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Word and Spirit in Ezekiel

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Two fundamental experiences of Yahweh in the Old Testament are an encounter with the ‘word’ of Yahweh and an encounter with the ‘spirit’ or ‘wind’ or ‘breath’ (*rûah*) of Yahweh. This thesis explores ‘word’, *rûah*, and their relationship in the book of Ezekiel. It argues that the relationship between Yahweh’s *rûah* and Yahweh’s word is to be understood not so much in terms of the inspiration and authentication of the prophet but in terms of the transformation of the book’s addressees.

According to the dominant paradigm for explaining the emphasis on *rûah* and its relation to Yahweh’s word within the book of Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel is recovering from the pre-classical prophets, or even pioneering, an emphasis on *rûah* in prophecy that is conspicuously absent from the classical, writing prophets. This reading interprets the emphasis on *rûah* in Ezekiel in terms of the self-authentication of the ministry of the prophet. This thesis examines the relationship between *rûah* and prophecy in Ezekiel and in the rest of the Old Testament, and shows that the dominant paradigm requires modification.

The emphasis on Yahweh’s *rûah* in Ezekiel, even the ‘prophetic spirit’, is best understood in relation to the book’s concern for the transformation of its addressees. The prophet Ezekiel’s experience of Yahweh’s *rûah* and his own obedience to Yahweh’s call are clearly contrasted with the disobedience of the prophet’s addressees in order to present Ezekiel as a model for the addressees of the book. His experience illuminates for them how the dramatic vision of the future can become a reality in their experience. This provides a different perspective on the conundrum of the presence in the book of calls to repentance alongside declarations of Yahweh’s unilateral salvific actions. Further, it provides an integrated account of the different occurrences of *rûah* in relation to the rhetorical function of the book. Yahweh’s *rûah* has a fundamental role in the envisaged obedient response to Yahweh’s word, both of Ezekiel and of the book’s addressees.

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PREFACE

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Note: Throughout the thesis, where the original text is given in the footnotes, the translation in the main body is my own. I have used ‘Yahweh’ for the divine name and ‘Lord’ for *’ādōnāy*, except when quoting secondary literature. Quotations from the Bible in English come from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The section entitled ‘What is the Thesis?’ in Chapter 1 and the whole of Chapter 7 use transliteration rather than Hebrew to facilitate understanding for a wider audience.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , eds. D.N. Freedman et al., (New York, Doubleday, 1992)
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANE	Ancient Near-East
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. B. Prichard, 3rd edn. with supplement, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , repr., (Oxford, Clarendon, 1959)
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
BETAP	<i>The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives</i> , eds. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong, SBL symposium series 9, (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2000)
BHS	<i>Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , eds. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, (Stuttgart, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990 (=1977))
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CahRB	Cahiers de la Revue Biblique
CBC	The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CDL	Capital Decisions Limited
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World</i> , eds. W.W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger Jr., (Leiden, Brill, 1997)
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DCH	<i>The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> , ed. D.J.A. Clines, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-)
DSB	Daily Study Bible
EHB	<i>Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism and their Interrelation</i> , ed. J. Lust, BETL 74, (Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1986)
EncJud	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> , eds. C. Roth et al., (Jerusalem, Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971)
ESV	English Standard Version
ET	English Text
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
EvT	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. E. Kautzsch., tr. A.E. Cowley, 2nd edn., (Oxford, Clarendon, 1910)

<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , study edn., tr. and ed. M.E.J. Richardson, (Leiden, Brill, 2001)
Heb.	Hebrew
<i>HAR</i>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBHS</i>	Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, <i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> , (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 1990)
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia</i> , eds. G.W. Bromiley et al., rev. edn., (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1979-88)
ITC	International Theological Commentary
IVP	Inter-Varsity Press
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JM	Paul Joüon, <i>A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> , tr. and rev. T. Muraoka, Subsidia Biblica 14, (Rome, PBI, 1991)
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JOTT</i>	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JPTSup	Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplements
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplements
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	JSOT Supplements
JTC	Journal for Theology and the Church
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of the Theological Society</i>
MOT	Mastering the Old Testament
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	The New American Commentary
NASV	New American Standard Version
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , eds. W.A. Van Gemeren et al., (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1997)
NIV	New International Version
NIVAC	New International Version Application Commentary
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTG	Old Testament Guides
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
OUP	Oxford University Press
PBI	Pontifical Biblical Institute
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RSPT</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Theologiques</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version

<i>SBJT</i>	<i>The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCM	Student Christian Movement
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>STJ</i>	<i>Stulos Theological Journal</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, tr. G. W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1964-76)
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , eds. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, tr. D. Green et al., (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1974-)
<i>ThWAT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , eds. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, (Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1970-)
<i>ThZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TLOT</i>	<i>Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , eds. E. Jenni and C. Westermann, tr. M.E. Biddle, (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1997).
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> , eds. R. Harris, G. L. Archer, and B. K. Waltke, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1980)
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WEC	The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WeslTJ</i>	<i>Wesleyan Theological Journal</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAH</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZThK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

PART I: GATHERING THE DATA

The goal of divine action is to maintain and to create life; to achieve this aim Yahweh chiefly avails of himself of two means which we encounter in varying intensities in all the realms of his manifestation: the Spirit and the Word.¹

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the Old Testament, two fundamental experiences of God are these: an encounter with the ‘word’ of God, often rendered, particularly in prophetic literature, by דְּבַר,² and an encounter with the ‘spirit’ or ‘wind’ or ‘breath’ of God, almost always represented by רוּחַ.³ Indeed the first paragraph of Koch’s book on the spirit of God in the Old Testament declares, ‘On the Spirit and the Word of God rests, as on two pillars, the whole edifice of Old Testament revelation.’⁴ Conceptually speaking, these two experiences could be related. There is, after all, a natural association between ‘breath’ and ‘word’ – it is a person’s breath that carries their word. Such an association is quite common in the ANE. For example, in the Egyptian *The Legend of Isis and the Name of Re*, ‘Isis came, bearing her effective magic, her speech being the breath of life, her utterance dispelling suffering, her words revivifying one whose throat is constricted.’⁵ This connection is sometimes exploited in the Old Testament. For example, in Isa. 11:4, the shoot from the stump of Jesse, on whom the spirit of Yahweh shall rest, shall kill the wicked ‘with the breath of his lips’ (בְּרוּחַ שְׂפָתָיו), a phrase that occurs in parallel with him striking the earth ‘with the rod of his mouth’ (בַּשֶּׁבֶט פִּי). Such an association is also predicated of Yahweh. This is particularly apparent in Ps. 33:6:

By the word of Yahweh (בְּדְבַר יְהוָה) the heavens were made,
and all their host by the breath of his mouth (בְּרוּחַ פִּי).

¹ Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, tr. A.W. Heathcote and P.J. Allcock, (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1958), p121.

² The semantic range of דְּבַר is very great. The closest synonyms (in terms of function and syntagmatic relations) that speak of Yahweh’s prophetic word are פֶּה (used metonymically), נְאֻם, and three poetic words, אָמַר, אִמְרָה, and מִלָּה. מִלָּה יְהוָה פִּי can speak of Yahweh’s prophetic word (e.g. 1 Kgs. 13:21 (cf. v.9); Num. 24:13); see further C.J. Labuschagne, ‘מִלָּה פֶּה’, *TLOT* 2, pp976-78. אָמַר speaks of Yahweh’s prophetic word in Hos. 6:5 (בְּאִמְרֵי פִי) (cf. Num. 24:4, 16); it also speaks of Yahweh’s word more generally (e.g. Josh. 24:27; Job 22:12 (//תוֹרָה); 23:12; Ps. 138:4). אִמְרָה speaks of the prophetic word in Isa. 28:23 and 32:9; it, too, speaks of Yahweh’s word more generally (e.g. 19 times in Ps. 119). A third poetic word, found particularly in wisdom literature, is מִלָּה. It never occurs in a construct relationship with ‘Yahweh’ or ‘God’; it is only used for the divine prophetic word in 2 Sam. 23:2 (וּמִלָּתוֹ); the other occurrence where it speaks of Yahweh’s words is in Job 23:5 (מִלִּים). The final synonym that should be mentioned is נְאֻם. I shall be examining it and its occurrence in the phrase יְהוָה נְאֻם below.

³ The principal alternative is נְשָׁמָה. In Isa. 30:33, נְשָׁמַת יְהוָה; in Job 4:11, מְנַשְׁמַת אֱלֹהִים; in Job 32:8 and 33:4, וְנִשְׁמַת שָׂרִי; in Job 34:14, וְנִשְׁמַחוּ; in Job 37:10, מְנַשְׁמַת־אֵל; in 2 Sam. 22:16, מְנַשְׁמַת רוּחַ אָפוֹ (cf. Ps. 18:16 [ET 18:15], מְנַשְׁמַת רוּחַ אֶפְדָּי).

⁴ ‘Auf dem Geiste (*rúach*) und dem Worte (*dabar*) Gottes ruht wie auf zwei Pfeilern das ganze Gebäude der alttestamentlichen Offenbarung.’ Robert Koch, *Der Geist Gottes im Alten Testament*, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1991), p13.

⁵ *COS*, pp33-34. For other ANE texts, see Johannes Hehn, ‘Zum Problem des Geistes im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament’, *ZAW* 43 (1925), pp218-19.

Eichrodt, in commenting on ‘the association of the spirit of life with the creative word’, affirms ‘the inner homogeneity of the two concepts’. This homogeneity is evident from the fact that ‘the same expression’ is ‘used to designate both the spirit of God as the breath of life going forth from him and the word of God as the breath of his mouth.’⁶

This near-interchangeability of the two concepts is seen very clearly in the postexilic book of Judith 16:14, ‘Let all your creatures serve you, for you *spoke* (εἶπας), and they were made. You sent forth your spirit (τὸ πνεῦμά σου), and it formed them; there is none that can resist your voice (τῇ φωνῇ σου).’ It is also found in the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, in the discourse after the feeding of the 5000 (6:1-15), Jesus declares, ‘The words (τὰ ῥήματα) that I have spoken to you are spirit (πνεῦμά) and life’ (John 6:63). In two of the prison letters of Paul, closely paralleled passages outlining the need for the recipients to address one another with ‘psalms, hymns and spiritual songs’ preface such a call with what seem to be almost interchangeable commands: ‘...but be filled with the Spirit’ (ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι – Eph. 5:18) and ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly’ (Ὁ λόγος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνοικεῖτω ἐν ὑμῖν πλουσίως – Col. 3:16).

In view of the natural association, sometimes paralleled by a theological association, this thesis aims to pursue further the relationship between Yahweh’s word and Yahweh’s breath / spirit within the book of Ezekiel.

A. WHY THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL?

I have decided to focus the study particularly on the book of Ezekiel for two main reasons.

First, its emphasis on *both* Yahweh’s דְּבַר and Yahweh’s רוּחַ makes it particularly appropriate. At the start, it is important to emphasise that this study is not restricted to the relationship between words *per se*, but between concepts, such that I am concerned to explore the relationship between ‘word’ and ‘spirit’ however the concept of Yahweh’s utterance (and, indeed, Yahweh’s ‘spirit’) is expressed. At the same time, however, an analysis of the surface structure of the book of Ezekiel reveals how it is dominated by the prophetic ‘word of Yahweh’. Apart from five visionary encounters with Yahweh, in which the ‘hand of Yahweh’ is significant (1:1-3:15; 3:22-5:17; 8:1-11:25; 37:1-14; 40:1-48:35), Zimmerli identifies forty-seven other units.⁷ Of these, forty-five are introduced by the phrase (or a variation of the phrase), ‘the word of Yahweh came to me saying...’ (וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר).⁸ Rarely are there narrative

⁶ Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, tr. J. Baker, vol. 2, OTL, (London, SCM Press, 1967), p49.

⁷ Walther Zimmerli, ‘The Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel’s Prophecy’, *VT* 15 (1965), pp515-16.

⁸ Zimmerli accounts for the other two instances as follows: one exception, Ezek. 33:21-22, gives the year, the day and the month on which not Yahweh but an escapee from Jerusalem brings Ezekiel news of

comments (e.g. 20:1; 24:18); instead, the words that Ezekiel is to utter, the sign-acts he is to perform, even the reaction of his audience, are all subsumed within what Block calls ‘the prophetic event,’⁹ the prophet receiving a ‘word’ from Yahweh. As Zimmerli comments, ‘the message in this prophet is dominated completely by the event of the divine word to which he refers in the first person.’¹⁰

This emphasis on the ‘word of Yahweh’ is matched by the prominence of רִיחַ. Within the book, there are fifty-two references to רִיחַ, a number that has led Block to term Ezekiel ‘the prophet of the spirit.’¹¹ While Block is rightly quick to qualify such a statement, since רִיחַ can have meteorological (‘wind’) and anthropological (‘spirit,’ ‘mind,’ ‘breath’) meanings, as well as theological ones (‘spirit,’ ‘Spirit’), it is striking to notice the contrast between Ezekiel and the two works to which Ezekiel is most similar both in thought and language, Jeremiah and Leviticus.¹² Leviticus has no reference to רִיחַ of any kind, and Jeremiah never uses רִיחַ theologically.¹³

The second main reason is perhaps best explained by noting that one of Wonsuk Ma’s motivations for studying רִיחַ in the book of Isaiah and not Ezekiel, when both of these books have more than 50 references to רִיחַ, is ‘the long historical span the book embraces.’¹⁴ In other words, the implicit assumption lying behind his statement, which I take to be essentially correct, is that the book of Ezekiel is *not* the product of a ‘long historical span.’ I shall look at this question in more detail within chapter 1. For the moment, I want simply to highlight that a relatively short compositional history has two implications which have influenced my choice of the book. First, it increases the likelihood of a coherent, unified portrayal of the relationship between Yahweh’s ‘word’ and Yahweh’s רִיחַ, and thus lends support to the holistic approach that in general I have adopted. Secondly, a relatively short compositional history means that the book of Ezekiel, rather than being a video camera (to alter slightly Ma’s metaphor of a

Jerusalem’s destruction. This unique ‘narrative without a word of proclamation’ exploits the prominence of the ‘word of Yahweh’ and emphasises the announcement of the fall. The other exception is the ‘lament’ (קִינָה) of ch. 19. See Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, pp515-16.

⁹ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997), p18.

¹⁰ Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, p516.

¹¹ Daniel I. Block, ‘The Prophet of the Spirit: The Use of *RWH* in the Book of Ezekiel’, *JETS* 32 (1989), p28.

¹² Cf. John Woodhouse, ‘The “Spirit” in the Book of Ezekiel’, in *Spirit of the Living God Part One*, ed. B.G. Webb, Explorations 5, (Sydney, Lancer, 1991), p5. Dion notes, ‘The legislative material of the Old Testament appears therefore completely impervious to theological uses of the notion of breath.’ (‘Le matériel législatif de l’Ancien Testament paraît donc totalement imperméable aux emplois théologiques de la notion de souffle’). Paul-Eugène Dion, ‘La *rwh* dans l’Heptateuch’, *Science et Esprit* 42 (1990), p168. He uses ‘souffle’ as his provisional rendering of the word רִיחַ (p167).

