained in the language and literature of the Babylonians (1:4), and they probably would have learned through oral or written tradition the stories of Daniel and his companions. There were more than four of them (1:6), and at least one of them was inspired by God to compile and craft the book in its final form (cf. Beckwith 1985:416-417). This person could have put the book into its final form, but the book also clearly indicates that Daniel was the author of several portions of the book (see below, "Date and Place of Writing" and "Literary Unity") so that Daniel remains the major and most important contributor to the composition of the book. Under the scenario described in chapter 1, based on the previous training and natural aptitudes of Daniel and the other young Jewish captives (1:4-7), and based upon their completion of the prescribed course of study (1:4), it appears that any one of them could have been the author-compiler of the final form of the book.

The author indicates that Daniel wrote down a substantial summary of his dreams and visions in chapters 7–12 (7:1, 8; 10:1), doing so in the first person (7:2; 8:1; cf. 8:26; 12:4, 9). In chapter 9 he writes his own prayer in the first person (9:4b-19), as well as the introduction (9:1-4a) and the vision that follows (9:20-27). The references that imply Daniel's writing in 12:4, 9 refer at least to the long visions of 10:2–12:4. They may refer to an entire scroll (*seper* [TH5612, ZH6219]; NLT, "book") that Daniel had maintained (12:4) to record the visions of chapters 7–12. Daniel wrote down the final vision and the concluding comments in 12:4-13. Daniel's special ability (1:17) to understand dreams and visions was complemented by the writing skill he had acquired in Imperial Aramaic, Hebrew, and probably Akkadian. His mastery of the language and literature of the Babylonians rivaled the accomplishments of Moses, who was taught all the language and learning of the Egyptians (Exod 2:9-11; Acts 7:22).

The introduction to the book (1:1-21), along with the dreams and stories of 2:1–6:28 [29], focus on Daniel and stem from the sixth-century BC diaspora in Babylon. They are written in the third person, as are the introductions in 7:1 and 10:1. These chapters could still have been written by Daniel, who was still engaged in diligent and energetic physical and spiritual disciplines at 80 to 83 years of age (6:3 [4]; 10:2), but they were more likely put together with the material in chapters 7–12 by a contemporary of Daniel near the end of his life or soon thereafter, during the time of the Persian Empire. The book states that Daniel's visions would become more relevant sometime after Daniel's death (8:26; 12:4, 9). The final author had in hand the material recorded by Daniel in 7:2–12:13. Similarly, the author had in hand the court stories in 2:1–6:28 [29] from written or oral tradition and composed the introduction in 1:1-21, all in the third person. By the same Spirit who had inspired Daniel, he composed the book as we have it, making Daniel the inspired, but also human hero of the book, but God the ultimate author of the book. The original genius and inspiration of the book is evident throughout, and its historicity, literary quality, and theological insights far surpass those portrayed in Daniel's pedestrian successors or imitators (e.g., *1 Enoch*, *Sibylline Oracles*, Baruch, 2 Esdras, *Assumption of Moses*, and the apocalyptic sections of *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*).

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

Daniel's writing of his accounts and the shaping of the final form of the book may have occurred in Babylon (7:1; 8:1) and/or Persia (1:21; 6:1 [2]; 9:1; 10:1), although this is not certain in either case.[2] More importantly, however, the dreams, visions and events in the book took place at a particular time—during and immediately following the Jews' exile in Babylon (see 1:21 and 10:1). Both events—the Exile and its end—were foretold as a part of God's plan (Deut 4:25-31; 28:64-68; 2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-11; Jer 25:8-14) for a disobedient people (9:4-19). This, ironically, is what makes the book of Daniel a book of hope, a book for people under siege, for at the nadir of their existence God spoke a word of anticipation to his people, a message that assured them that the Lord would yet establish his kingdom with them by exalting them above the superpowers of the day. The ruling superpowers would eventually fall, and God's Kingdom would be established in the end. Even in their exile, they should know that God was supreme among the gods and able to deliver his people against all odds (chs 3, 6).

In contrast with the suggestions of Babylon and Persia as places of composition for the book, many scholars today, including some conservative scholars, believe the book was composed in Judah during the Maccabean Era, being completed around 164 BC. Others have argued the book was composed in various stages, each stage meeting the needs of its contemporary audience. These views will be addressed briefly below.

Chapters 1–6 show their place of origin in many ways: While the Hebrew of Daniel cannot be dated to any particular century with certainty and convincing detail, it does "fit" better with the Hebrew of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles than with that of Ezekiel (Lucas 2002:307). This, however, does not rule out the suggestion above that the final author framed and formed the materials in the early Persian period or soon thereafter. The Aramaic of Daniel (2:4b–7:28) is most likely Imperial Aramaic, datable to roughly 700–200 BC (Stefanovic 1992:307), but Stefanovic argues that Daniel's Aramaic shows an impressive relationship with some Old Aramaic inscriptions. Also, the general word order of the Aramaic (the verb in last position) strongly suggests Akkadian syntax, which would place Daniel's Aramaic in the period of early Imperial Aramaic (c. seventh to fourth centuries BC) or earlier (Stefanovic 1992:106).[3] While Aramaic was probably used in Palestine at this time, the syntax suggests a Mesopotamian (e.g., Babylonian) origin rather than a western, Maccabean one. An origin for the book in Mesopotamia is very likely (Baldwin 1978a:31-32). Neither the Persian (probably Old Persian) words in the book nor the Greek words prohibit a sixth-century date for the book (Lucas 2002:307-308).

Chapters 1–6 portray a picture of pagan rulers that would not have been acceptable in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 BC), for the Babylonian and Persian rulers are presented as much too benevolent toward Daniel and his Jewish friends. Although two of them have character flaws that foreshadow features of the chief players of the book in chapters 7–12, they also demonstrate fear and humility before the Most High as well, a feature that is not descriptive of Antiochus (11:21-35; cf. 11:36-45). Certain features, such as Babylonian ambiance, the religious officials involved and their use of omens, the genre of the court tale, the author's knowledge about Nebuchadnezzar as the builder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (4:30 [27])

and his correct assertion about Belshazzar as "King" (5:1), all suggest the book's author knew intimately the workings of the eastern Akkadian cultures of the Babylonian and Persian empires (Baldwin 1978a:35-38).[4] Richard Patterson has recently argued that the "court-tale" motif may have taken on new force at the time the Jews returned from Babylonian exile and endured fierce opposition from their adversaries (539–432 BC). These tales of success at the court of pagan kings would have become stories of hope at that time. He concludes that data from various areas—historical background, political scenarios, cultural features, literary genre, setting—all combine to add integrity to the book's own claim to be presenting material and events from the sixth century (Patterson 1993:445-454).

Chapters 7–12 also have been shown to have features that suggest an eastern provenance as opposed to a western, Palestinian one. Chapter 7 presents a succession of two ancient Near Eastern empires (cf. Swain 1940:1-21) and two empires yet to arise from the west (which prove to be Greece and Rome). The Maccabean origin of these chapters is by no means certain. The most detailed chapter concerning Antiochus Epiphanes, chapter 11 (cf. 8:9-14), is at times not precise enough about the Maccabean crisis (11:36-45). If it were written only months or weeks after these events occurred (Ferch 1983:134-136), it should be even more precise. There is no established heuristic tool by which prophecy can be judged to be "too specific" to be considered prophecy before the event rather than prophecy after the event (*vaticinium ex eventu*). Daniel was given a message that outlined in broad strokes the Maccabean crisis as a model and foretaste of the ultimate onslaught against God's people. But his major concern was to illustrate God's divine providence within that period of political, military, and religious strife.

Daniel and his contemporaries needed to know that God was in control of all future history and would deliver his people in the face of all future attempts of annihilation (cf. 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 1:3). This message of future deliverance, however, indicated to some of God's people of the sixth century that they too would make it through their immediate times of trouble, just as earlier Nebuchadnezzar's dream and the decree to kill the wise men of Babylon were shared by Daniel with his three compatriots (2:17-19). Daniel and his friends did not work in a vacuum, and there was no charge to not share the events that they encountered in chapters 1–6.

In spite of the support for an eastern provenance and an early date, many scholars today believe Daniel was composed in the Maccabean era and probably arrived at its present form around 164 BC. It is argued that the final author-editor had chapters 2–6 and probably chapter 7 at hand in some written form, to which he appended his own compositions: chapter 1 and chapters 8–12.[5] (Note that many of these scholars affirm an earlier date for large portions of the book. Hence, there must have been a need for and use of those portions at an earlier time as well.) Some who hold this position do regard the book as holy Scripture—these chapters being considered inspired interpretations of history that had already passed in the plan of God. Some critics who hold to a Maccabean dating of the book, however, do so because they rule out any possibility of predictive prophecy. Other critics have argued that the book was composed in various stages, each stage meeting the needs of its contemporary audience. This view seems hard to sustain, given the literary

unity and excellence of the final composition (Gammie 1976:191-204). Santoso is a recent example of this continuing approach (2007:284).

The claim for a Maccabean origin of the book, and even for chapters 7–12, has its problems (Ferch 1983:134-136), as does any claim for the date of this challenging book of the Canon. Gordon Wenham has summarized various arguments for a sixth-century date. These include the book's own claim to be predictive prophecy (2:29-31; 4:24 [21]; chs 7–12; see G. Wenham 1977:49-52), the author's claim that Daniel lived in the sixth century (2:1; 5:1; 10:1), the author's excellent knowledge of Babylonian history—unequaled in any other apocalypse, and the fact that information in 11:40-45 does not fit the known facts about Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The last point would seem to force those who hold to the second-century date to say that either Daniel or the heavenly interpreter erred as he shared from the Book of Truth (10:21).

Additionally, Daniel's apocalyptic character does not demand a second-century date for the book. The book was rather a model and source for later apocalypses. It is qualitatively superior to other apocalyptic literature, although it shares many features with them in whole or in part, for example, genre, eschatology, imagery, concern for history (in some), and use of other Old Testament books for concepts and imagery. There is quasiapocalyptic literature that precedes Daniel and attempts to foretell the future in a way similar in some ways to Daniel 11 (Longman 1999:311; Longman 1991:131-195; ANET 431-432, 605-607; Grayson and Lambert 1964; Arnold and Beyer 2002:207-217).

The problem of alleged historical inaccuracies in Daniel is challenging, but the presence of this problem in itself does not date the book to the second century BC, and the issues can be resolved in most cases based on the genre of the book and on a continuing increase in our knowledge of the world of the ancient Near East. One of the burdens of the book, and one of its major themes, is God's astonishing ability to predict the future (2:27-29). If the book was written as late as some claim, this point would fall flat, although some choose to view certain chapters (e.g., 11) as inspired interpretations of history after the fact. Another issue with a late date is the unproven idea of the acceptance of pseudonymity among the inspired biblical writers.[6] Pseudonymity and false theological claims do not make acceptable bedfellows with the integrity demanded of one of God's inspired prophets. In addition to this, certain theological concepts that link Daniel to the Old and New Testaments in an organic way,[7] the relationship of Mesopotamian texts as old as the seventh century to certain prophetic/apocalyptic aspects of Daniel,[8] and the probable date of the close of the Canon, which could be as early as 132 BC (Beckwith 1985:357-358, 415-417),[9] all support its antiquity. (See further, "Canonicity and Textual History" below.)

Joyce Baldwin, who dates the final form of the book to the sixth century, has noted that the interpretation of the book is not greatly changed just because we are not able to date its composition precisely (NIDOTTE 4.499). This sentiment is shared by Goldingay (1989:xl), who dates the final form of the book in the era of Antiochus Epiphanes (c. 164 BC). Not all commentators would agree with this sentiment, however, as it assumes much concerning the worldview of the individual interpreter. This commentary accepts an early date for the entire book (cf. Miller,

Longman, Young, McComiskey), but does not depreciate the work of those (such as Collins, Bruce, Goldingay, Lucas)[10] who are convinced that the book should be dated to the time of Antiochus. Their insights into the text and background of Daniel are invaluable. Although favoring the late date, Lucas (2002), for example, discusses the alleged historical inaccuracies, linguistic issues, the possibility of predictive prophecy in the book over against a prophetic inspired interpretation of history, the implications of an apocalyptic genre for dating, and Daniel's place in the Hebrew canon (versus its LXX placement).