¹³ Of the eighteen occurrences in Jeremiah, fourteen refer directly to רִיחַ as ‘wind’ (Jer. 2:24; 4:12, 13; 10:13; 13:24; 14:6; 18:17; 22:22; 49:32, 36 (x2); 51:1, 16), of which the most significant is 5:13, where ‘the prophets are nothing but wind’ (וְהַנְּבִיאִים יְהִיוּ לְרוּחַ); one refers to an extension of this meaning, ‘side’ (Jer. 52:23), two to the ‘breath’ that idols do not have (Jer. 10:14 = Jer. 51:17), and one to the ‘spirit’ of the kings of the Medes (Jer. 51:11). רִיחַ as ‘wind’ is under Yahweh’s control (e.g. 10:13), and often a simile or metonymy for Yahweh’s judgement (e.g. 4:11; 13:24; 22:22).

¹⁴ Wonsuk Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes: The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah*, JSOTSup 271, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p16.

‘window’) ‘through which the modern reader can see how the concept [of רִיחַ] was used to address a real historical struggle’¹⁵ is perhaps more akin to an ordinary camera that provides a snapshot alongside which the picture before and afterwards can be compared and evaluated.

B. WHERE DOES THIS STUDY FIT?

It will be apparent from what I have said above that this study takes place at the interface of Ezekiel studies, on the one hand, and studies about רִיחַ on the other. Many of the monographs exploring particular themes within the book of Ezekiel focus in their orientation section either on the book of Ezekiel more generally, or on the particular subject on hand. However, in his examination of רִיחַ in Isaiah, Ma’s orientation section focuses exclusively on research about רִיחַ. Since I shall be interacting with many of the works insofar as they relate to the subject of this study *en route*, and since few deal directly and in depth with the relationship between Yahweh’s word and Yahweh’s spirit, what follows is by no means an exhaustive attempt at surveying either the history and state of Ezekiel scholarship, or the study of רִיחַ. Rather, it is a sketch of what I see as some of the most important works, and some of the main trends, currents and issues, particularly as they impact this study.

1. Study of the book of Ezekiel¹⁶

The scholarly study of Ezekiel can be characterised as having three phases, though of course it should be recognised that any review is an attempt to impose order where there is none inherent, so some works do not ‘fit’ precisely within the phases, and the transitions are in reality less pronounced than a sketched review can portray.

The first phase, up until the beginning of the 20th century was marked by a broad agreement on the authorial unity and general integrity of the book. So, for example, in the introductions to the Old Testament by Driver and Gray, there appear concise statements to that effect.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p16.

¹⁶ For more detailed reviews of literature until 1950, see in particular H.H. Rowley, ‘The Book of Ezekiel in Modern Study’, in *Men of God*, (London, Nelson, 1963), pp169-210 (reprinted from *BJRL* 36 (1953-54), pp146-90); Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 1-24*, tr. R.E. Clements, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1979), pp3-8; Henry McKeating, *Ezekiel*, OTG, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp30-42. For reviews of scholarship after 1950, see Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, ‘Ezekiel Among the Critics’, *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (1994), pp9-24; McKeating, *Ezekiel*, pp43-61 and most recently Risa Levitt Kohn, ‘Ezekiel at the Turn of the Century’, *CBR* 2 (2003), pp9-31. Other notable reviews are those by Joyce, who tackles questions of unity and authorship by examining the different criteria that have been used (Paul M. Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 51, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1989), pp21-31), and Renz, who deals lucidly and comprehensively with the particular question of the location of the prophet (Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup 76, (Leiden, Brill, 1999), pp27-38).

¹⁷ ‘No other book of the Old Testament is distinguished by such decisive marks of unity of authorship and integrity as this...it forms a well-articulated whole.’ G.B. Gray, *A Critical Introduction to the Old*

This peace was shattered soon afterwards, although the cracks had already appeared.¹⁸ Significant in this was the work of Hölscher,¹⁹ who drew a sharp distinction between authentic poetry, on the one hand, and secondary prose, on the other. After removing all hopeful material (chs. 33-48), because Ezekiel was a prophet of doom, and any passages redolent with the language of the (later) Deuteronomy and the Holiness Code, he was left with around 150 verses that were genuine. In the years that followed, it was, according to Torrey, 'as though a bomb had been exploded in the book of Ezekiel, scattering the fragments in all directions.'²⁰ Issues revolved around three interlocking topics: *when* the book was composed, *how* (if at all) the book is a unity, and *where* the prophet (if there was one) had carried out his ministry.²¹ The emphasis on Jerusalem in the first 24 chapters led a number of scholars to argue that part or all of Ezekiel's ministry had taken place there.²² Other views, such as that of Torrey, who thought that the book of Ezekiel was pseudepigraphic, with the earliest parts written in the 3rd century BC, were more radical.²³

The shift to the third phase started around 1950. Howie, although arguing that the 'collection of Ezekiel's teachings' was made by others, contended for a solely Babylonian ministry for the prophet, drawing on historical, linguistic and archaeological data which corresponded with the book of Ezekiel.²⁴ Fohrer recognised the problem the

Testament, Studies in Theology 10, (London, Duckworth, 1913), p198; 'No critical question arises in connexion with the authorship of the book, the whole from beginning to end bearing unmistakably the stamp of a single mind.' S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 9th edn., (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1913), p279.

¹⁸ Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p4) notes how in the 1897 commentary of Bertholet, some parts of the book only arrived later in their present context, and how in 1900 Kraetzschmar thought he could find 'parallel recensions' on the basis of the shift between 1st and 3rd person found in Ezek. 1:1-4, and subsequently at different points throughout the book. Howie notes that the earliest shift from the traditional view is to be found in the late 18th century work, G.L. Oeder's *Freye Untersuchung über einige Bücher des Alten Testaments*. Oeder claims that chapters 40-48 are a 'spurious addition' to Ezekiel's prophecy. See C.G. Howie, *The Date and Composition of Ezekiel*, JBL Monograph Series 4, (Philadelphia, SBL, 1950), pp1-2.

¹⁹ Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch*, BZAW 39, (Giessen, Töpelmann, 1924).

²⁰ C.C. Torrey, 'Notes on Ezekiel', *JBL* 58 (1939), p78. The 'fact' that precipitated the destruction of the 'unity and harmony' was the editing of 'the original Palestinian prophecy...in such a way as to transfer it to Babylonia' (ibid.).

²¹ Cf. Rowley, 'Book of Ezekiel', p171.

²² So for example Hertrich, who regarded most of chs. 1-39 as coming from Ezekiel's ministry in Jerusalem prior to 586. The rest of the book comes from a Babylonian redactor, who also reshaped the first 39 chapters so as to give an apparent Babylonian provenance for the prophet (Volkmar Hertrich, *Ezechielprobleme*, BZAW 61, (Gießen, Töpelmann, 1932)). Bertholet, however, ascribed the dual focus of the book, on both Jerusalem and Babylon, to a dual ministry. Ezekiel was not deported in 597 but in 586 (Alfred Bertholet, *Hesekiel mit einem Beitrag von Kurt Galling*, HAT 13, (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1936)).

²³ Charles C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1930). For him, 'The original "Ezekiel(.)"...was a pseudepigraph purporting to come from the reign of Manasseh, but in fact composed many centuries later. It was converted into a prophecy of the so-called "Babylonian Golah" by an editor' as part of a 'literary movement' starting 'in the middle of the third century B.C.' whose 'purpose' was 'the vindication of the religious tradition of Jerusalem.' (p102).

²⁴ Howie, *Date and Composition of Ezekiel*. Examples include a) the term לִבְנֵי in Ezek. 4:1, which Howie regards as a 'sun-dried brick', and therefore Ezekiel's action reflects a practice common in the Neo-Babylonian empire, but unusual in Judah (p18); b) 'mud brick' walls, which were the only walls used in Mesopotamian house-building and through which it would have been possible to dig (Ezek. 12:5),

book presents by seeming to portray Ezekiel as a prophet to Jerusalem although he lives in Babylon. However, he examined rigorously the arguments used to defend a Palestinian sphere of ministry for the prophet, and a late date, and systematically refuted them.²⁵ Rowley, after reviewing the recent scholarship of his day (1953-54), concluded, 'The ministry of Ezekiel I would place wholly in Babylonia in the period immediately before and after the fall of Jerusalem.'²⁶ The transition to the third phase was given further, one might even say conclusive, impetus by the publication in 1955 of the first part of Zimmerli's major commentary on Ezekiel. His work was marked by comprehensive form-critical and traditio-historical analysis, and by a systematic attempt to trace the journey from the prophet himself, whose ministry he located exclusively in Babylon, to the final form of the text.

The first characteristic of the third phase could be described as the *reinstatement of the prophet*. For the last 50 years, it has been without doubt the majority opinion that the prophet Ezekiel was a real figure with a real ministry in Babylon during the early part of the exile, and that significant parts of the book of Ezekiel reflect accurately his words and his ministry.²⁷

There is a sense, though, in which the reinstatement of the prophet did not lead directly or necessarily to the reinstatement of the *book* of Ezekiel. This statement needs careful qualification, since it is not saying that the recognition of redactional additions or layers, as acknowledged in the four works mentioned above and in most subsequent research, necessarily militates against the reinstatement of the book. As we shall see below, many of the works focusing on the unity of the book do not deny redaction. Allen summarises my point succinctly,

'Zimmerli, while concerned with the whole book, was inclined to stand *beside* Ezekiel and then look *beyond* to the redactional sequel to which the book bears witness. This is a natural procedure, especially since the book urges us to look back at Ezekiel's prophesying. Yet its real invitation is to engage in a re-reading of the record *from a later standpoint*, and it is only as we endeavor to respond to that invitation that we honor the book.'²⁸

unlike the stone walls common in pre-exilic Palestine, which would have immediately collapsed (p18). Howie also makes the important point that the prophet need not 'face his audience directly' if he is to be a prophet (p100). This then removes one of the main arguments in favour of a ministry in Jerusalem.

²⁵ Georg Fohrer, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel*, BZAW 72, (Berlin, Töpelmann, 1952). He observes that the command to Ezekiel to speak to his addressees orally ('mündlich') is mirrored in the OAN, yet that does not mean Ezekiel should be thought to have preached to those nations. Thus from the form of oracles alone, the location of the prophet cannot be deduced (pp204-205).

²⁶ Rowley, 'Book of Ezekiel', p210.

²⁷ Though there have been, of course, some dissenting voices, particularly among German scholars such as Garscha (Jörg Garscha, *Studien zum Ezechielbuch: eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung von 1-39*, Europäische Hochschulschriften 23, (Frankfurt, Lang, 1974)) and Pohlmann (Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *Das Buch des Prophet Hesekiel (Ezechiel) Kapitel 1-19*, ATD 22/1, (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996); *Das Buch des Prophet Hesekiel (Ezechiel) Kapitel 20-48*, ATD 22/2, (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002)). For Garscha, only 17:1-10 and 23:2-25 are the authentic words of Ezekiel. For Pohlmann, the Babylonian setting that pervades the book does not derive from the oldest material. Only 134 verses in the first 19 chapters derive from the oldest layer.

²⁸ Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, WBC 28, (Dallas, Word, 1994), pxxvi (my emphasis).

Certainly some scholars have repudiated diachronic approaches to the book, without subscribing either to a pre-critical or to an ahistorical literary reading. The leading exponent has been Moshe Greenberg. He has mounted a sustained critique of some of the preconceptions and methods used to distinguish between what is authentically Ezekielian and secondary material,²⁹ and in his two commentaries has demonstrated the value of a synchronic reading.³⁰ However, it has not been essential to follow Greenberg unequivocally in order to focus on the book of Ezekiel from the perspective of recognising its essential *unity*. It is this perspective, recognising not just the essential accuracy of the book's portrayal of the prophet's words and Babylonian location, but also the essential (usually redactional) unity, that has marked almost all of the monographs published in English in the last thirty years.³¹ This has enabled Ezekielian studies to blossom in at least seven areas.³²

The first is that of the book of Ezekiel's relationship to other parts of the Old Testament. Four examples focusing in this area are those of Carley, Hurvitz, Rooker and Levitt Kohn.³³ Carley explores Ezekiel's relationship to the pre-classical prophets, in particular, as well as to other major streams of Old Testament tradition. Hurvitz, Rooker and Levitt Kohn all examine the characteristics of the Hebrew of the book in order to compare it with other works, principally P, but also, in the case of Levitt Kohn, with D/Dtr. For all of these three, Ezekiel represents the transition from classical to late biblical Hebrew better than P, which they adjudge to be earlier.

The second is that of the book of Ezekiel as a literary or rhetorical work. Davis outlines in her words a new 'mode of interpretation' of the book, whereby the prophet, in a radical departure from what has preceded him, confronts his audience by means of *text*.³⁴ Her purpose is to take account of parts of the book 'which violate our preconceptions about prophetic speech' while at the same time 'taking seriously' Ezekiel's 'own claim to stand in the line of Israel's prophets.'³⁵ Renz argues that the

²⁹ See in addition to Greenberg's commentaries the trenchant article 'What Are Valid Criteria For Determining Inauthentic Matter in Ezekiel?', in *EHB*, pp123-35.

³⁰ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB 22, (New York, Doubleday, 1983); *idem*, *Ezekiel 21-37*, AB 22A, (New York, Doubleday, 1997).

³¹ It should also be noted that the three major English commentaries published in the last 20 years similarly focus on the unity of the book: Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*; *idem*, *Ezekiel 21-37*; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*; *idem*, *Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC 29, (Dallas, Word, 1990); Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*; *idem*, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998).

³² These are not discrete, watertight areas, but they do help highlight different fields of study.

³³ Keith W. Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets: A Study of Ezekiel's Place in Prophetic Tradition*, SBT 2nd Series 31, (London, SCM Press, 1975); A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem*, CahRB 20, (Paris, Gabalda, 1982); Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 90, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1990); Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and a New Soul: Ezekiel, the Exile and the Torah*, JSOTSup 358, (London, Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

³⁴ Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy*, JSOTSup 78, Bible and Literature Series 21, (Sheffield, The Almond Press, 1989). The phrase 'mode of interpretation' comes from p127.

³⁵ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p25.

book of Ezekiel ‘received its final shape to function in a specific way for the second generation of exiles.’³⁶ That is, the book is not so much an anthology as an argument. The work by Stevenson can also be placed here, although she deals with Ezek. 40-48 alone.³⁷ Stevenson looks at these chapters through the lenses of human geography, regarding them as rhetoric concerning space, rather than an elaborate blueprint for building. The mass of details are in no sense irrelevant but are there ‘to give hope to a community in exile.’³⁸ The book generates hope ‘by creating a vision of a future restructured society, a society centered around the temple of YHWH’³⁹ with Yahweh as the only king, a vision evident from Yahweh’s territorial claim. Finally, mention should also be made of the examination of the sign-acts in the books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah by Friebel.⁴⁰ Marshalling an extensive range of scholarly work into his discussion of each sign-act, he focuses on the ‘rhetorical strategies’ embodied in the performance of each act as recounted within both books.

The third area is that of the temple vision in Ezekiel 40-48. We have already observed the work of Stevenson here. To it should be added the work of Levenson and Tuell.⁴¹ Levenson explores in his monograph the different traditions underlying the temple vision, the nature of the messianic expectation, and the ‘social and political organization of the restored society’.⁴² Although he regards the vision as ‘informed by radically contradictory traditions’,⁴³ at the same time, he comments that ‘to break up this vision into its components is to dissipate its power.’⁴⁴ Tuell describes these chapters as ‘the religious polity of the Judean Restoration’;⁴⁵ for him, ‘ancient tradition, current practice, and the author’s own insight and innovation have been skillfully [sic] combined’⁴⁶ into ‘a final, purposive unity’⁴⁷ to give ‘a courageous confession in a “day of small things” (Zechariah 4:10) that YHWH is not far off, but near at hand.’⁴⁸

The fourth area focuses on Ezekiel’s use of emotive language found in the extended metaphors of chs. 16 and 23, and in particular at the portrayal of women.⁴⁹

³⁶ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p1.

³⁷ Kalinda R. Stevenson, *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48*, SBLDS 154, (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1996).

³⁸ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, p163.

³⁹ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, p163.

⁴⁰ Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts*, JSOTSup 283, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

⁴¹ Jon D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48*, HSM 10, (Missoula, Scholars Press, 1976); Steven S. Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40-48*, HSM 49, (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1992).

⁴² Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, p2.

⁴³ Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, p161.

⁴⁴ Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, p162.

⁴⁵ Tuell, *Law of the Temple*, p14.

⁴⁶ Tuell, *Law of the Temple*, p176.

⁴⁷ Tuell, *Law of the Temple*, p13.

⁴⁸ Tuell, *Law of the Temple*, p178.

⁴⁹ Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh’s Wife*, SBLDS 130, (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1992); S. Tamar Kamionkowski, *Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos: A Study on the Book of Ezekiel*, JSOTSup 368, (London, Sheffield Academic Press, 2003).

This is closely related to the second area, but the perspective with which the book of Ezekiel is read is generally hostile towards what are regarded as pornographic texts. The critique of the book of Ezekiel is aimed neither at its unity, nor its authenticity, since both Galambush and Kamionkowski treat the book holistically. Rather, it is aimed at the demeaning of women by Yahweh, as portrayed by Ezekiel.

The fifth area is that of ethics. Two representatives in this field are Matties and Mein.⁵⁰ Matties focuses on Ezekiel 18, analysing it ‘using the literary-historical tools of form criticism...and traditio-historical investigation’.⁵¹ He moves from this to explore three major problems that the chapter raises: ‘(1) the matter of responsibility in community, (2) the human moral agent and the function of law, and (3) the divine moral agent in relation to human responsibility, human community, and theodicy.’⁵² For Matties, Ezekiel 18 speaks of the ‘liminal moment between Ezekiel’s harsh announcements of judgment and his bold eschatological vision.’⁵³ At this moment, it is ‘an attempt to shape a moral community...it envisions the possibility for transformation and reconstitution. Its task is to nurture the formation of a peoplehood.’⁵⁴ Mein argues that a study of biblical ethics needs to take account of social context. That Ezekiel’s addressees are the Jerusalem élite explains the ‘dual focus’ on both Jerusalem and Babylon found in the book. Oracles proclaiming judgement on Jerusalem reflect the élite’s concern for and past involvement in foreign policy and the cult, while oracles focusing on the disempowered exiles ‘ritualize’ ethics by extending the language associated with the temple and ‘domesticate’ sin, focusing particularly on the individual and the family. In reviewing this work, Boadt makes the striking observation that Mein’s regarding the book as ‘far more unified than most previous commentators would grant...allows him to identify the major topics of the oracles from a new vantage point...and frees him to show that the distinction between apparently inconsistent points of view’⁵⁵ lies in the time and situation which Ezekiel is addressing. In other words, the reinstatement of the book has led directly to a blossoming of study and a new way of reading. These in turn have further fostered the book’s reinstatement.

The sixth area is that of theology, or of theological themes. Four works that focus here particularly are those of Joyce, Duguid, Kutsko and Wong.⁵⁶ Joyce explores the tension between divine sovereignty, expressed in God’s declaration that he will give

⁵⁰ Gordon Matties, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*, SBLDS 126, (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1990); Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, Oxford Theological Monographs, (Oxford, OUP, 2001).

⁵¹ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p2.

⁵² Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, pp5-6.

⁵³ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p224.

⁵⁴ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p219.

⁵⁵ Lawrence Boadt, ‘Review of Andrew Mein’s *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*’, *Biblica* 84 (2003), p127.

⁵⁶ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*; Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel*, VTSup 56, (Leiden, Brill, 1994); John F. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth: Divine Presence and Absence in the Book of Ezekiel*, *Biblical and Judaic Studies* 7, (Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2000); Ka Leung Wong, *The Idea of Retribution in the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup 87, (Leiden, Brill, 2001).

Israel a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 36:26; cf. 11:19), and human responsibility, expressed in the call for Israel get for themselves a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 18:31). His conclusion, after lucidly rebutting the notion that Ezekiel's prime contribution is as the innovator of individual responsibility, is that the book exhibits 'radical theocentricity' such that 'the responsibility of Israel has been subsumed in the overriding initiative of Yahweh.'⁵⁷ If Matties concludes by giving significant place to human responsibility, Joyce ends by accentuating divine sovereignty. Duguid explores the portrayal within the book of four different groups of leaders: kings and princes, priests and Levites, prophets, and lay leaders. He argues that 'there is a coherent and connected attitude taken toward...leadership groups throughout the book: those singled out for the most reproach in Ezekiel's critique of the past are marginalized in his plan for the future, while those who escape blame are assigned positions of honour.'⁵⁸ Kutsko explores the theme of divine presence and absence in the book of Ezekiel, working from the perspective of the book as an 'integrated discourse'.⁵⁹ In particular, he argues strongly for Ezekiel's monotheism as an answer to the trauma of exile, a monotheism evident from a number of factors including use of *גְּלוּלִים* rather than *אֱלֹהִים* in stock phrases in order to avoid any suspicion of implying some kind of existence by using the common word for deity. More controversially, in view of the fact that it is nowhere explicit in the book of Ezekiel, he argues that Ezekiel shares the same belief as P that humans are created in the image of God. Kutsko explains Ezekiel's silence by arguing that Ezekiel could not speak of this explicitly because of the danger found in the Mesopotamian context of regarding idols as images. Wong in his study on retribution in the book of Ezekiel finds three distinct principles at work concerning the relationship between an act and a consequence. The first is that the relationship between act and consequence is 'determined by an external agent according to agreed norms.'⁶⁰ The second principle, 'is that impurity requires its resolution. Basic to this principle is the idea that impurity should be confined or disposed. One way to do this is to remove the source of impurity.'⁶¹ The third principle 'is that the consequence is like the act by incorporating some features of the act.'⁶² All three principles Wong sees as being adduced by Ezekiel 'as a response to the question of theodicy.'⁶³

The seventh area is that of anthropology. Lapsley explores precisely the same tension that Paul Joyce does, between calls to repentance, on the one hand, and declarations that Yahweh will act unilaterally to bring about salvation (compare Ezek.

⁵⁷ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp89, 127.

⁵⁸ Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p1.

⁵⁹ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p10.

⁶⁰ Wong, *Idea of Retribution*, p246.

⁶¹ Wong, *Idea of Retribution*, p248.

⁶² Wong, *Idea of Retribution*, p249.

⁶³ Wong, *Idea of Retribution*, p251.

11:19; 36:26 with 18:31).⁶⁴ Instead of focusing on issues of theology, she concentrates instead on what she sees as two conflicting views of human moral identity. On the one hand, there is what she terms ‘virtuous moral selfhood’, whereby ‘people are assumed to be inherently capable of making moral decisions that accord with a vision of the good, which for Ezekiel is always coterminous with Yahweh’s will (most often manifested by *torah*).’⁶⁵ This is evidenced by the language of repentance in several chapters (Ezek. 3; 14; 18; 33). On the other hand, there is what she terms ‘neutral moral selfhood’, whereby ‘people are inherently incapable of acting in accord with the good.’⁶⁶ This is apparent from the language of determinism, especially in chapters 16, 20, 23, 24. Within the book of Ezekiel, she discerns a shift in Ezekiel’s conception of human moral identity, which cannot be reduced to a simple chronological shift within the book, and which has two aspects. First, there is a shift in origin of this identity, ‘from being inherent in human beings to existing only as a potential gift from God.’⁶⁷ Secondly, there is a shift in form, from a moral selfhood focused on action to a moral selfhood focused on knowledge.

In summary, the reinstatement both of Ezekiel the prophet *and* of Ezekiel the book has led to the blossoming of a diversity of approaches to the book, and many fruitful avenues of research. The study I am undertaking, exploring the relationship between Yahweh’s word and Yahweh’s spirit, falls chiefly within the sixth area above, that of theology or theological themes. At the same time, though, it will interact with works found in other areas (particularly the second area, that of rhetorical approaches, and the seventh, that of anthropological approaches), not least because one of the central tensions within the book, reflected in the call to the exiles to ‘Get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!’ (Ezek. 18:31) and in the promise by Yahweh, ‘A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you’, involves רִיחַ at its centre. It is to this רִיחַ that we now turn.

2. Study of רִיחַ in the Old Testament

Within the Old Testament as a whole, there are three hundred and eighty-nine occurrences of רִיחַ; eleven of these occur in the Aramaic sections of Daniel.⁶⁸ The semantic range of the word is wide, as can be seen from the following four examples. It can serve as a meteorological term, speaking of the ‘wind.’ Thus in 1 Kgs. 18:45, the heavens are said to have grown black ‘with cloud and wind (רִיחַ).’ It can also serve as

⁶⁴ Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live? The Problem of the Moral Self in the Book of Ezekiel*, BZAW 301, (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 2000).

⁶⁵ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p185.

⁶⁶ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p185.

⁶⁷ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p186.

⁶⁸ Daniel Lys, *Rûach: Le Souffle dans L’Ancien Testament*, Études D’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p15; R. Albertz and C. Westermann, ‘רִיחַ, *rûah* spirit’, *TLOT* 3, p1202.

an anthropological term, speaking of the ‘breath of life’ or the emotions or disposition in a person. Thus in Gen. 6:17, Yahweh declares that he will ‘destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath (רוּחַ) of life,’ and in Jdg. 8:3, after Gideon has mollified the Ephraimites, the narrator reports that ‘their anger (רוּחָם) subsided.’ רוּחַ can also function as a theological term, referring to Yahweh’s רוּחַ. In Jdg. 3:10, ‘the spirit of Yahweh (רוּחַ יְהוָה)’ came upon Othniel and he judged Israel. Such a wide semantic domain is reflected in the variety of words used by the LXX to translate it, including πνεῦμα (‘breath’, ‘wind’, ‘spirit’, 277 times), ἄνεμος (‘wind’, 52 times), θυμός (‘anger’, 6 times) and πνοή (‘breath’, 4 times).⁶⁹

a) A brief survey of scholarship

In view of the fact that רוּחַ is essentially invisible, and generally refers to the unseen cause of a wide variety of effects, it is neither surprising that Neve comments, ‘Probably nothing in the Old Testament so eludes comprehension as the spirit of God’,⁷⁰ nor that the study of רוּחַ in the Old Testament has given rise in the last 100 years to only a small number of monographs dedicated to the subject in English, French and German.

In English, there are the works by Neve⁷¹ and Hildebrandt,⁷² as well as the first part of the book by Montague which explores the development in the understanding of what became known as the ‘Holy Spirit’ prior to the New Testament.⁷³

Neve’s approach is to isolate the ‘spirit of God’ texts from other texts where רוּחַ occurs, and then to examine them within the categories of four different periods: ‘Earliest’, ‘Elijah to the Exile’, ‘Exile and Early Restoration’, and, finally, ‘Post-Exilic’. This approach has the advantage that it acknowledges a development in the Old Testament understanding of רוּחַ, but his self-consciously chosen approach to leave dating and provenance discussions out of a book which takes a diachronic perspective is one weakness.⁷⁴

Montague similarly follows a diachronic approach, though he traces development through postulated authors, sources or traditions. He starts with the Yahwist, and then acknowledges at the start of his second chapter that ‘at this point it is difficult to decide

⁶⁹ For these figures, see Friedrich Baumgärtel, ‘πνεῦμα, πνευματικός: B. Spirit in the Old Testament – C.I.1. Spirit in Judaism’, *TDNT* 6, p367. Baumgärtel also lists other, less frequently occurring words, with references. See further Muraoka’s Appendix 4, ‘Hebrew/Aramaic Index to the Septuagint’, p344 and the corresponding entries in the Concordance itself in Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 2nd edn., (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1998); also S. Tengström, ‘רוּחַ rūah’, *ThWAT* 7 (1993), p418.

⁷⁰ Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament*, (Tokyo, Seibunsha, 1972), p1.

⁷¹ Neve, *Spirit*.

⁷² Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1995).

⁷³ George T. Montague, *Holy Spirit: Growth of a Biblical Tradition*, (New York, Paulist Press, 1976), pp3-115. I have excluded the more popular book by Wood (Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, Contemporary Evangelical Perspectives Series, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1976)) because it does not interact with critical works.

⁷⁴ He comments in the preface, ‘The texts have not been dated without serious consideration, however, but the debate over the chronology and provenance of each text seldom appears in the book’ (Neve, *Spirit of God*, pv).

to which part of the Old Testament to turn next.’⁷⁵ He chooses the Deuteronomist, principally because he regards the references to the spirit within the ‘Deuteronomic History’ as coming from ‘an early stratum’.⁷⁶ His work therefore has similar strengths and weaknesses to that of Neve. Further, by treating the material so discretely, he evinces an unwillingness to allow one tradition to be interpreted by referring to another.⁷⁷

Hildebrandt is somewhat different. Although his opening chapter discusses the semantic range of רִיחַ, and explores both the origins of its use and chronological development, the bulk of the book comprises four chapters surveying the work of Yahweh’s Spirit from a synchronic perspective, dealing with ‘The Spirit of God in Creation’, ‘The Spirit and God’s People’, ‘The Spirit of God in Israel’s Leadership’, and ‘The Spirit of God and Prophecy’. The strength of such an approach is the willingness to explore interconnections, such as those between the pillar of cloud and fire and רִיחַ.⁷⁸ This is further enhanced by his willingness not to restrict himself simply to occurrences of the word רִיחַ. However, although Hildebrandt is aware of a variety of scholarly literature, he does not interact with the French and German monographs mentioned here. Further, his work suffers from the lack of depth that a diachronic perspective would give. That is not to say that a diachronic approach is straightforward, for, as Dreytza notes, ‘late redaction can preserve earlier use or can have adapted to a newer usage’,⁷⁹ thus making it harder to date texts, but it is clear, for example, that some of the verbs predicated of רִיחַ in Judges (such as ‘rush’ (*slh*) (Jdg. 14:6)) would not be predicated of רִיחַ in post-exilic works, so some account should be made of this.