OCCASION OF WRITING

Several reasons for the creation of the book of Daniel can be identified. The primary cause was theological: In his supreme act of judgment, God had sent his people into exile as he had said he would. The cause was therefore also historical and social, for God judged his people by means of the Babylonians in the sixth century BC. Certain ancient Akkadian apocalypses that preceded Daniel share this social setting of oppression, which has often engendered apocalyptic writings, although, as several studies have cautioned, the social setting was not the only factor at work. A certain theological milieu and worldview was necessary, and anthropological and sociological studies must be used with great caution when describing the origins of apocalypticism (Hanson 1979; Grabbe 1989; Collins 1991; S. L. Cook 1995; Sim 1995). Further, the Akkadian texts mentioned do not, in the materials now available, employ the highly developed imagery of Daniel, his periodization of history, or his apocalyptic eschatology, which reaches to the final consummation (see Longman 1991:189 for dating and details of these texts; cf. Hallo 1966:231-242).

Many of the particular historical acts that are important in Daniel have universal effects because they are brought about by Israel's God, who is shaping all of history to reach his goals. Another cause for the book's composition was to recount God's preservation of his people in the Exile, as depicted in his deliverance of them and certain of their pagan contemporaries (2:12-19). The book was also occasioned by the Lord's revelation of himself more fully to his own people (Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah) and to pagan kings in dreams, visions, and mysteries, and through earthly and divine interpreters of these events. It was motivated by the challenge to be faithful in a pagan land and culture (cf. Deut 4:25-31) in the presence of pagan politics and false religion. It was necessary because of the failure of God's people. The book of Daniel was the Lord's promise to his people that there was a future for them if they would repent (7:22; 9:4-19; 12:2-3). It was the need for a model or pattern to follow in times of great crisis that called this book forth. It was finally time for God to give his people a word of hope and a view of the future Kingdom of God with its ruler, the Son of Man. It was the critical mass of all these things that combined to produce the events of Daniel's life and the book that bears his name. Daniel realized that the desolations of Jerusalem came because of his failure and the failure of his people (9:14, 16), but he also knew that these desolations would end (9:2). He implored God, as he had been doing all along (6:11 [12]). His plea for the Lord to hear and to act for the Lord's sake on behalf of his people (9:19) was answered: The Lord gave him further visions and words to impart insight and

sively by the outpouring of God's judgment upon kings and kingdoms. In this sense, even within the biblical linear view of history, as God moves creation toward his Kingdom, there is a cyclical pattern of judgment: epochs of obedience and disobedience, blessing and cursing for Israel. For example, Judges 3–16 presents Israel's religious, moral, and ethical behavior in a six-step cycle: Israel sins, is sent by God into servitude, and cries out for deliverance; God graciously raises up a deliverer (judge), delivers his people, and rest is attained. The cycle is repeated. But there will be an end to such cycles. And, finally, God's sovereignty is demonstrated in the fact that he has left for his people a tract, the book of Daniel, a book that presents the reader with shocking-but-true scenarios in stories, dreams, and visions, and heavenly and human battles that, in the end, assure the reader of the triumph of God on behalf of his people. God's reign will be universal; Daniel's people and their anointed leader will stand supreme. The author of Daniel has shown foreign rulers and kings who declare their recognition of the God of Daniel and the Jews with him. Daniel's people will be triumphant over all obstacles. They will eventually become the head and not the tail, as God had told Moses (Deut 28:1, 13, 44).

The book of Daniel demonstrates the connection between God's sovereign willingness to deliver his people and the outstanding moral, ethical, and religious character the Lord expects of his people. His people should be wise, prudent, faithful, dependable, and unswerving in their devotion to the Lord. Daniel was a man of prayer (chs 6 and 9) whose prayers made a difference. He was humble, and God was touched by this disposition. Daniel fulfilled Micah 6:8: He did justice, loved mercy, and walked (and talked) humbly before his God. Daniel was and is a model of spiritual stability for all ages and all peoples. He was truly a subject of the Kingdom of God. But behind Daniel stands the real hero of the book—Daniel's God, the Lord (9:4).

OUTLINE

I. The Lord's Sovereignty and Faithfulness (1:1-21)
   A. The Lord Gives Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar (1:1-2)
   B. The King Selects, Trains, and Proselytizes Capable Young Men for His Court (1:3-7)
   C. How Shall We Live in a Foreign Land? (1:8-14)
   D. The Results: *Summa cum Laude* and Then Some (1:15-21)
II. Dreams and Stories for the Present and Future: Daniel's Faithfulness and Wisdom Demonstrated before the Kingdoms of This World (2:1–6:28)
   A. Daniel's Divine Wisdom concerning All World History: The Establishment of God's Kingdom (2:1-49)
      1. A dream that troubles Nebuchadnezzar (2:1-3)
      2. "Only the gods can tell you your dreams" (2:4-11)
      3. Nebuchadnezzar's lethal decree and Daniel's wise response (2:12-16)
      4. Daniel's prayer and praise to a God who reveals secrets (2:17-24)
      5. Daniel informs the king of a God who can answer him (2:25-28)

6. Daniel presents the dream to Nebuchadnezzar (2:29-35)
7. Daniel presents the revealed interpretation of the dream (2:36-45)
8. The king's response to Daniel's unveiling of the dream and its meaning (2:46-49)

B. Three Hebrew Men Divinely Delivered from a Furious King (3:1-30)
1. The challenge of pagan worship in the Babylonian culture (3:1-7)
2. The Jews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego defy the king (3:8-18)
3. God's deliverance from fury and fiery furnace (3:19-27)
4. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (3:28-30)

C. The Exile and Restoration of a Proud Pagan (4:1-37)
1. Nebuchadnezzar's praise of the Most High God, and a terrifying dream (4:1-8)
2. Daniel interprets the dream (4:9-27)
3. The king is humbled and restored to his kingdom (4:28-37)

D. The Demise of the Kingdom of Babylon and the Rise of Persia (5:1-31)
1. Belshazzar's hubris and defilement of the Temple vessels (5:1-4)
2. The handwriting on the wall (5:5-9)
3. The queen mother remembers Daniel; Belshazzar's interview and offer (5:10-16)
4. Interpretation, application, and fulfillment of the handwriting (5:17-31)