In French, there is the substantial work by Lys.⁸⁰ In addition, a series of articles on רִיחַ published in different journals by van Imschoot has sufficient depth and breadth to merit placement here.⁸¹ Lys analyses רִיחַ by categorising occurrences into three: ‘wind’, ‘God’ and ‘man’.⁸² Further categorisations are those of genre (e.g. poetry, wisdom) and of era (earliest texts, the major prophets, the historical texts deriving from around the

⁷⁵ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p17.

⁷⁶ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p17.

⁷⁷ So, for example, in his discussion of Gen. 1:2 and the meaning of רִיחַ there, although mention is made of the verb *rhp* and its occurrence in Deut. 32:11, and of the noun *tohu*, and its occurrence in Deut. 32:10, there is nothing made of the *significance* of these occurrences, and, in particular of the fact that in the *torah*, the only two places that these two words occur are in Gen. 1:2 and Deut. 32:10-11.

⁷⁸ Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, pp72-76.

⁷⁹ ‘Späte Redaktion kann frühen Gebrauch konserviert oder an neueren Sprachgebrauch angepaßt haben’, Manfred Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAḤ im Alten Testament: Eine wort- und satzsemantische Studie*, (Giessen, Brunnen, 1990), p76.

⁸⁰ Lys, *Rûach*.

⁸¹ Paul van Imschoot, ‘L’action de l’esprit de Jahvé dans l’Ancien Testament’, *RSPT* 23 (1934), pp553-87; *idem*, ‘L’esprit de Jahvé, source de vie dans l’Ancien Testament’, *RB* 44 (1935), pp481-501; *idem*, ‘L’esprit de Jahvé et l’alliance nouvelle dans l’Ancien Testament’, *ETL* 13 (1936), pp201-20; *idem*, ‘Sagesse et esprit dans L’Ancien Testament’, *RB* 47 (1938), pp23-49; *idem*, ‘L’esprit de Jahvé, principe de vie morale dans l’Ancien Testament’, *ETL* 16 (1939), pp457-67; *idem*, ‘L’esprit de Jahvé, source de la piété dans l’Ancien Testament’, *Bible et Vie Chretienne* 6 (1954), pp17-30.

⁸² ‘Vent’(V), ‘Dieu’ (D), and ‘Homme’ (H).

time of Josiah's reforms, the exilic texts and post-exilic texts). Individual books, such as Ezekiel, may appear in more than one of these eras; thus Ezek. 1-39 is categorised as an exilic text, while Ezek. 40-48 is characterised as a post-exilic text. As perhaps might be evident from his title, Lys places strongest emphasis on the anthropological dimension.

With regard to van Imschoot, there is not space here to discuss each one of his articles. Instead, I want to note the main observations from his first article.⁸³ There he argues that before the exile the spirit of Yahweh can be represented in two different ways. The first, which he believes is older, is רִיחַ acting intermittently in particular individuals. Such action is seen in sudden bursts of enthusiasm of different kinds, whether it be of courage or strength in war, or prophetic exaltation (e.g. Jdg. 3:10; Num. 24:2). The second use describes a permanent gift for a particular function or task that has already been determined (e.g. Isa. 11:2ff.). In both cases, the visible effects produced by the spirit of Yahweh are comparable to the effects produced by a wind, or, rather, Yahweh's breath.

In German, there are the works by Volz,⁸⁴ Koch,⁸⁵ and Dreytza.⁸⁶

Volz discerns five stages within the development of the concept of רִיחַ as the spirit of Yahweh. Strikingly, he sees the earliest stage as '*Ruh* als Dämon'. He notes the hitpa'el of נָבֵא describes Saul's behaviour induced by an evil spirit in 1 Sam. 18:10 as well as the behaviour of prophets in 1 Sam. 10:6 and Num. 11:25, and comments, 'Moreover it turns out that the link between *Ruh* and Yahweh is not so close or original as it now appears in the literature of the Old Testament and as it is usually portrayed.'⁸⁷ Such a perspective he sees as reinforced both by references to the 'spirit of' something within the Old Testament as if it were some kind of external power, and by the comparative study of religions. It was only in later Judaism that the independence of רִיחַ re-emerged.

Koch's work focuses on the messianic dimension of רִיחַ, by which he also means the eschatological or end-times (*endzeitlich*) dimension. In his second monograph, he observes that many of the studies of רִיחַ in the Old Testament have missed this dimension, which he regards not just as the pinnacle of the portrayal of רִיחַ in the Old Testament, but also the pinnacle of Old Testament theology.⁸⁸ This messianic perspective provides the focus and the order for his investigation. For him, there is a

⁸³ van Imschoot, 'L'action de l'esprit de Jahvé', pp553-87. Albartz / Westermann identify this article as the first clear characterisation of the spirit of God in the early period of Israel's history (רִיחַ', *TLOT* 3, p1213).

⁸⁴ Paul Volz, *Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im Alten Testament und im anschließenden Judentum*, (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1910).

⁸⁵ Robert Koch, *Geist und Messias*, (Freiburg, Herder, 1950); *idem*, *Der Geist Gottes*.

⁸⁶ Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*.

⁸⁷ 'Zudem zeigt es sich, daß das Band zwischen *Ruh* und Jahwe nicht so eng und ursprünglich ist, wie es jetzt in der Literatur des A.T. erscheint und wie es gewöhnlich dargestellt wird.' Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p1.

⁸⁸ See Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p12.

development from רִיחַ as wind in the natural world to רִיחַ as breath of life, and finally, to רִיחַ as something that can only be spoken about in religious categories.⁸⁹ The action of the ‘spirit of Yahweh’ on people mirrors that of the wind or life-breath – ‘as the life-giving one, the dynamic one’,⁹⁰ but remains closely linked to Yahweh. There is no real independence of the spirit of Yahweh in the Old Testament despite occasional poetic personifications (e.g. 2 Sam. 23:2; Hag. 2:5). Instead, ‘the crucial characteristic of the term “spirit of God” is the closest of connections to God’s person. The Old Testament does not know yet of any personal divine Spirit, but rather a personal power of God with many and different effects.’⁹¹

Dreytza’s work is an examination of the use of the word רִיחַ, and in particular its syntagmatic relations. The thoroughness of his dealing both with ancient near-eastern material and with secondary literature makes this work indispensable for these two areas. His focus is on the theological use of רִיחַ, though he does devote a chapter to meteorological use. It is slightly surprising that there is no chapter on the anthropological use of רִיחַ. The study’s strength is its categorisation of רִיחַ and its collocations. Less space is therefore devoted to discussion of theological issues.

Alongside these monographs are general articles on רִיחַ in journals,⁹² dictionaries,⁹³ Old Testament theologies,⁹⁴ and other books.⁹⁵ Rather than summarise them here, I shall

⁸⁹ Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p31.

⁹⁰ ‘als das Belebende, das Dynamische’ (Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p31).

⁹¹ ‘Das entscheidende Merkmal des Gottesgeist-Begriffes liegt im absoluten Anschluß an die Personalität Gottes. Das Alte Testament kennt noch keinen persönlichen göttlichen Geist, wohl aber eine personhafte Gottesmacht mit vielen und verschiedenen Wirkungen.’ Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, pp137-38 (his emphasis).

⁹² E.g. Charles A. Briggs, ‘The Use of רִיחַ in the Old Testament’, *JBL* 19 (1900), pp132-45; William R. Schoemaker, ‘The Use of רִיחַ in the Old Testament, and of πνεῦμα in the New Testament’, *JBL* 23 (1904), pp13-67; Hehn, ‘Zum Problem des Geistes’, pp210-25; Claus Westermann, ‘Geist im Alten Testament’, *EvT* 41 (1981), pp223-30.

⁹³ ‘רִיחַ’, BDB, pp924-26; ‘πνεῦμα, πνευματικός’, *TDNT* 6, pp359-67; ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, pp1202-20; F. W. Horn, ‘Holy Spirit’, tr. Dietlinde M. Elliott, *ABD* 3, pp260-80; ‘רִיחַ’, *ThWAT* 7, pp385-418; M.V. Van Pelt, W.C. Kaiser, Jr. and D.I. Block, ‘רִיחַ’, *NIDOTTE* 3, pp1073-78; ‘רִיחַ’, *HALOT*, pp1197-1201.

⁹⁴ Ludwig Koehler, *Old Testament theology*, tr. A.S. Todd from 3rd edn. (1953) of *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, (London, Lutterworth Press, 1957), pp111-18; Jacob, *Theology*, pp37-42, 121-34; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, pp46-68, 131-34; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, tr. D.M.G. Stalker, vol. 1, (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1962), pp94-104; *idem*, *Old Testament Theology*, tr. D.M.G. Stalker, vol. 2, (Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd, 1965), pp56f.; Paul van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, tr. K. Sullivan and F. Buck, vol. 1, (Tournai, Desclée, 1965), pp172-88 (inevitably not as comprehensive as his journal articles); Rolf P. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), pp269-308; H.D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology I*, tr. L.G. Perdue, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1995), pp160-163. There is surprisingly little in Brueggemann’s stimulating volume (Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1997). The most significant discussion is on pp292-93.

⁹⁵ Important treatments include those in Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London, The Epworth Press, 1944), pp143-58; Aubrey R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God*, (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1961), pp14ff.; Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Vitality of the Individual in the Thought of Ancient Israel*, 2nd edn., (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1964), pp26-39; Hans W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, tr. M. Kohl, (London, SCM Press, 1974), pp32-39; Max-Alain Chevallier, *Souffle de Dieu: Le Saint-Esprit Dans le Nouveau Testament*, vol. 1, *Le Point Théologique* 26, (Paris, Editions Beauchesne, 1978), pp22-35; Henri Cazelles, ‘Prolégomenes à une étude de l’esprit dans la Bible’, in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, eds. W.C. Delsman et al., *Festschrift J.P.M. van der Plög*, AOAT 211, (Neukirchen, Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), pp75-90; Benjamin B.

be interacting with many of them at different points in the study, though it is appropriate to highlight the concise and measured article by Albertz and Westermann.⁹⁶

There are also a number of articles, chapters or monographs on רִיחַ in the Old Testament with a more specific focus. Some examine רִיחַ with particular reference to a time-period⁹⁷ or a particular corpus such as the Heptateuch⁹⁸ or the historiographic writings.⁹⁹ However, perhaps not unexpectedly, it is in the discussions about the prophets that רִיחַ has particular prominence.

Most significant in this regard is the book by Wonsuk Ma on the spirit of God in the book of Isaiah.¹⁰⁰ Although he recognises that there is a degree of potential oversimplification to his approach, in that further redactional layers may be obscured, he splits his work into four chapters reflecting his ‘four-stage reading’ of Isaiah to preserve clarity. His first stage is the ‘Pre-exilic Isaianic Spirit Tradition’; his second is ‘Exilic Isaianic Spirit Traditions’; his third is ‘Postexilic Isaianic Spirit Tradition’; finally, he ‘takes a more holistic approach by reading the passages [already discussed] in the literary and theological context of the entire book.’¹⁰¹ He categorises spirit traditions in the Old Testament under six headings, ‘Leadership Spirit’, ‘Prophetic Spirit’, ‘Creation Spirit’, ‘The Spirit as God’s Independent Agent’, ‘The Spirit as Part of God’s Person or Sign of God’s Presence’, and, finally, ‘The Spirit Practically a Substitute for God’, and explores how each one is portrayed within each stage. The great strengths of the book are his painstaking examination of the individual texts, his relating the conclusions from close exegesis to the ongoing development in the conception of רִיחַ, and his attempt to integrate both a diachronic and a more holistic reading.

Discussions about the relationship between רִיחַ and prophecy are also found in a number of books exploring Old Testament prophecy, in particular the works by Wilson,¹⁰² who explores the spirit’s role in mediation in the light of contemporary sociological and anthropological research, Heschel,¹⁰³ who argues that the dimension of רִיחַ as expressing pathos or emotion is often omitted, and the wide-ranging Lindblom.¹⁰⁴

Warfield, ‘The Spirit of God in the Old Testament’, in *idem*, *Biblical Doctrines*, 1st Banner of Truth edn., (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth, 1988), pp101-29.

⁹⁶ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, pp1202-20.

⁹⁷ E.g. Richard J. Sklba, “‘Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us’ (Isa 32:15): Reflections on the Role of the Spirit in the Exile’, *CBQ* 46 (1984), pp1-17; Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah bewegt die Welt: Gottes schöpferische Lebenskraft in der Krisenzeit des Exils*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 151, (Stuttgart, Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1992).

⁹⁸ Dion, ‘La *ruah* dans l’Heptateuch’, pp167-91.

⁹⁹ Daniel I. Block, ‘Empowered by the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit in the Historiographic Writings of the Old Testament’, *SBJT* 1 (1997), pp42-61.

¹⁰⁰ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*.

¹⁰¹ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p158.

¹⁰² Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1980).

¹⁰³ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 2, reprinted from 1962 edition, (Peabody, Prince Press, 2000), pp95-97.

¹⁰⁴ Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1962).

In addition, there are also a number of articles that explore the relationship between רִיחַ and the prophetic word.¹⁰⁵

Finally, in this survey, we should note particular works on רִיחַ in the book of Ezekiel. There has been no work comparable to Ma's, but there are three journal articles that focus on רִיחַ in Ezekiel,¹⁰⁶ and two books which give particular attention to the subject beyond the ones already mentioned.¹⁰⁷ These will of course be discussion partners throughout this study.¹⁰⁸

b) Some issues

Out of this literature there are three issues that merit further comment. These are the development of רִיחַ language in the Old Testament, insights from lexical semantics about רִיחַ, and the relationship between רִיחַ and the prophetic word. The first merits further comment because it illustrates some of the difficulties in accounting for the wide semantic range of רִיחַ; the second, because it highlights some of the issues that this study faces in exploring the use of רִיחַ in Ezekiel, and explains why I shall often leave רִיחַ untranslated; the third because it identifies an issue that lies right at the heart of this study.

With regard to the development of רִיחַ language in the Old Testament, the particular issue is not so much the etymology of רִיחַ,¹⁰⁹ nor indeed its relation to the counterparts of רִיחַ in north-west Semitic languages,¹¹⁰ but whether there is one meaning that can explain all the others found in the Old Testament, given the great diversity. There seem to be five main views on this question, though some are very closely related. The first is that of רִיחַ as 'wind'.¹¹¹ The second is that of רִיחַ as 'breath'

¹⁰⁵ E.g. Sigmund Mowinckel, 'The "Spirit" and the "Word" in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets', *JBL* 53 (1934), pp199-227. Reprinted as 'The Spirit and the Word in the Prophets', in Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Spirit and the Word: Prophecy and Tradition in Ancient Israel*, ed. K.C. Hanson, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2002), pp83-99; *idem*, 'A Postscript to the Paper "The Spirit and the Word in the Pre-exilic Reforming Prophets"', *JBL* 56 (1937), pp261-65; Arvid S. Kapelrud, 'The Spirit and the Word in the Prophets', *ASTI* 11 (1977-78), pp40-47; Josef Scharbert, 'Der "Geist" und die Schriftpropheten', in *Der Weg zum Menschen: Zur philosophischen und theologischen Anthropologie*, eds. Rudolf Mosis and Lothar Ruppert, (Freiburg, Herder, 1989), pp82-97; Guy Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique en Israël', *Science et Esprit* 42, (1990), pp129-65.

¹⁰⁶ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', pp27-49; Woodhouse, "'Spirit" in the Book of Ezekiel', pp1-22; Harold E. Hosch, 'RUAḤ in the Book of Ezekiel: A Textlinguistic Analysis', *JOTT* 14 (2002), pp77-125.

¹⁰⁷ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, tr. J.D. Martin, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1983), pp566-68 (Excursus: רִיחַ in the Book of Ezekiel).

¹⁰⁸ For a fairly comprehensive bibliography of works until 1990, see 'רִיחַ', *ThWAT* 7, pp386-88.

¹⁰⁹ For which see Lys, *Rûach*, pp19ff.; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAḤ*, pp37f.; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, pp9-12. Silva helpfully summarises the different kinds of etymological approaches: a) 'identifying the component parts of a word'; b) finding 'the earliest attested meaning'; c) looking at 'prehistorical stages: what meaning (or form, or both) did a particular word have prior to its earliest attestation?'; d) 'reconstruction of the form and meaning of a word in the parent language by a careful examination of the cognate languages.' See Moises Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1983), pp39-40 (his emphasis).

¹¹⁰ For which see Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAḤ*, pp16-32.

¹¹¹ So e.g. Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p14.

or 'wind' without distinguishing them.¹¹² Certainly early texts (e.g. Exod. 15:8) do speak of the wind as the breath of Yahweh's nostrils. This could either be defined as 'air in motion'¹¹³ or as 'the power encountered in the breath and the wind.'¹¹⁴ The latter is preferable because the former potentially assumes the conceptualising of a substance, instead of focusing on the effects.¹¹⁵ The third is רוח as a demon.¹¹⁶ The fourth is רוח as 'space' (*espace*) (cf. Jer. 22:14).¹¹⁷ The fifth is that there are diverse spirit traditions reflected in the Old Testament which defy a common origin.¹¹⁸ For Ma, who proposes this last view, the action of the spirit of God on leaders and prophets, on the one hand, is not easily explained in terms of developments from a life-giving wind. On the other hand, there are instances such as 1 Kgs. 22:19-23 where רוח 'maintains the Mesopotamian demonic tradition.'¹¹⁹ It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the arguments in depth, but tentatively I would align myself, along with majority opinion, with the second position, that of 'the power encountered in the breath and the wind', while acknowledging at the same time that some of the development may well have happened *outside* Israel, yet be reflected in, for example, the 'personal' spirit seen in 1 Kgs. 22.

The second issue that merits further discussion is that of רוח and insights from lexical semantics. Four insights derived from lexical semantics need to be borne in mind as we come to look at רוח in the book of Ezekiel, and face, in some cases, difficulties over the meaning or the best translation of a 'polysemantic lexeme' like רוח in a particular context.¹²⁰

First, there is the possibility of deliberate ambiguity. For rhetorical purposes, the writer of the book of Ezekiel might have kept the precise meaning or nuance of רוח vague, in order to keep the readers (or hearers) thinking, anticipating further instances which might clarify their understanding or force them to conceive fresh realities.

¹¹² van Imschoot, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, pp172-73, though he cautiously favours 'breath' as 'primary'. Eichrodt (*Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p46) similarly makes no distinction, '*Rûah* has retained at all times...the meaning "wind", denoting the movement of air both outside Man in Nature, and inside him, his own breath.' It should be noted in passing that Eichrodt seems here to be guilty of what Cotterell terms 'the myth of point meaning', which asserts that behind *every usage* lies a 'central', 'fundamental', or 'basic' meaning. See Peter Cotterell, 'Linguistics, Meaning, Semantics and Discourse Analysis', *NIDOTTE 1*, p148.

¹¹³ 'an initial awareness of air in motion, particularly "wind"', Johnson, *Vitality*, p3.

¹¹⁴ 'רוח', *TLOT 3*, p1203. A careless reading of Lys might suggest he focuses erroneously on רוח as 'air': 'le sens fondamental est celui de l'air en mouvement dans l'espace' (Lys, *Rûach*, p23). Lys however makes it clear that movement is everything, '*Rûah* n'est rien sinon mouvement; en sorte qu'à proprement parler il n'y a pas d'être du *rûah*' (p336, his emphasis).

¹¹⁵ Schoemaker comments, 'the conception of wind as air in motion is, of course, entirely absent from the thought of the early Hebrews' (Schoemaker, 'Use of רוח', p14). See also 'רוח', *TLOT 3*, p1203.

¹¹⁶ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, pp3-6.

¹¹⁷ Cazelles, 'Prolégomenes à une étude de l'esprit dans la Bible', pp75-90.

¹¹⁸ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, pp26-28.

¹¹⁹ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p27.

¹²⁰ For a helpful discussion of the 'phenomenon of polysemy' and the 'practical problem of decoding' with reference to רוח and other polysemantic Hebrew words, see Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, 'On the Decoding of Polysemantic Lexemes in Biblical Hebrew', *ZAH 7* (1994), pp17-25.

Secondly, there is the possibility of unintended ambiguity. What communication theory calls ‘noise’ can arise both from ‘interference in the process of communication’ (e.g. textual variation), and from the fact of two differing contexts.¹²¹ The writer is so engrossed in a particular train of thought that the potential ambiguity is overlooked. The readers (or hearers), not having access to the speaker’s thought processes, are unable to distinguish between two or more possible meanings. An amusing example of such ambiguity can be seen in the phrase apocryphally seen on a reference, ‘If you can get him to work for you, you would be very lucky.’ In practice, as in this example, it may not always be possible to distinguish between deliberate and unintended ambiguity.

Thirdly, there is the degree of choice that the writer had available when using רָוַח. It was Saussure who noted the interdependence of language, and that, as Thiselton puts it, ‘words or other linguistic signs have no “force,” validity, or meaning, independently of the relations of equivalence and contrast which hold between them.’¹²² Saussure, summarised in Thiselton, used the analogy of chess, noting the changing value of chess pieces depending on where they were on the board, and how they were positioned relative to the other pieces. In order to try to work out the particular nuance of a word, it is important to ask what degree of *choice* the writer had; to continue Saussure’s analogy, we need to ask what other chess pieces were available to the writer at that moment. In other words, if a word is to have a particular nuance, the question needs to be asked whether there were any appropriate synonyms that *could* have been used. If there were no synonyms available, then the word chosen was no longer a matter of style; any particular nuance of that word is to some degree neutralised.¹²³ With regard to רָוַח, at some points in the Old Testament it is clearly synonymous with נְשָׁמָה (e.g. Gen. 6:3; 7:22 (cf. 2:7); Isa. 42:5; 57:16), while at other points it is synonymous with לֵב (e.g. Ezek. 20:32; cf. Jer. 51:50). The presence of these alternatives suggests that style may be the reason for the usage of רָוַח, rather than its synonym, at points where רָוַח has a referent similar to that of נְשָׁמָה or לֵב, but issues of semantic development over time need to be taken into account.

Fourthly, there is the distinction between acceptations (dictionary definitions) and translation equivalents. Since no two languages are isomorphic, it is most unlikely that the semantic domain of a word in one language maps perfectly onto a word in another. Silva gives the example of the English words *eat* and *drink*, and the Spanish words *comer* and *tomar*.¹²⁴ There is not a straightforward mapping. The English speak of *to eat soup* (or *ice cream*), while the Spanish will not tolerate *comer*, but use *tomar la sopa*

¹²¹ For both these points, see Silva, *Biblical Words*, p152.

¹²² A.C. Thiselton, ‘Semantics and New Testament Interpretation’, in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. H. Marshall, (Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1977), p82. I follow him closely here.

¹²³ See Silva, *Biblical Words*, p165. ‘Neutralise’ is used as a technical term in phonology and is borrowed by Silva here.

¹²⁴ Silva, *Biblical Words*, pp142-43.

(or *el helado*).¹²⁵ He suggests that the English terms refer to the manner the food is taken to the mouth,¹²⁶ while the Spanish terms refer to the consistency of the ‘food’ – is chewing required? Just because *tomar* is, in certain contexts, an appropriate translation equivalent for *eat*, this does not mean that *eat* has two distinct acceptations (dictionary definitions). In other words, because X and Y are two translation equivalents for A (in certain collocations), that does not mean that A has two acceptations, or X and Y are two different meanings of A. It is not correct to invest A with the meanings of X and Y. With regard to רִיחַ, it *may* be preferable to translate רִיחַ as ‘spirit’ in some contexts, ‘breath’ in others, and ‘wind’ in others; *but that does not mean, necessarily, that these were three different acceptations of רִיחַ*. What may be properly translated ‘spirit’ in English may not have been in the author of Ezekiel’s mind at all. It may, for example, be difficult for us to envisage the ‘breath of God’ transporting Ezekiel (e.g. 8:3). We may, therefore, prefer the translation ‘spirit’ as the (English) idiomatic way of speaking of Yahweh’s action (in the same way as the Spanish idiom is of *tomar la sopa* (or *el helado*)) – but it is a mistake to think, *necessarily*, that Ezekiel had anything else in mind other than a metaphorical usage of רִיחַ (similar to ‘the hand of Yahweh’).

In short, speaking of Yahweh’s ‘spirit’ can, unless care is taken, invite a dogmatic reading, aspects of which might be incongruous in Ezekiel. This point is strongly endorsed by one of the five conclusions that Sawyer drew, based on his study of Hebrew words for salvation, namely that ‘*semantic analysis must be monolingual.*’¹²⁷ He comments that

‘one of the chief obstacles to good semantic theory in much OT scholarship has been the persistent practice of overestimating the importance of English equivalents: *dabar* means both ‘word’ and ‘thing’; *y^ᶜšū‘a* means ‘victory’ as well as ‘salvation’. Only at the very end of the study of the meaning of a given item is it appropriate to suggest English equivalents: only after the semantic description is complete are we ready to contemplate translation.’¹²⁸

By way of conclusion to the discussion about רִיחַ and lexical semantics, at the start of our study, I posited three domains of meaning of רִיחַ (meteorological, anthropological and theological) which shall serve to provide a basis for categorisation.¹²⁹ Such an approach is preferable, in a study examining the theological use of רִיחַ, to the division of רִיחַ into ‘wind,’ ‘spirit’ and ‘breath,’¹³⁰ since ‘breath,’ when spoken of Yahweh, is

¹²⁵ Though he notes these observations will not apply to all Spanish speakers. Silva, *Biblical Words*, p143.

¹²⁶ English speaks of ‘drinking’ soup from a mug.

¹²⁷ John F.A. Sawyer, *Semantics in Biblical Research: New Methods of Defining Hebrew Words for Salvation*, SBT 2nd Series 24, (London, SCM, 1972), p116 (his emphasis).

¹²⁸ Sawyer, *Semantics*, p116.

¹²⁹ So, for example, Lys (*Riúach*, pp25-26), who categorises the occurrences as *vent*, *dieu* and *homme*, derived from three domains (le créateur, la création, la créature), and Neve, *Spirit of God*, pp3-4, who speaks of the ‘trifurcation’ meaning of רִיחַ. Both are careful not to divide occurrences into ‘wind’, ‘breath’, and ‘spirit’.

¹³⁰ BDB, pp924-926.

clearly theological, if anthropomorphic, language, while ‘breath’ spoken of in a person is clearly anthropological. However it needs to be remembered that the boundaries, even between these categories mentioned above, may be much more fluid than our English translations make them, and the range of meanings within each category is very great.¹³¹

The third issue is the narrower question of the relationship between רוּחַ and the prophetic word. This takes us closer to the heart of this study.

We have already observed above how prominent both Yahweh’s word and Yahweh’s spirit are in the book of Ezekiel. Given the prominence of both Yahweh’s ‘word’ and Yahweh’s ‘spirit’ within the book, it might be expected, though it ought not be assumed *a priori*, that there is a relationship between them. Certainly later theology placed all the activity of the prophet wholly under the influence of the divine Spirit, whether in the Old Testament (Neh. 9:30), in the New Testament (2 Peter 1:20-21), or in church history. Aquinas writes,

‘in prophetic revelation, the mind of the prophet is moved by the Holy Spirit, just like an instrument deficient in view of its principal agent. Moreover, the mind of the prophet is not only moved towards something to be laid hold of, but also towards something to be said, or towards something to be done; and sometimes indeed to all three at the same time; sometimes, however, to two of these; sometimes, in fact, to one only.’¹³²

The matter, however, is not straightforward. Amongst scholars, there is divergent opinion on the nature of the relationship, and the reasons for that relationship (if there is one). Kaufmann has commented, particularly with reference to word, spirit and prophecy, that ‘there is no biblical doctrine of the relationship between the word and the spirit.’¹³³ Ma, on the other hand, asserts that ‘the prophetic inspiration of the spirit of God throughout the Old Testament is for the preaching of Yahweh’s word’¹³⁴ and that, after a relative absence of such prophetic inspiration in the pre-exilic classical prophets, ‘it is only after the fall of Jerusalem that the idea receives a revived emphasis as seen in Ezekiel.’¹³⁵ The relationship between word and spirit in general, and between spirit and prophetic word, in particular, need re-examination.

C. WHAT IS THE THESIS?

Having looked at the study of the book of Ezekiel, and the study of *rûah*, I am now in a position to articulate clearly what I shall be arguing in this thesis. It can be summarised

¹³¹ See especially the detailed differentiation in ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT* 3, pp1202-20.

¹³² *Summa Theologiae Hallae*, q.173, a.4. ‘...in revelatione prophetica movetur mens prophetae a Spiritu Sancto, sicut instrumentum deficiens respectu principalis agentis. Movetur autem mens prophetae non solum ad aliquid apprehendum, sed etiam ad aliquid loquendum, vel ad aliquid faciendum; et quandoque quidem ad omnia tria simul; quandoque autem ad duo horum; quandoque vero ad unum tantum.’

¹³³ Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, tr. and abridged by M. Greenberg, (London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1961), p101.

¹³⁴ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p121.

¹³⁵ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p135; so too ‘רוּחַ’, *ThWAT* 7, p394.

in straightforward fashion: *The relationship between Yahweh's rūah and Yahweh's word in the book of Ezekiel is to be understood not so much in terms of the inspiration and authentication of the prophet but in terms of the transformation of the book's addressees.*

By speaking of the '*book of Ezekiel*', I mean to make it clear, as I said above, that I am working from the standpoint of regarding the book as an intentional unity. While this is a methodological perspective, and one that has proved fruitful in recent research, it is neither an uncritically held nor an ahistorical literary one.

By speaking of '*the relationship between Yahweh's rūah and Yahweh's word*', I mean to indicate that I am approaching the thesis from both an historical and a theological perspective. The historical perspective means that I shall be interacting closely with the discussions introduced above, with regard to the place of what has sometimes been termed 'the prophetic spirit' within the variegated phenomenon of Old Testament prophecy. In particular, it will mean trying to account for the prominence of *rūah*, when it is so noticeably absent from Jeremiah and Leviticus. The theological perspective means that I am concerned to make sense of the different possible dimensions of the relationship between *rūah* and word. I am not simply interested in the 'prophetic spirit' but in relating Yahweh's *rūah*, wherever it may be found, to Yahweh's word, wherever it may be found.