E. Daniel's Deliverance from Destruction (6:1-28)
1. Daniel's ability and success against religious opposition (6:1-5)
2. The entrapment of Daniel (6:6-13)
3. "May your God rescue you!" (6:14-24)
4. Darius's praise of God for Daniel's rescue (6:25-28)

III. Visions and Interpretations for the Present and Future: Daniel's Faithfulness and Wisdom Demonstrated on Behalf of His People, Israel (7:1–12:7)

A. Daniel's Divine Wisdom concerning Israel and the Nations in World History: The Establishment of God's Kingdom (7:1-28)
1. Daniel's vision of the four beasts (7:1-14)
2. The four beasts are four kingdoms (7:15-18)
3. Interpretation of the fourth beast, little horn, Ancient One, and holy people (7:19-28)

B. The Israelite Nation Divinely Delivered from a Furious King (8:1-27)
1. Daniel's vision of the ram, he-goat, and small horn (8:1-14)
2. Gabriel interprets the vision (8:15-27)

C. The Exile and Restoration of a Rebellious Nation (9:1-27)
   1. Daniel's prayer for his people in exile (9:1-19)
   2. Daniel's prayer answered (9:20-23)
   3. Seventy weeks decreed and described (9:24-27)
D. The Fall of the Kingdom of Persia and the Rise of Greece (10:1–11:1)
   1. Daniel's vision by the Tigris River in Cyrus's reign (10:1-9)
   2. Daniel's encounter with a manlike being (10:10-19)
   3. The manlike being explains his visitation (10:20–11:1)
E. The Deliverance of Israel from Destruction, Resulting in the Triumph of God's People (11:2–12:7)
   1. The truth concerning the kingdoms of Persia and Greece (11:2-4)
   2. The kings of the south triumph (11:5-12)
   3. The rise of the king of the north (11:13-20)
   4. The rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21-24)
   5. Antiochus Epiphanes opposes the holy covenant (11:25-35)
   6. The despicable king who does as he pleases (11:36-45)
   7. The deliverance of God's people (12:1-7)

IV. Conclusion: The Lord's Sovereignty and Rewards (12:8-13)

ENDNOTES

1. Daniel displayed the gamut of wisdom in its various forms in the Old Testament; he was the consummate wise man before both God and man. His mantic wisdom (the ability to solve the mysteries presented to him and the kings; see endnote 11) is noted in 1:17 and seen throughout the book as he receives the interpretations to dreams and visions. In addition to this mantic wisdom, Daniel also illustrated in his everyday life the more traditional wisdom of the Israelites as reflected in the book of Proverbs, which stressed wisdom for living successfully before God and man, principles that enlightened rulers and guided a person through life (Prov 8). Daniel wisely honored his God as a servant; he tactfully handled himself at the court of the kings he served. In chapter 2 he was able to gain an audience with the king, and he wisely dealt with him in order to deliver the wise men from death (2:16); he displayed wisdom and common sense and administrative ability. God honored him, and the king promoted and trusted him. God added to Daniel's wisdom, and he increased in wisdom as a true wise man would (Prov 1:1-5). He displayed a deep commitment to the law of his God and the call to holiness (1:8-9; 6:10 [11]) and prayerful intercession (9:1-19). In addition to his excellence in these two spheres of wisdom, Daniel exercised the gift of prophecy by foretelling the future and by challenging King Nebuchadnezzar to stop sinning and to do what is righteous and care for the poor (4:27 [24]). These features of his work will be pointed out in the commentary.
2. The statement in 1:21 does not conflict with 10:1, which says that Daniel was alive in the third year of Cyrus. Daniel 1:21 simply asserts that he continued throughout the period of the Neo-Babylonian Empire—that is, he lived through the period of the Exile.
3. See Lucas 2002:307; Stefanovic 1992:11-27; Meadowcroft 1995:272-280; Kitchen 2003; Kitchen 1965:75-76. Also see further discussions in the Introduction. The syntax of the Aramaic in Daniel can be compared to the different syntax of, e.g., the Genesis Apocryphon in the Dead Sea Scrolls, of western provenance.
4. For the historical value of chs 1–6, see especially A. R. Millard 1977:69-71; Montgomery 1927:73-75; Soggin 1980:408-411; Collins 1975:218-234; Lucas 2000:73; Paul 2001:55-68; Dillard and Longman 2006:373-390.

5. As noted in Young 1949:25; cf. Lacocque 1979:9-10; Delcor 1971:13-16; Miller 1994:24-42.
6. See Joyce Baldwin 1978b; Walton 1986:217-226.
7. David Flusser (1972:148-175) has shown that Daniel need not be dated late because of claims that there is Persian influence in chapters 2 and 7. Persian apocalyptic ideas and genre are notoriously difficult. There appears to be some Persian influence in the book of Daniel, but as Collins notes (1989:22-26), any Persian motifs have been adapted and reconceived by the Jewish traditions in the book. See also Lucas 2009:545 for the difficulty of dating Persian materials.
8. Longman 1991:167-190; Longman 1999:22. See further COS 1.150; 1.149; Walton 1986:220-226 for excellent discussions of similarities and contrasts between Daniel and these Akkadian prophecies.
9. Cf. Longman 1999:22-24; Wallace 1979:19-22. Randall Price (1996:150-151, 157-163) presents the case ably and clearly, reviewing the evidence for an early date of Daniel and against the Maccabean dating. The book purports to present a historical Daniel in a sixth-century setting as the person who experienced the events in the book; that the book was written in the sixth century is not proven, nor is it proven that it was written in the second century BC, but the author of the book purports to be speaking from the sixth century. For a helpful and respectful review of the current issues surrounding the dating and other matters, see Collins 2001:1-15, who holds firmly to a date for the final form of the book in the Hellenistic era.
10. See F. F. Bruce 1988:291, 325. See also Goldingay 1989:xi; note his sagacious assertion about the essential exegesis of the book no matter which position is taken—Babylonian (sixth century BC) or Palestinian (second century BC); see also Longman 1999:23-24 and Lucas 2002:312. I concur with the sentiments expressed by Longman and Lucas.
11. "Mantic wisdom" is a term common in recent commentaries dealing with apocalyptic literature and with Daniel. It is distinct from practical or traditional wisdom, which centered on transmitting wise sayings and teachings regarding a life well lived to each new generation, as exemplified in the book of Proverbs. In general, the term "mantic" refers to a wide variety of forms of divination, including those involving the interpretation of omens, dreams, and visions. In Daniel, however, it is the manner of his mantic wisdom that makes all the difference—he gets it not by pagan divination, but by humble prayer to his God. In this commentary, "mantic wisdom" refers to the wisdom that God gives to Daniel in order to solve the riddles and mysteries presented to him through dreams and visions that contain direct and immediate revelation to Daniel.