By speaking of '*its addressees*', I intend to make clear that I regard the book not simply as a collection of the words of a prophet, the structure of which is dependent on loose thematic connections. Rather, it is a *book* written with a purpose, to a set of *addressees*. In addition, by speaking of '*addressees*', I am indicating the book as a whole can be understood as a 'speech event'.¹³⁶

Naturally I will be arguing for the above three points, but none is in itself the thesis. The thesis itself contains both a negative and a positive statement. The negative statement is that '*the relationship between Yahweh's rūah and Yahweh's word in the book of Ezekiel is to be understood not so much in terms of the inspiration and authentication of the prophet*'. In other words, I shall be arguing that perhaps the dominant paradigm for explaining the emphasis on Yahweh's *rūah* and its relation to Yahweh's word within the book of Ezekiel is inadequate. According to this paradigm, the prophet Ezekiel is recovering an emphasis on *rūah* in prophecy from the pre-classical prophets, or even pioneering an emphasis that has been conspicuously absent from the classical, writing prophets. Such an emphasis on *rūah* in Ezekiel is usually understood, on this reading, in terms of the self-authentication of the ministry of the prophet.

¹³⁶ 'A speech event is an activity in which participants interact via language in some conventional way to arrive at some outcome.' George Yule, *Pragmatics*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996), p57.

The positive statement is that *'the relationship between Yahweh's rūah and Yahweh's word in the book of Ezekiel is to be understood...in terms of the transformation of its addressees.'* In other words, the emphasis on Yahweh's rūah, even the 'prophetic spirit', is best understood within the overall function of the book, which is concerned for the transformation of the addressees. In particular, I shall be arguing that the prophet Ezekiel's experience of Yahweh's rūah and his own obedience to Yahweh's call are clearly contrasted with the disobedience of the prophet's addressees in order to present Ezekiel as a model for the addressees of the book. His experience will illuminate for them not just *that*, but also *how* the dramatic vision of the future can become a reality in their experience. This will provide a different perspective on the conundrum of the presence of calls to repentance within the book being found alongside Yahweh's apparently unilateral actions to bring about the salvation of the exiles. Yahweh's rūah has a fundamental role in the envisaged obedient response to Yahweh's word.

The study will therefore proceed in three main parts. In the rest of Part I, I shall look in detail at where Yahweh's word can be found within the book of Ezekiel, and at how it should be conceived. I shall also look, more briefly given the fact that some occurrences will be treated in greater depth in Part II and Part III, at the different occurrences of rūah within the book, with a view to categorising them and identifying those instances where interpreters disagree.

In Part II, I shall examine what is probably the dominant paradigm for interpreting the relationship between word and spirit in the book of Ezekiel - that of the inspiration and authentication of the prophet. Since such a paradigm is typically associated with a particular perspective on the relationship between word and spirit through Israel's history, the chapter will explore the relationship between word, spirit and the inspiration of the prophet, in terms of possible historical developments. I shall argue that the book of Ezekiel, in its emphasis on rūah, is less concerned with authenticating the prophet than is often supposed.

In Part III, I shall propose a different conceptual framework for the link between Yahweh's word and spirit within the book. In particular I shall maintain that the prophet portrayed in the book has, in addition to the customary proclamatory role, a paradigmatic one to the readers of the book. Through examining the role of Yahweh's rūah in the programmatic 36:26-27, 37:1-14 and 39:21-29, I shall argue that the prophet himself is a paradigm of the transformation necessary for the addressees of the book. The book of Ezekiel, and the emphasis on Yahweh's rūah within the book, is more concerned with the transformation of the people in obedience to the word of Yahweh. Yahweh brings about the transformation of his people through the cooperation of word and rūah.

I shall finish by reviewing the main arguments and conclusions of the thesis, and by considering the contribution that this study makes both to the study of Ezekiel and to the study of *rûah* in the Old Testament.

Now, our attention must turn to Yahweh's word and Yahweh's spirit in the book of Ezekiel, as I examine them in their own right.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING WORD AND SPIRIT IN EZEKIEL

In the introduction to this study, I looked to do four things: to introduce the subject of the study, to survey the current scene of Ezekiel scholarship, to survey the scene of scholarship on רִנָּה, and, finally, to outline my thesis.

In this chapter, there are two foci for my study. First, I shall examine the different possible communication situations in which the word of Yahweh can be discerned, exploring in the process some issues surrounding the different possible relationships to that word that different groups may have. If we are to see how Yahweh's רִנָּה is related to Yahweh's word, we need to see where that word is found. Of necessity, we will look at the dating and provenance of the book of Ezekiel, since Part II explores the contribution of the book of Ezekiel within the framework of historical development. Secondly, I shall look at the different instances of רִנָּה in the book of Ezekiel chiefly through the lenses of four writers, to provide a necessary orientation to the debate that will follow in the subsequent chapters, and to discuss in more detail those occurrences which will not be prominent in the rest of the thesis.

With regard to the first, I shall argue that it is possible to discern four distinct communication situations, in each of which Yahweh can be said to be the speaker. I shall argue that the final communication situation envisaged is that of the book of Ezekiel to its addressees in exile in Babylon. Further, I shall also seek to demonstrate that insights from speech act theory can help illuminate some of the different possible relationships to the (same) word of Yahweh that different groups might have.

With regard to the second, it will become obvious that, while there is substantial agreement on the meaning of רִנָּה in some places in the book of Ezekiel, in others there is significant disagreement. Some of these disagreements will be seen to have substantial impact on the interpretation of the book as a whole. Further, the distinction between theological, anthropological and meteorological senses of רִנָּה will be shown to be not always as easy to maintain as some studies might suggest. Works that look only at the theological use of רִנָּה can miss some of the force and interplay of the other instances.

A. YAHWEH'S WORD IN EZEKIEL

Although it is possible to take Yahweh's word in the sense of the *message* of the book of Ezekiel, a summary of the argument or theology,¹ our task is to focus more closely on where Yahweh's word in the sense of a 'speech event' with Yahweh as the speaker is to be found, and precisely how it should be conceived. Thus I am using the 'word' of Yahweh in a narrower sense than 'message', but I am also using it in a broader sense,

¹ Walther Zimmerli, 'The Word of God in the Book of Ezekiel', tr. James F. Ross, in *History and Hermeneutic*, ed. R.W. Funk, JTC 4, (New York, Harper & Row, 1967), pp3-13. The original is 'Das Gotteswort des Ezechiel', *ZThK* 48 (1951), pp249-62.

for my focus is not limited to prophetic discourse, but embraces every communication situation in which a speech event with Yahweh as the speaker may be found. There are four communications, four possible ‘speech events’, which require our attention:

1. Yahweh addressing Ezekiel
2. Ezekiel addressing his audience
3. Yahweh’s ordinances and statutes
4. The book of Ezekiel itself

For each of these possible speech events, I shall look at how these different communications can be understood as speech events, and to what extent Yahweh can be understood as the speaker. After exploring each one of these four, I shall turn my attention to the question of the recipients of these speech events, in order to illuminate further our understanding of each event as a whole. It is only when we have explored the different communications, the different speech events in which Yahweh can be said to be the agent that we will be in a position to see how Yahweh’s דְבַר יְהוָה relates to each of those events.

1. Yahweh addressing Ezekiel

As I noted above, the book is dominated by Yahweh’s dealings with the prophet, both in the giving of visions, and in the giving of his word. Central to an understanding both of what it means for Yahweh to address Ezekiel, and of the significance of that address, is the word-event formula, ‘the word of Yahweh came to me, saying...’ (and variations on this), which dominates the book’s articulation of the coming of Yahweh’s word to the prophet.² After assessing this formula, I shall look at how the visions Ezekiel receives relate to Yahweh’s word, in order to develop a coherent picture of what it means for Yahweh to address Ezekiel.

a) The word-event formula

In this section, after a brief outline of the occurrences of the formula in the book, I shall focus the discussion around two questions: first, the question of what it means to speak of ‘the word of Yahweh’ (דְבַר יְהוָה) as found in the formula, and, secondly, the question of what is the significance of the formula itself. Under this second question we shall

² For more on דְבַר יְהוָה in general, and on the ‘word-event’ formula in particular, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp144-45; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp83-84; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p32; J. Bergman, H. Lutzmann, and W. H. Schmidt, ‘ דְבַר *dābhar*; דָּבָר *dābhār*’, *TDOT* 3, pp84-125; Frank R. Ames, ‘ דְבַר ’, *NIDOTTE* 1, pp912-15; G. Gerleman, ‘ דְבַר *dābār* word’, *TLOT* 1, pp325-32; Klaus Koch, ‘The Language of Prophecy: Thoughts on the Macrosyntax of the *dēbar YHWH* and Its Semantic Implications in the Deuteronomistic History’, in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honour of Rolf Knierim*, eds. Henry T.C. Sun et al., (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1997), pp210-21. For a nuanced discussion of introducing direct discourse in Ezekiel and the ‘word-event’ formula, see especially Samuel A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible*, VTSup 46, (Leiden, Brill, 1992), pp230-42, 314-19. For discussion of the theology of the ‘word of God’, see von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, pp80-98; Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, pp69-79; Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, pp195-200; *idem*, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp73-81.

look at the distribution of the formula within prophetic literature, the question of in what way this formula speaks of an 'event', the related question of whether the 'word' is to be regarded as an hypostasis, and, finally, we shall look at issues around the reception, audibility and form of the word.

The word-event formula occurs fifty times within the book, all of which occur in chapters 1-39. It almost always introduces 'a new speech section'.³ Apart from 1:3, where it is a redactional description of what happened to Ezekiel in the 3rd person, it always describes in the 1st person the reception of the word of Yahweh by the prophet, and it precedes direct discourse by Yahweh. In what we might call its 'purest form' (וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר), the same phrase occurs thirty-nine times. There are another ten instances, with some variation. Some of these include a date (in particular those which introduce the oracles against the foreign nations⁴); another instance includes a time (12:8, 'in the morning'); on one occasion, 24:20, the phrase is set in a narrative context, with Ezekiel explaining his behaviour to the exiles after his wife has died.

Central to the word-event formula is 'the word of Yahweh' (דְבַר-יְהוָה). The phrase occurs around two hundred and twenty-five times in the Old Testament, and has been characterised as 'a technical term for the prophetic word of *revelation*.'⁵ Internal evidence within the book of Ezekiel for understanding the phrase as a technical term can be derived from the lack of variation in wording. The robustness of the formulaic saying as a whole, and in particular the phrase 'word of Yahweh,' to variation is apparent from the fact that two other major formulae, the 'citation' formula (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה - 'Thus Yahweh declares') and the 'signatory' formula (נְאֻם יְהוָה - 'the declaration of Yahweh'), both have a distinctive wording in the book of Ezekiel, with 'the Lord Yahweh' usually replacing 'Yahweh.'⁶ On no occasion, however, in the book of Ezekiel (or in the Old Testament as a whole), does the word-event formula have the double designation of the divine name, 'the word of *the Lord Yahweh* came to me...saying...'.⁷ The same effect is also observable in Jeremiah. The phrase 'Yahweh of Hosts' (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) occurs more than seventy times, but never in connection with Yahweh's word, yielding 'the word of Yahweh of Hosts' (דְבַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת). On the other hand, the phrase 'the word of Yahweh' (דְבַר יְהוָה) occurs more than sixty times in Jeremiah, but it remains untouched by the distinctive Jeremianic divine appellation.

³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p144.

⁴ 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1, 17; other dated instances of Yahweh's word coming are 1:3; 3:16; 20:1-2; 24:1; 33:21-23.

⁵ O. Grether, *Name und Wort Gottes im AT* (1934), pp66, 76, cited by Schmidt in J. Bergman, H. Lutzmann, and W. H. Schmidt, 'דָּבָר *dābhar*; דְּבָר *dābhār*', *TDOT* 3, p111 (my emphasis); cf. Preuss's description of it as a '*terminus technicus*' for the prophetic communication either from Yahweh to a prophet or from a prophet to the prophet's audience (*Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p73).

⁶ Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, pp556-62 (Appendix 1). He comments that the distinction between Jeremiah and Ezekiel 'shows that the two books in their present form come from quite different tradition circles and, in spite of all the points of contact, are not to be attributed overhastily to related editing' (p558).

⁷ There are only three instances of the phrase 'the word of the Lord Yahweh' (דְבַר-אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה), all in Ezekiel (6:3; 25:3; 36:4). They all occur in the phrase 'hear the word of the Lord Yahweh'.

Two cautions, though, need to be levelled against the characterisation above. First, in view of the limited occurrence of the word-event formula (and the phrase דְּבַר יְהוָה) in many prophetic books (see further below), an understanding of דְּבַר יְהוָה as a technical term should clearly be carefully circumscribed. It is a characteristic mark only of some prophets in some prophetic books. Further, the phrase ‘word of X’ is not exclusive to prophets or prophetic books, but is a commonplace of the word of a king (e.g. 2 Kgs. 18:28, “Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria!”), or indeed of a person with authority in the Old Testament (e.g. 1 Sam 4:1, ‘And the word of Samuel came to all Israel’). Meier notes how ‘other cultures elsewhere in the ancient Near East also employed the same figure of speech to describe the dictates of gods and kings.’⁸ Its usage as a technical term is illuminated by its use in more ordinary contexts, where it ‘connoted an authoritative communication’.⁹

Secondly, attention needs to be paid so that the ‘word of Yahweh’ is not associated more with ‘revelation’ as a theological category than with divine speech.¹⁰ Thiselton points out that the concept of revelation ‘*directs attention to propositional content*, but so pervasively as to leave no room for questions about propositional *force*.’¹¹ In the book of Ezekiel, the focus is very much on ‘propositional *force*.’ The word is Yahweh’s speech *addressed to the prophet*, or, in the case of the call-to-attention formula, ‘hear the word of Yahweh’, it is the prophet addressing his audience.¹² The word of Yahweh is Yahweh’s particular word to a particular situation, as is emphasised by the dates given throughout the book, a word of address which cannot be reduced to the concept of revelation.¹³ In the book of Ezekiel, it makes clear that what follows is nothing other than what Yahweh says.

If we turn our attention now to the word-event formula, and to its distribution, it is apparent that, as with many of the formulaic statements and phrases, it is not unique to the book of Ezekiel. If the significant elements are identified as the phrase דְּבַר יְהוָה, the verb הִקְיָה, and the marker of direct discourse, לְאָמַר, a number of significant parallels and distinctions with other Old Testament books can be observed.¹⁴

⁸ Meier, *Speaking*, p316.

⁹ Meier, *Speaking*, p319.

¹⁰ For a cogent argument on the difference between the two, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 2.

¹¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, ‘Speech-Act Theory and the Claim That God Speaks: Nicholas Wolterstorff’s *Divine Discourse*’, *SJOT* 50 (1997), p101 (his emphasis).

¹² Though this too is subsumed within the word of Yahweh to the prophet, since the voice of Ezekiel is rarely heard in the book as an independent element, other than as the narrator.