    Two recent evangelical commentators refer to this type of wisdom being given to Daniel. Lucas notes that 1:17 refers to "Daniel's skill in an aspect of 'mantic' wisdom—the ability to understand visions and dreams" (2002:56). Longman notes that Daniel had a "kind of mantic wisdom ('Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds,' v. 17)." He notes that "[God] uses Daniel's specialized knowledge as an instrument for the revelation he gives him later in the book" (1999:55). This type of wisdom is regularly featured in apocalyptic literature, but is not wholly lacking in the prophets. Heavenly messengers spoke to Daniel and gave him understanding in answer to his prayers. God spoke to him in immediate ways that made him aware of the interpretation of a dream or vision. Daniel received direct revelation from God in visions, dreams, messages (2:26-30; 4:18-19 [15-16]; 5:17; 7:1-2; 8:1-2; 9:21; 10:1), and by the Spirit of God in him he discovered the meaning of the cryptic writing on the wall (5:11, 17). The other nations thought that they could do the same, but the book of Daniel makes it clear that only Daniel, through his God, really had this special knowledge (cf. Longman 1999:55).

    Daniel's wisdom was such that Nebuchadnezzar made him chief of the Babylonian wise men (magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners). Daniel must have studied divination (ch 1), but in the book of Daniel he does not use the techniques of divination to get his "direct mantic knowledge" from the Lord. God spoke to him by dreams,

visions, and direct heavenly interpreters, sometimes as a result of prayer and sometimes without any preceding prayer (e.g., ch 7). Dreams and visions had been used by God to reveal himself since the time of Abraham (Gen 15) and Joseph (Gen 41). These had been acceptable ways for the Lord to communicate to patriarchs, prophets, and wise men in Israel, and the Lord supplied interpretations and explanations for these dreams and visions.

12. Some convenient and readable general histories of the ancient Near East include Kuhrt 1995; J. M. Cook 1983; Provan, Long, and Longman 2003; Chavalas 2006.
13. See the remarks of Beckwith (1985:416, note 76).
14. For a brief discussion of textual and canonical issues, see Lucas 2002:19-21; Baldwin 1978a:68-72; Harrison 1969:1132-1134; Montgomery 1927:24-56; Koch 1985:117-130.
15. E. Earle Ellis notes a quotation from Daniel at Qumran, 4QFlor [4Q174] 2:3, which asserts "As it is written in the book of Daniel the prophet" (1988:683). Hence, he suggests an older tradition of the Hebrew canon that placed Daniel among the prophets. Grabbe notes this (2001:237) and observes that several portions of this scroll quote and exegete the passages. Jesus calls Daniel a prophet (Matt 24:15) as does Josephus (*Antiquities* 10.11.4 [10.249]). LaSor, Bush, and Hubbard support this position and reject the distinctions that have been used to disqualify Daniel as a prophet: He was a seer, not a prophet; and, he did not hold the prophetic office, only the gift. These distinctions cannot be maintained based on Scripture (1996:575). Longman holds that Daniel was prophetic because he foretold the future (1999:1-31, 200-206). The NT writer of Revelation pairs Dan 7:13 with Zech 12:10, a recognized OT prophet. Hence, Daniel is paired with a prophet and presents material that looks into the future. K. Koch has argued that Daniel should be called a prophet based on the placement of the book in the prophets in the Septuagint and Christian Bibles. And he argues that the placement of the book among the writings in the Hebrew canon took place because of a desire to stress Daniel as a role model.
16. Beckwith, whose arguments have not been generally accepted, argues for a canonization of Daniel much earlier than the second century BC, and for the antiquity of the book as a whole; see Beckwith 1985:74-75, 138-139, 415-416.
17. For a discussion of scholarly opinions about the origins of apocalypses, see Baldwin (1978a:48-59). She notes that Zoroastrianism, ancient wisdom sources, prophetic books of the OT, and Hellenism have been put forth as the sources of apocalyptic literature; Collins (1989:1-32) updates Baldwin's materials well; see also Lucas 2009:568; 2002:268-270. This whole area remains a matter of intense research. It seems that Daniel would be among the earliest examples of the genre.
18. Nearly everyone sees a unity in the book of Daniel. See Collins 1989:70-72; Dillard and Longman 2006:391-392; Baldwin 1978a:38-46; Pfeiffer 1952:760-764; Rowley 1949:249-280; Young 1949:19-20. However, Soggin (1980:38-46) asserts that "the book is not a unity in either content or language."
19. This literary device is found in Hebrew poetry and was formerly referred to as synthetic parallelism. The phenomenon is a type of parallelism in which following lines develop or repeat in various ways preceding statements. But more than repetition is featured in Daniel's narrative expansions on themes previously introduced; there is development and an unfolding of these themes. There is narrative progression and thematic intensification (Alter 1981:27-63, 137-162). For a visual presentation of the phenomenon in Daniel, see Doukhan 1987:54-55. Doukhan also sees a literary unity to the book in which 1:1 and 12:13 frame the book and function as inclusions. Chapter 1 serves as a general introduction to the entire book. There is an overall interlocking literary structure as well for the remaining chapters: 2/7, 3/6, 4/5, 7/12, 8/11, 9/10. The centrality of chapter 7 both in content and literary form and placement is evident.
20. On these issues, see Dillard and Longman 2006:375-384; R. K. Harrison 1969:1112-1122; A. R. Millard 1977:72-73; Lucas 2009:519-575.
21. Wiseman 1965:9-18; Lucas 2009:574, notes 106, 107.