¹³ See Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, tr. D.W. Scott, (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1982), pp24-25. See also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p145 and Mowinckel, ‘Postscript’, p264. All three writers stress this historical and particular nature of the divine word. Westermann goes so far as to say that the word ‘cannot be separated out of this history as something God said. The Old Testament knows nothing of an abstracted, objectified word of God, and that is why the word of God in the Old Testament cannot become a doctrine’ (p24). Were he correct, then there would be no justification for the word being retained, edited and reapplied for subsequent generations.

¹⁴ See especially Meier, *Speaking*, pp314-19 for what follows.

In some of the books, these three elements do not appear at all together; indeed, the verb *הָיָה* is not used with *דִּבֶּר יְהוָה* to describe the prophetic event (Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Malachi). In some of the books, the phrase *דִּבֶּר יְהוָה* and the verb *הָיָה* occur together only in the 3rd person and only in the redactional headings (Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1); they are not to be found introducing individual oracles (i.e. the third element, marking direct discourse, is absent). The only prophetic books apart from Ezekiel where the three elements combine to introduce direct discourse to a prophet are Jeremiah, Haggai¹⁵ and Zechariah (though they do occur in Jonah 1:1 and 3:1, but Jonah is narrative; see below for Isaiah). Of these, the 1st person form that is almost universal in Ezekiel is to be found on ten occasions in the book of Jeremiah.¹⁶ Subsequently, the only occurrences of the 1st person form are in the book of Zechariah.¹⁷

In the book of Isaiah, there are two instances where the phrase *דִּבֶּר יְהוָה* and the verb *הָיָה* occur together in the context of the word of Yahweh coming to people, followed directly by Yahweh's speech. In 28:13, strikingly, the word comes not to prophets, but to the people as a whole. Meier plausibly suggests that 'its appearance in this isolated piece of poetry...points to the actual significance the phrase had before it became a stereotypical marker used by some prophets to identify a communication from God. Here it simply refers to an authoritative directive issued to insubordinate Israelites.'¹⁸ In 38:4, the three elements *are* present in a situation where Yahweh's word comes to a prophet (Isaiah), but it is likely that they occur here because the section is borrowed from Kings, where the formula is often to be found (e.g. 1 Kgs. 13:20, of the northern prophet who invited home the man of God who came from Judah; 1 Kgs. 16:1, of Jehu¹⁹; 1 Kgs. 17:2 of Elijah; 2 Kgs. 20:4, of Isaiah).²⁰

Outside the prophetic literature identified above and Kings, these three elements are hardly to be found together. Within Genesis to Judges, they only occur together in Gen. 15:1 (though Gen. 15:4 should be noted, where there is the deictic *וַהֲגִיבָהּ* instead of *הָיָה*). In Samuel, they occur together in three places: 1 Sam. 15:10, of the word coming to Samuel; 2 Sam. 7:4, to Nathan; 2 Sam. 24:1, to Gad, David's seer. These elements are also sparingly present in Chronicles, present from sources in 1 Chr. 17:3 (parallel to

¹⁵ Though in only two of the five occurrences is the word said to come *to* Haggai, as opposed to *through* him (*בְּיַד־חַגַּי*) (Hag. 2:10, 20). The other three instances (1:1, 3; 2:1) stress the agency of Haggai in speaking to Haggai's addressees, merging the prophetic and rhetorical events.

¹⁶ Jer. 1:4, 11, 13; 2:1; 13:3, 8; 16:1; 18:5; 24:4; 32:6; (cf. 25:3). There are thirty instances altogether within Jeremiah of the word of Yahweh coming to the prophet.

¹⁷ Zech. 4:8; 6:9; 7:4; 8:18; cf. 3rd person forms in 1:7; 7:8; 8:1.

¹⁸ Meier, *Speaking*, p319.

¹⁹ Though strikingly in 1 Kgs. 16:7, Jehu becomes the invisible mediator, as the word of Yahweh (*דִּבְרֵי־יְהוָה*) comes (*הָיָה*) to king Baasha and his house by the hand of Jehu.

²⁰ So Meier, *Speaking*, p315. Other instances in Kings where the main elements occur, marking divine speech are 1 Kgs. 6:11 (to Solomon); 1 Kgs. 12:22 (to Shemaiah; with *הָאֱלֹהִים*); 1 Kgs. 17:8, 18:1, 19:9 (with *וַהֲגִיבָהּ* instead of *הָיָה*), 21:17, 28 (to Elijah); 1 Kgs. 18:31, to Jacob.

2 Sam. 7:4, though with *דְּבַר־אֱלֹהִים*) and 2 Chr. 11:2 (parallel to 1 Kgs. 12:22), but otherwise in only two other places (1 Chr. 22:8, of David; 2 Chr. 12:7, of Shemaiah).²¹

This brief survey demonstrates how this way of speaking about Yahweh addressing a prophet is by no means universal, even within prophetic literature. At the same time, it is extraordinarily prominent in the particular works identified above, a fact that should not be surprising given the similar ‘temporal horizon’ of the 6th Century when the phrase ‘word of X’ was used ‘as the introductory (and not repeated) words in official communiques [sic].’²²

With regard to the question of the status of the word coming to the prophet as an ‘event’, although the presence of dates and other modifiers to the word-event formula indicate a narrowing of the speech event to a particular point, this does not mean the event should be over-dramatised or over-interpreted. So again Meier observes that ‘the use of “word” in conjunction with the verb “to be” is actually quite underwhelming in its banality in the light of usage in Akkadian and Hebrew’,²³ because many more colourful fientive verbs, such as ‘seize’ or ‘arrive’ or ‘reach’ are predicated of ‘word’.²⁴ Indeed, in 1 Sam. 4:1, the verb-form *וַיְהִי* and the phrase *דְּבַר־שְׁמוּאֵל* occur together to describe the event of *Samuel’s* word going to all Israel.

Consequently, we should not see in the word-event formula the hypostatisation of the word. Zimmerli’s claim that, ‘instead of a direct encounter by the personal address of God, the “word” is understood almost as an objective entity with its own power of entry,’²⁵ reads too much into the phrase, given what we have observed above about ‘banality’ of the verb ‘to be’.²⁶ In addition, in Ezekiel there is not always a consistent mediation of the word between Yahweh and the prophet. On occasions, Yahweh speaks directly with the prophet, without ‘the word’ mediating (2:2, 8; 3:10, 24; cf. 22:28).²⁷

Speaking of the word coming ‘directly’ to the prophet, or of Yahweh ‘addressing’ the prophet raises questions about the mode of reception, audibility and the form which the word took. These questions are important if we are going to consider in what way Yahweh speaks, and how Yahweh’s *דְּבַר* might relate to it.

It seems that the word was a private word, in the sense it was not immediately publicly available. When the elders visited the prophet (14:1; 20:1), the ‘word of Yahweh’ came to Ezekiel. There is no evidence that the elders heard it before Ezekiel addressed them; indeed, Yahweh’s address is explicitly to Ezekiel in the 1st person, instructing him on what to say to the elders (14:3-4; 20:3). Such a perspective is

²¹ See Meier, *Speaking*, p315.

²² Meier, *Speaking*, p319.

²³ Meier, *Speaking*, p317.

²⁴ Meier, *Speaking*, p317.

²⁵ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p145. For the question of hypostatisation, see ‘דְּבַר *dābhar*; דְּבַר *dābhār*’, *TDOT* 3, pp120-21; *TLOT* 1, pp331-32.

²⁶ For the question of the inherent power of a word, as opposed to hypostatisation, see further pp204f. below.

²⁷ See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp83-84.

reinforced by the reticence inherent in the word-event formula, for, 'although the content is specified as verbal (דבר יהוה),' the phrase 'retreats from the position that God's voice is heard, for it obscures any precision – God's word simply happened'.²⁸ While the word was inaudible to onlookers, the book characterises Ezekiel's subjective impression of the words of Yahweh as objective speech.²⁹ Such characterisation is not restricted to Ezekiel 'hearing' Yahweh's voice in the context of visions, though it is present there (1:28b; 2:2; 3:24; 8:5, 9). In 3:17, Ezekiel is told that he will hear a word from Yahweh's mouth, and that he, as a watchman, is to utter it. Further, his certainty in the face of hard-heartedness (2:7), unbelief (12:21-28), scorn (21:5 [ET 20:49]) and apathy (33:30-33) points to a profound experience of something that, though probably internal, must have *seemed to him* to have been objective. If the prophet did not believe that the words were objective, his critique of the false prophets, that they prophesy out of their own 'imagination' (מִלְבָּבָם (13:2)) or 'follow their own spirit' (הִלְכִים אַחַר רוּחָם) (13:3)) would have been both duplicitous and erroneous.³⁰

At this point, it is also appropriate to express reservations about Wilson's characterisation of the particular emphasis on the 'word of Yahweh' within Ephraimite prophetic tradition as evidence that they 'regarded spirit possession as the most common means of inspiration.'³¹ Were this true, there would be a conspicuous, continuous link between Yahweh's רוּחַ and word running throughout much of the prophetic literature. It seems that he reaches this conclusion by extrapolating from the observation that within 'contemporary intermediation, possession theories are usually characterized by the belief that the possessing spirit takes control of the intermediary and speaks directly through him, with the result that the speech of the intermediary is actually the speech of the spirit,'³² though ultimately he insists his understanding is based on exegesis, not contemporary sociology or anthropology.³³ Since there is a similar emphasis on 'direct divine speech' within the Ephraimite prophetic tradition, as evidenced by 'the tendency to describe prophecy as the reception and delivery of the word of God',³⁴ this is, for him, conclusive evidence that 'the Ephraimites regarded possession involving God's speaking as the normal form of intermediation.'³⁵ One

²⁸ Meier, *Speaking*, p232.

²⁹ Cf. Lindblom, *Prophecy*, p110; Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 2, p211: 'To the consciousness of the prophet, the prophetic act is more than an experience; it is an objective *event*.' For Heschel here, 'the prophetic act' is 'the act of inspiration', that is, the act of the word coming to the prophet.

³⁰ Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1948), p232. For further discussion, see *ibid.*, pp230-48 and Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 2, chs. 13 and 14.

³¹ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p144; cf. also Susan Niditch, 'Ezekiel 40-48 in a Visionary Context', *CBQ* 48 (1986), pp208-24. For Niditch (p208), Ezekiel is like 'a spirit medium' because in so many of his actions he 'looks like those whom traditional societies consider to be possessed by the divine, a mouthpiece for the deity, a bridge between heaven and earth.'

³² Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p145.

³³ See Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p16.

³⁴ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p145.

³⁵ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p146.

difficulty with such a conception is the fact that the difference between Ephraimite and Judean traditions is not as clear as Wilson portrays. The most obvious exception to his viewpoint is Ezekiel, where, as we have seen, emphasis on the ‘word of Yahweh’ is great. It is true that he recognises and tries to account for (the Judean) Ezekiel’s ‘affinities with Ephraimite language and theology.’³⁶ There are, though, very few references to ‘the word of Yahweh’ coming to a prophet, or calls to ‘hear the word of Yahweh’ in Hosea (Ephraimite) or Isaiah (Judean) (cf. Isa. 8:11). Further, Jeremiah is very reticent to speak about the role of רִיָּה within prophecy, so it is rather too speculative to regard the opening formula in Jer. 1:2 as a ‘typical Ephraimite superscription indicating that the prophet received his revelations when he was possessed by Yahweh’s spirit.’³⁷

In summary, it is preferable to see in the book’s use of the ‘word of Yahweh,’ and, in particular, the word-event formula, the self-conscious awareness on the part of Ezekiel, as narrator, of Yahweh *speaking* to him *within history* as an *objective event* which mirrored both ‘the old tradition of the prophetic schools,’³⁸ as seen in the narratives of the early monarchical prophets (e.g. 1 Sam. 15:10; 2 Sam. 7:4; 1 Kgs. 13:20), and the contemporary practice found in official communiqués. This ‘word’ is not a hypostatic entity, nor is a focus on the ‘word of Yahweh’ necessarily evidence of an underlying belief in spirit possession.

b) Visions

We now turn our attention to the visions that the book portrays the prophet as experiencing. These are important for an analysis of the relationship of Yahweh’s רִיָּה to the word of Yahweh coming to the prophet, since Yahweh’s רִיָּה at points in the book is explicitly linked with the visions, and Kaufmann distinguishes between spirit-inspired visions and the word that comes to the prophet within them: ‘The spirit of prophecy also prepares him [the prophet] to receive the divine word – to see visions, to hear the divine voice in dreams or ecstatic slumber. But the source of prophecy proper is other than these activities. It is in the revelation of God.’³⁹ In this section, I argue that they are not simply vehicles for Yahweh’s word to come, but can in themselves be understood as

³⁶ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p145 n22. He does not attribute these to a Deuteronomistic redaction of Ezekiel, since he regards the Ephraimite portrayal of Ezekiel (i.e. a prophet like Moses to whom elders come and inquire; intercession is forbidden to him) as present in every layer. Thus, for Wilson, Ezekiel had Deuteronomistic influence on him before being exiled, though he retains a distinctive Zadokite element. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, pp284-85.

³⁷ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p235; cf. p226 for a similar statement about Hosea. Carroll questions the ‘appropriateness of fit between spirit possession cults and biblical prophecy’ because ‘spirit possession seems to be a minor element in the prophetic texts’. See R.P. Carroll, ‘Prophecy and Society’, in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. R.E. Clements, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p218.

³⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p145; cf. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p10.

³⁹ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p99.

‘speech events’. Before I can make the case for this, we need first to identify the visions.

We observed above that Zimmerli identified five main vision units. Three of those, the longest vision complexes, are introduced with the phrase *מִרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים* (1:1-3:15; 8:1-11:25; 40:1-48:35), with *אֱלֹהִים* being almost certainly a subjective genitive, ‘divine vision’ or ‘vision given by God’ given the subject matter in chapters 8-11 and 40-48.⁴⁰

The opening vision complex is marked off by the word-event formula in 3:16, and is made up of a report of the vision *per se* in 1:4-28b α , followed by a report of the words Yahweh spoke to commission Ezekiel (though with a brief reversion to visionary encounter in 2:8-3:3 and again in 3:12-15).

The second of these vision complexes introduced by *מִרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים* occurs in chs. 8-11. Although there are clear signs of disjunction within these chapters (e.g. formally, the word-event formula in 11:14; in terms of content, the survival of 26 prominent men who ought to be already dead (11:1, 13; cf. 9:3-11)), the chiasmic order apparent in 8:1-4 and 11:22-25 clearly marks out the complex as one literary unit.⁴¹

The third of these occurs in chs. 40-48. Again, there are clear signs of discontinuity, notoriously, one might say, around the pro-Zadokite material in ch. 44 and around the organisation of the text in chs. 45-46. Such discontinuities led Tuell to observe, ‘Attractive as it may be to hold for a single interpretive principle explaining all of chapters 40-48, the text itself is too vague, too disparate in nature, too haphazardly presented for such a single-theme approach to be relevant.’⁴²

Stevenson, however, observes rightly that ‘interpreters evaluate the visionary character of the text on the basis of their own assumptions about what an “authentic vision” is supposed to be, whether the vision was a real experience or a literary fiction, whether authentic visions contain legislation, and so on.’⁴³ As it stands, the text has been put together as a narrative account of a vision. It is with this perspective, rather than with an emphasis on its redactional history, that chs. 40-48 need to be understood as ‘visions given by God’. Within this, there are descriptions of what the prophet saw, and what the prophet heard.