22. See three articles by W. H. Shea (1971:51-57; 1972:177; 1982:229-247). Whitcomb in fact identified two men named Gubaru, one the conqueror of Babylon and the other a later governor of the province. While Whitcomb equated Darius the Mede with the latter, Shea asserted that the former Gubaru is the correct identification, but he has retracted that statement now (1991:235-237; cf. Lucas 2002:135-136). See Yamauchi 1990:59 for an excellent summary of Shea's position. Note also L. L. Grabbe's (1988:198-213) rejoinders. The intimate, intriguing, but tortuous historical, political, and familial relationships between the Medes and the Persians are relevant to understanding the multivalent potential and qualities of a title like "Darius the Mede."
23. See LaSor, Bush, and Hubbard 1982:662, note 7, for full documentation. They assert that "the 'third year of Jehoiakim' (1:1) would end on 6 Oct., 605 (using a Tishri–Tishri year), which would fit Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of summer 605."
24. See Flint 2001 for a discussion of the Daniel tradition at Qumran and Stuckenbruck 2001:368-386 for a discussion of Daniel and early Enoch materials in the DSS; finally, see Ulrich 2001:573-585 for the Daniel texts present at Qumran.
25. For references in Revelation, see Beale and Carson 2007:1081-1083. Montgomery (1927:5) lists Matt 21:44; 1 Cor 1:24; 2:14 as other NT references to consider. Also note Matt 24:26; Mark 13:14; 14:62; Luke 22:69; Col 1:13-15; 2 Thess 2:4; Heb 11:33ff; Rev 1:7, 12-16; 13; 19:11-21.
26. See R. A. Anderson 1984:153-155 for a brief summary of the influence of the book of Daniel in the NT and history; for recent extended discussions of the extent of the influence of Daniel in the NT and elsewhere see Evans 2001:490-527; Dunn 2001:528-549.
27. See D. Wenham 1987:132-134; see also Merrill 1986:211-225; see preceding note.
28. For a recent discussion of theology and theological ethics see, respectively, Goldingay 2001:660 and Barton 2001:661-670.
29. For selections of such ancient historical writers, see Grant 1992:v-xii, 1-686; Oates 1986:163-198; Starr 1991:3-713; von Soden 1992.

COMMENTARY ON

Daniel

◆ I. The Lord's Sovereignty and Faithfulness (1:1–21)

A. The Lord Gives Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar (1:1–2)

During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah,* King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia* and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

1:1 This event occurred in 605 B.C., during the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (according to the calendar system in which the new year begins in the spring). **1:2** Hebrew *the land of Shinar.*

NOTES

1:1 ***third year of King Jehoiakim's reign.*** Most likely 605 BC, but 601 and 597 are also possible dates for this event (see "Historical Accuracy" in the Introduction).

1:2 ***The Lord.*** Heb., *'adonay* [TH136, ZH151]. Some mss read *yhwh* [TH3068, ZH3378] (Yahweh), but God's covenantal name is not used in Daniel except in 9:2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14 (twice), 20. *'Adonay* is probably best translated "O Lord of All" in Daniel (Waltke and O'Connor 1990:123-124). The LXX renders this as *kurios* [TG2962, ZG3261] (Lord), but the LXX tended to use "Lord" instead of "God" when translating both the Aramaic and Hebrew sections of Daniel (Meadowcroft 1995:254).

gave him victory over King Jehoiakim. Lit., "gave Jehoiakim into his hand," with "hand" signifying power or authority. Cyrus later asserted that the Babylonian god Marduk had given Babylon into his hand because Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, had not worshiped Marduk as supreme (Brown 1995:149). Starr (1991:395-410), in his standard history of the ancient world, does not even list Daniel as a source for the Babylonian period, an indication of the unfortunate way the historical aspects of the book are given little weight or discussion by many secular writers. The gods of the ancient world were often cited as giving enemies into the hand (power) of their own people: Enlil gives victory to Urnammu (2110–2095 BC; COS 2.138D; Carpenter 2009:430 and notes 82-86); cities were destroyed and given to the enemy because of disobedience of the people of the city toward their gods.

the Temple of God . . . treasure-house of his god. The Hebrew contrasts the house of God with the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god (lit., "his gods"), where the captured Temple vessels were placed.

the land of Babylonia. This is a good rendering (cf. Gen 11:2). The Hebrew reads "the land of Shinar" (see NLT mg) and intends to remind the reader of the exact same expression in Gen 11:2, regarding the place where the Tower of Babel was built (see Zadok 1984:240-244).

COMMENTARY

These two verses set the historical and theological backdrop for the events of the Exile that are recorded in the book of Daniel. Daniel and Ezekiel are the only books in the Old Testament in which all of the events take place during the exilic era (605?/597?–539 BC) or immediately after it (10:1). We learn that the great king Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, capital of Judah, and was successful. He may have taken its reigning king Jehoiakim into temporary exile, although this is not clearly asserted (See Introduction, "Historical Accuracy"). However, there is much more to this story than the mere facts that are recorded on the historical level. It is the theological backdrop of the Lord's sovereignty that gives the historical event its eternal significance, an event already predicted by the Lord before it happened (9:1-2). While most modern historians do not see divine providence in history, the inspired author of Daniel saw it everywhere, from the life of the ordinary villager to the feats of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar the king came and besieged the city—but the Lord of all (see note on 1:2) was the one who gave Nebuchadnezzar his victory, not Nebuchadnezzar himself, nor his gods. He, however, thought that he was the master of his fate and the builder of his empire (4:28-30 [25-27]). He was, rather unwittingly, the Lord's servant (Jer 25:9; 27:6).

The writer emphatically asserts that Jehoiakim, Judah's king, was given into Nebuchadnezzar's hand by the Lord. The Lord of all also gave some of the vessels of the house of Israel's God, the Temple, into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, who took them to the land of Shinar (NLT, "Babylonia") to the house of his god. The treasure-house of the king was indeed impressive. Its name Etemenanki means "the house that is the foundation of heaven and earth," and its accompanying temple of Marduk, Nebuchadnezzar's chief god, was named Esagila (meaning "the temple with its head raised"). The structure was over a hundred feet tall at its peak (Lucas 2009:526-527; 572, note 15). The holy vessels of the Lord were defiled by being deposited in this pagan temple; they will surface again to be further abused and made unclean on the day that Babylon falls (5:1-4, 31 [6:1]).

Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, had come out of that pagan cultural area (Gen 11:31; 15:7; Neh 9:7). The Exile represented a devastating reversal of the exodus of Abraham out of Babylon and of Israel out of Egypt. Ironically, just as Pharaoh had given a free state education to Moses, who helped devastate the gods of Egypt, so Nebuchadnezzar would educate Daniel whom the Lord would use to display a greater and final exodus (9:24-27; 12:1-3).

Throughout these verses it is the sovereign Lord of Israel who brings about these events, not the Babylonian king or his gods. This is the beginning of Israel's exile into Babylonia because of her refusal to follow her faithful God and to obey his righteous laws. The Exile was a sovereign act of the Lord based upon his laws of governance for his people. It was discussed and threatened in the law (Deut 28:64) and the prophets (Jer 25:8-14; cf. Dan 9:2).

Jehoiakim was exiled because of the wicked policies he unrelentingly pursued (see 2 Kgs 23:36–24:6; 2 Chr 36:5-8; Jer 25:1-38). The rebelliousness of Jehoiakim and Judah are shockingly portrayed in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 1, 22, 24, 25–28, 35–37, 45–46, 52). One must ask, "Could anything good come out of this catastrophe that happened to Judah, Jerusalem, and her anointed king?" The Lord's

answer was a resounding yes! He promised his new action would cause even the exodus from Egypt to pale in comparison (Isa 43:18).

◆ B. The King Selects, Trains, and Proselytizes Capable Young Men for His Court (1:3-7)

3Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. 4"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.*" 5The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

6Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. 7The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.
Hananiah was called Shadrach.
Mishael was called Meshach.
Azariah was called Abednego.

1:4 Or *of the Chaldeans.*

NOTES

1:3 ***Ashpenaz.*** This name may be Old Persian and mean "guest master"; but it has also been found as a personal name in Aramaic (c. 600 BC; Lucas 2009:528, 572, note 17).

chief of staff. This phrase *rab sarisayw* [TH7227B/5631, ZH8042/6247] follows "Ashpenaz," standing in apposition to it, and can mean "chief eunuch"; however, the Akkadian equivalent (lit., "he of the head [of the kind]"; cf. Lucas 2002:47; cf. COS 2.117D) refers to a confidant of the king or leading courtier of the king. The Hebrew phrase likewise can refer to others besides eunuchs—a larger group of persons surrounding the king and loyal to him (cf. Buchanan 1999:21). The NLT and most modern translations render along these lines.

Judah's royal family. The MT doesn't actually mention Judah in this verse, but instead indicates Israelites and then specifies those who were "royal" and "noble." This implies the families of Judah. Although Jerusalem had fallen, the royal line would be preserved.

1:4 ***strong, healthy.*** The words attempt to render the phrase "who have no blemish" of the Hebrew text (cf. NIV, "without any physical defect"). It may suggest, but I would not press the issue, that we are to see Daniel and these young men as sacrifices for Yahweh (the Lord), fully dedicated to him and ready, if necessary, to suffer death in order to be faithful. The language recalls Lev 21:16-24; 22:17-25.

well versed in . . . learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment . . . suited to serve. The underlying wording in the MT comes from Israel's wisdom tradition. The piling up of words in the semantic domain of wisdom emphasizes the great inherent ability of these youths, even before their three-year educational program. Gerald H. Wilson (1985:373-381) gives a helpful survey of some of the wisdom words used in Daniel. But it seems that Daniel was more influenced by divine wisdom than Wilson would allow.

are suited to serve. Heb., *koakh* [TH3581, ZH3946], referring to the strength or capability to endure the rigors of serving in the highest levels of governmental administration (see Yamauchi 1990:259-260 for what it took to have proper court etiquette; also cf. Neh 2).

the language and literature of Babylon. Lit., "the literature and language of the Chaldeans." The LXX renders *seper* [TH5612, ZH6219] as *grammata* [TG1121, ZG1207] (writing, literature). Babylonian literature was extensive at this time, especially wisdom and esoteric literature. For a survey of Mesopotamian culture and literature, see Hallo and Simpson 1971:151-183; Saggs 1962:157-483. The term "Chaldeans" simply refers to the ruling people of Babylon (cf. 2:5 and "Historical Accuracy" in the Introduction).

1:5 ***food and wine.*** This phrase seems to connote "the king's own food" (cf. 11:26, see note).

1:7 ***Belteshazzar . . . Shadrach . . . Meshach . . . Abednego.*** These Babylonian names are difficult to decipher (see the other possible suggestions in the commentary), but more recent suggestions may be helpful: Belteshazzar, "Bel protects the king (or life)," (cf. 4:9 [6]; some prefer "Lady, protect the king," which is less certain); Shadrach, "I am fearful [of God]"; Meshach, "I am of little account"; Abednego, "a servant of the Shining One [Nabu]." However, these are not entirely certain and given the context of the book of Daniel, are suspicious. Perhaps a mocking perversion of original names of Babylonian deities is present. See especially Montgomery 1927:129-130. See also Lucas 2002:53; Baldwin 1978a:81-82; Delcor 1971:64-65; Millard 1977:72; Longman 1999:50-51.

COMMENTARY

God did not leave himself without a witness to the nations even in Babylon, for he employed Daniel and the three Hebrew young men of royal or noble lineage to serve him as his ambassadors in the pagan stronghold of the city of Babylon. Daniel (meaning "God is my Judge" or "God has judged"), Hananiah ("The LORD is grace"), Mishael ("Who is God?"), and Azariah ("The LORD helps") are now introduced to us as the major Israelite players in the book. In 1:6 their names are changed by Ashpenaz to Belteshazzar ("Bel protects his life"; Bel is Marduk, the Babylonian god), Shadrach (possibly "command of Aku"), Meshach ("Who is it that is Aku?"), and Abednego ("servant of Nego"—i.e., Nebo/Nabu). It is not possible to be certain about these meanings (see note on 1:7). The exile of these descendants of the royal line fulfilled Isaiah 39:7 (cf. 2 Kgs 24:12-16). Daniel was a young man, perhaps 14–17 years of age when he was taken into Babylonian captivity. If he was 14 in 605 BC and then lived into the third year of Cyrus the Great (10:1; 536 BC), that would make him about 80 at that time, a rather advanced age for that historical era. The idea that Daniel and these youths were made eunuchs is a mere assumption that finds no evidence in Daniel and is not demanded by Isaiah 39:7. The name Ashpenaz, as translated here, could be a title meaning "guest master" or "innkeeper" (cf. Lucas 2002:45, 47), or it can simply be a personal name (see notes on 1:3).

Some have thought that the name changing reported here implies that Daniel and his friends may have capitulated to the religious milieu in which they found themselves. But 1:8 dispels this notion. Ultimately, it was what was in these Israelites' hearts that counted then as now (Rom 2:28-29), not what external label was attached to them. True religion is an issue of the heart, but the heart ultimately effects behavior that shows the reality and trust of faith in the heart.

As the first referent to God's judgment, Daniel's name itself is intended to cause the reader to understand the judgment of God as depicted in this book—with his taking Israel into exile. God also judges in favor of Daniel and his companions

several times before the book has ended. He judges against those who would oppose him or his people, as recorded throughout the book.

These young men were chosen because of their evident natural abilities and aptitudes, but a wisdom and understanding far beyond human capability would be theirs. No amount of teaching from the Babylonian sages and soothsayers could provide it (cf. 1:17). From the human point of view, these gifted young men could master all of the educational challenges presented to them, but they would still find themselves unable to fathom the mysteries that the sovereign Lord would present to them, although Daniel is highlighted as the one who could understand dreams and visions (1:17). They were young men chosen by God, "without blemish" (see note on 1:4), possibly to indicate their potential as living sacrifices for God if necessary (cf. Lev 21:16-24; 22:17-25; Rom 12:1-2). They did in fact become living sacrifices, living examples of how God's people should serve him in oppressive hostile circumstances (chs 3, 6).

The young men chosen were already considered to be the most promising new students around; they were already in the highest percentile of their class, both in their innate abilities and in what they had already accomplished (1:4). They did not enter into their new program of study and indoctrination as blank slates; they were already well versed "in every branch of learning" and "gifted with knowledge and good judgment" (1:4). Their moral character was already sharp; they knew their own traditions well. These assertions about them indicate that there is a connection between their traditional wisdom, in which they were already well versed, and the new program of study in Babylon. To their traditional knowledge, considerable character development, and inherent gifts of wisdom, they will have more added.

Their three years of intensive training in the extensive wisdom and literature of the Babylonians, including languages, would have helped give them a mastery of the topics and problems they would face. But they would decide to work within the new system only as their worldview would permit. The Lord's willingness to work through dreams and visions would make this possible, for he would impart to them mantic knowledge (see Introduction, endnote 11). With their new mastery of the Babylonian language and literature, their new names, their superb diets of the king's food, the best living quarters available in Babylon, their innate capabilities to handle themselves in the royal palace, and the king's blessing, they would be ready to solve all the problems the king could pose to them. Undoubtedly, they all graduated *summa cum laude*. But was this enough to answer the really tough issues of dream and vision interpretation, solving cryptic puzzles, and surmounting challenges to their faith? Would they even be able to understand the mysteries of God revealed to his prophets (9:1-2)? Who would help them interpret the visions and dreams? The God of the captives made the ultimate difference.

Their education rivaled that of Moses under Pharaoh, and Daniel's special God-given abilities parallel those of Joseph to a significant extent (Gen 40–41). As in the Joseph narrative, it is as they allow God to work through them that these three men were given high-standing positions (Gen 41:37-40). Daniel and the other youths would have been exposed to cuneiform writing, Babylonian wisdom literature, creation stories, legal corpora, ancient histories, religious rituals and epics,

prophecies and the destinies of the nations, letters, dream journals, vision manuals, and undoubtedly a profound introduction to the chief "science" of the day—divination through the study and interpretation of omens. There were various kinds of omens and numerous ways of interpreting them (Lucas 2009:530, 533; COS 1.120:421-426). This education in Babylon opened the door for Daniel to be involved in mantic wisdom—in Daniel's case, wisdom from God, gained through dreams, visions, and divine interpreters, and closely tied to prophetic insight from the Lord. This training also qualified Daniel and his friends to serve and function in the king's court, a highly regarded position in the ancient Near East. The famous Egyptian instructions *Amenemope* (thirteenth century BC) contain 30 sections and conclude with the assertion that the person who studies these books will be "found worthy to be a courtier" (COS 1.47:122).

Although Daniel studied and understood divination, he did not employ it to solve the dilemmas presented him in dreams and visions. Divination was specifically banned from Israel as a means of inquiring of God or knowing his will (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10, 14; cf. Carpenter 2009:472 and notes 96-99). This Babylonian indoctrination program was countered by Daniel's Jewish education from the Holy Scriptures and his faithful prayer life (Dan 6; 9:2-19). Armed with prayer and humility, and a firm grasp on his own Jewish tradition, he would speak according to the prophetic message the Lord provided, by and large rejecting this "toxic education" in its use and basic axioms. But there were points of contact such as dreams and visions, where Daniel's God would step in and overpower the system, so to speak, communicating with Daniel directly (cf. Balaam in Num 22–24).

Daniel engaged in prayer with a God who actually answered him and gave him understanding in these matters, and even supplied a heavenly interpreter as needed. By his rejection of most typical divination practices and reliance on prayer, Daniel advanced the message of the God of gods and King of kings and his coming Kingdom immensely. Daniel came from a tradition in which God inspired prophets to speak forth judgment and to report the future. Daniel would do that, but with an apocalyptic twist to it (in some cases being instructed to seal up the message for a time). And like the prophets of Israel, he also declared judgment and justice to those in his day, including kings (4:27 [24]; 5:22-29). In this task, Daniel's education prepared him to be relevant to the world of his day; he infiltrated the system, serving as a wise courtier as well a mantic wise man, knowing both to influentially employ the practical wisdom he had learned (2:16, 24-28, 48) and to reveal mysteries in the name of his God. But he also boldly warned Nebuchadnezzar and future kings (5:22-24) to "Stop sinning and do what is right. Break from your wicked past and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps then you will continue to prosper" (4:27 [24]).

◆ C. How Shall We Live in a Foreign Land? (1:8–14)

[8]But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. [9]Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel. [10]But he responded, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has