⁴⁰ Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp84-85 (on 1:1). He prefers the rendering ‘divine vision’ to ‘visions of God’ for three reasons. First, in Ezekiel *אֱלֹהִים* is not usually a proper noun, but rather an ‘appellative, “divinity.”’ Secondly, the vision is ‘not so much of God’ as of ‘divine, heavenly realities.’ Thirdly, the plural *מִרְאוֹת* is ‘not a true plural, but a “plural of generalisation.”’ For the genitive of the author as ‘subjective genitive’, see JM §129d and *IBHS*, 9.5.1c.

⁴¹ Cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp129-37; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp272-76.

⁴² Steven S. Tuell, ‘The Temple Vision of Ezekiel 40-48: A Program for Restoration?’, *Proceedings Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society* 2 (1982), p98, cited in Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, p6. It is evident from his later book (Tuell, *Law of the Temple*) that he subsequently changed his mind significantly.

⁴³ Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, p157 n38.

The fourth visionary encounter to be identified, the second that occurs in the book, is that classified by Zimmerli as occurring from 3:22-5:17.⁴⁴ The end of the unit is marked by the word-event formula in 6:1. Allen observes that the pattern followed here mirrors that in 1:1-3:15, with an ‘introductory divine vision (3:22-24a)...followed by a divine speech (3:24b-5:17).’⁴⁵ Although a number of scholars see 4:1 as the start of a new section,⁴⁶ the formulaic markers noted above, and the presence of the ‘hand of Yahweh’ (3:22), which is characteristic of visions in Ezekiel, mark this out as a vision complex, with the vision proper limited to a brief description of Yahweh’s glory in v.23, but within which Yahweh’s word comes.⁴⁷

The fifth vision which can be identified in the book, the fourth to occur, is that in 37:1-14. While there is no explicit mention of a vision in 37:1, it is clear that the incident with the dry bones takes place within a vision, since the introduction closely mirrors that of the vision in ch. 40,⁴⁸ the events that are described could not be conceived as literal events, and ‘the frequent use of וַיִּהְיֶה throughout the passage as well as וַיִּרְאֵהוּ in v.8 give additional support to such a reading.’⁴⁹

The five visions in Ezekiel are not introduced by the word-event formula, as we have seen, but by the ‘hand of Yahweh’ upon the prophet,⁵⁰ by Ezekiel seeing (1:1, 4; 8:2; cf. 3:23), and in particular by וַיִּהְיֶה followed by a description of what Ezekiel saw.⁵¹ This does not mean, though, necessarily that a vision event *in toto* cannot be understood as Yahweh’s speech or discourse, nor that there are not close links between individual visions within a vision event and word. In 11:25, for example, the vision that Ezekiel has seen is described at the close as ‘all the דְּבָרַי יְהוָה that he had shown me.’ Yahweh’s communication is not simply restricted to words uttered – the visions within the vision event can also be understood as divine speech. This is not based woodenly on the observation that because דְּבָר occurs, it must mean ‘word’. Rather, the understanding

⁴⁴ Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, p515. In his commentary, Zimmerli does not identify the unit specifically as a *visionary* encounter, and regards the unit as starting with 3:16a, while 3:16b-21 he treats separately, as a ‘redactional insertion’ (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p154).

⁴⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p55. He regards the unit as starting in v.16, but notes the difficulties surrounding the first section of the literary unit (3:16b-21).

⁴⁶ E.g. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p162; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, tr. C. Quin, OTL, (London, SCM Press, 1970), p80; Ronald E. Clements, *Ezekiel*, (Louisville, Westminster John Knox, 1996), p20.

⁴⁷ Odell questions whether ‘oral speech forms continue to govern the development of literary forms’, and has reservations about treating 1:1-3:15 and 3:16-5:17 as ‘two separate units because they were crafted from two separate genres’ (Margaret S. Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll’, *JBL* 117 (1998), p230). While it is of course true that they are linked together in a number of ways (such as the appearance of Yahweh’s glory and the agency of רִיחַ in setting the prophet on his feet (2:2; 3:24), such that within the literary work the individual units may have been woven into a larger compositional unit, nonetheless the sharp lines marking direct discourse in Ezekiel do argue for treating them as in some sense independent units.

⁴⁸ In particular, the phrase ‘the hand of Yahweh was upon me’ and the striking use of הִנֵּיחַ (usually ‘he gave rest to’) in the sense of הִנִּיחַ (‘he set down’). An alternative is that MT ‘misvocalizes’ (Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p367).

⁴⁹ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p201.

⁵⁰ Ezek. 1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1.

⁵¹ Ezek. 1:4, 15; 2:9; 3:23; 8:2, 4 and frequently in ch. 8; 9:2, 11; 10:1, 9; 11:1; 37:2, 7, 8; 40:3, 5, 17, 24; 42:8; 43:2, 5; 44:4; 46:19, 21; 47:1, 2, 7.

of how it is possible to 'say' something needs to be expanded. Critical in this expansion of understanding is speech act theory.

According to speech act theory, developed first by Austin,⁵² and then in particular by Searle,⁵³ 'speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior. To put it more briskly, talking is performing acts according to rules.'⁵⁴ There are three aspects of speaking. First, there is the *locutionary utterance*, 'which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to 'meaning' in the traditional sense.'⁵⁵ Secondly, there is the *illocutionary utterance*,⁵⁶ which is an utterance that does not describe anything, but 'is, or is a part of, the doing of an action.'⁵⁷ A typical example is that of a person declaring, 'I hereby name this ship "Josephine."' No other action needs to be performed for the ship to acquire the name Josephine, though it is of course true that there need to be certain conditions in place for the naming to be 'happy'⁵⁸ or 'successful.'⁵⁹ The focus here is on the *force* of the utterance, and answers the question, 'What are you doing *in* saying that?' or 'What *kind* of speech act is it?' Finally, there is the *perlocutionary utterance*. This answers the question, 'What are you doing *by* saying that?' and explains what is the result, or effect, of saying these words. It can cover both intentional and unintentional effects. Cohen summarises Austin's short formula to distinguish the three clearly: 'a locution is an act *of* saying something, an illocution is an act done *in* saying something, a perlocution is an act done *by* saying something.'⁶⁰

Since the early work by Austin and Searle, the study of speech acts has moved on significantly.⁶¹ Nonetheless, still fundamental is the difference between locutionary acts,

⁵² J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. J.O. Urmson, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁵³ E.g. John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1969); John R. Searle, 'What Is A Speech Act?', in *The Philosophy of Language*, ed. J.R. Searle, (London, OUP, 1971), pp39-53; John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1979); John R. Searle and Daniel Vanderveken, *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1985).

⁵⁴ Searle, *Speech Acts*, p22.

⁵⁵ Austin, *How To Do Things*, p108.

⁵⁶ Also known as a 'performative utterance'.

⁵⁷ Austin, *How To Do Things*, p5.

⁵⁸ Since illocutionary acts are actions, they are not so much true or false, but are carried out properly or not. The term Austin used was 'happy' if the appropriate conventions were in place. Conventions for naming a ship would include, as one example, that the one who does the naming has the publicly recognised right to name that ship. For Austin's list of conventions for the 'happiness' of a particular illocutionary act, see *How To Do Things*, pp14-15.

⁵⁹ Searle and Vanderveken, *Foundations*, p13.

⁶⁰ Ted Cohen, 'Illocutions and Perlocutions', *Foundations of Language* 9 (1973), p493 (his emphasis). Cohen points out that this is inadequate, because the "in"/ "by" distinction...will not underwrite the illocution / perlocution distinction...for it does not unfailingly mark a distinction between what is conventional and what is not.' (p493). Nonetheless, the formula generally seems to have been accepted as an approximation.

⁶¹ See e.g. Hugh C. White, 'Introduction: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism', *Semeia* 41 (1988), pp1-24; Yule, *Pragmatics*; John Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1995); Richard Briggs, *Words in Action*, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 2002); the essays by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Dan R. Stiver and Nicholas Wolterstorff in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, & Karl Möller, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol. 2, (Carlisle, Paternoster / Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2001).

‘acts of uttering or inscribing words’,⁶² and illocutionary acts, ‘acts performed *by way of* locutionary acts, acts such as asking, asserting, commanding, promising, and so forth’.⁶³ With this distinction, as Wolterstorff observes,

‘though of course such actions as asking, asserting, commanding, and promising, can be performed by way of uttering or inscribing sentences, they can be performed in many other ways as well. One can say something by producing a blaze, or smoke, or a sequence of light-flashes. Even more interesting: one can tell somebody something by deputizing someone else to speak on one’s behalf. In short, contemporary speech-action theory opens up the possibility of a whole new way of thinking about God speaking’.⁶⁴

In this sense, it is quite legitimate to regard a vision as a ‘word’ of Yahweh, as an illocutionary act, or, better, an illocutionary event, of God ‘speaking’. Such a view is confirmed by other instances in Ezekiel, and in other parts of the Old Testament, where the close links between divine visions and the word of Yahweh are apparent.

In 12:21-8, visions seem almost interchangeable with the word of Yahweh. This is apparent in the response Yahweh gives to two current proverbs. In 12:22, the proverb of the people lampoons the ineffectiveness, even falsehood, of the divine visions relayed by Ezekiel or perhaps by Jeremiah, “‘The days are prolonged, and every vision comes to nothing.’”⁶⁵ Yahweh declares there will be an end to such cynicism by asserting that he will speak the *word* that he will speak, and will fulfil it (12:25). A parallel is implicit between the divine vision (חֲזוֹן) in the past that has not come to anything, and the word (דְּבָר) which will come to pass in the future. Such a parallel is reinforced by the slightly awkward phrase כָּל-חֲזוֹן וְדְבָר (12:23b), rendered ‘that which every vision proclaims’ by Zimmerli,⁶⁶ ‘the content of every revelation’ by Allen,⁶⁷ and ‘the event of every vision’ by Greenberg.⁶⁸ However it is to be rendered, the explicit link between word and vision is established. In 12:27, the second proverb relates more explicitly to Ezekiel. The house of Israel has been bemoaning the fact that the vision Ezekiel had received was for the distant future, “‘The vision that he sees is for many years ahead; he prophesies for

⁶² Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, p13.

⁶³ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, p13 (his emphasis).

⁶⁴ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, p13.

⁶⁵ That the ‘yours’ in the first part of 12:22 (“‘Mortal, what is this proverb of yours about the land of Israel, which says...’”) is not simply Ezekiel is clear from לְכֶם. Whether this first oracle relates to words that are being said ‘in the land of Israel’ or ‘about the land of Israel’ is debated. The phrase in MT is עַל-אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל. Arguments in favour of ‘in’ include the preposition בַּ in v.23, which is more probably locative (‘in Israel’), and the parallel with 33:24, where the same expression (עַל-אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל) occurs locatively and Ezekiel similarly has access to the words of those left behind in Jerusalem. On this reading, the unfulfilled visions are perhaps those of Jeremiah. On the other hand, the inclusion of Ezekiel in the phrase points strongly to the saying being prominent in exile (so Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p196), and the phrase can also mean ‘concerning the land of Israel’ (Ezek. 36:6).

⁶⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p279.

⁶⁷ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p185.

⁶⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p226. Some scholars emend the MT here, making וְדְבָר into a verb (cf. Syr.) to ensure a verb clause. For a concise list of attempts, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p279.

distant times.” Ezekiel is told to reply, “none of my words will be delayed any longer (לֹא־תִמְשָׁךְ עוֹד כָּל־דְּבָרִי)” (v.28).⁶⁹

The linking between word and vision is also found elsewhere in the book. In chapter 13, the charge against the false prophets in 13:1ff. is that they say ‘hear the word of Yahweh’ (שָׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה), when they have not ‘seen’ (רָאוּ) anything (13:2-3). Finally, in 7:26, a prophet is clearly expected to have visions (cf. Jer. 18:18, where a prophet is marked by a ‘word’). This pattern is reflected elsewhere in the Old Testament. As Block notes, ‘several prophetic books that consist largely of oracles are formally introduced as “the visions” of the respective prophets (Isaiah, Obadiah, Nahum). Others speak of words or oracles that the individual “saw” (Amos, Micah, Habakkuk).’⁷⁰ The ‘word of Yahweh’ could come equally through a vision or through a direct ‘word’ (cf. 1 Sam. 3:1).⁷¹

In summary, Yahweh addresses the prophet both by vision and by word. Both should be conceived as Yahweh’s speech to the prophet which takes place at a particular historical point. The divine word in visions is not to be restricted simply to divine speech *within* visions, but encompasses the visions themselves. Such an address, while not audible to onlookers, is perceived to originate in Yahweh. The relationship between Yahweh’s רִוַּח and the word that comes to the prophet will be explored further in the next chapter.

2. Ezekiel addressing his audience

The second place in the book where Yahweh’s word is to be found is in Ezekiel addressing his audience, or, to be more precise, in Ezekiel being instructed to address his audience. As we noted above, narrated interaction between the prophet and his audience is negligible within the book, since almost everything is subsumed within Yahweh addressing Ezekiel, the rhetorical event.⁷² Nonetheless, it is possible to isolate such speech, since the book of Ezekiel makes strenuous efforts to mark the different voices. As Meier notes, ‘A number of prophetic texts are simply uninterested in the marking of divine speech and speech in general...At the other extreme stands the book of Ezekiel with the most extensively standardized marking of DD [Direct Discourse] in the entire Bible’.⁷³ Significant attention is necessary here because it is possible that any

⁶⁹ For the plural subject with the fem. sg. verb, see GKC 145k; see also Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p188.

⁷⁰ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p111.

⁷¹ It is interesting to note in this regard that Jeremiah’s critique of the false prophets in Jer. 23:16 was not that they saw visions, but that the visions they saw came from their own minds (מִלְבָּבָם), and not from the *mouth* of Yahweh. It was possible not merely to *see* Yahweh’s word, but to *hear* Yahweh’s visions. For the prophet ‘seeing’ Yahweh’s word, see Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p261; Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p73.

⁷² A notable exception is 11:25, where Ezekiel comments, ‘And I told the exiles all the things that Yahweh had shown me.’ The book’s addressees have just been given, therefore, the content of what Ezekiel told the exiles.

⁷³ Meier, *Speaking*, p324.

relationship between רִיחַ and the prophetic word uttered in the rhetorical event may simply be a product of the role of רִיחַ and the prophetic event.

In this section, after exploring the different ways in which the hypothetical rhetorical event is marked, I shall focus more specifically on three formulae, the citation formula, the signatory formula and the call-to-attention formula. I shall argue that the ‘messenger formula’ is not necessarily an indicator that the prophets saw themselves as messengers. I shall also argue that all three formulae indicate that what the prophet is saying in the rhetorical event is not simply a report of what Yahweh has said, but an instantiation of Yahweh speaking in the present. Finally, I shall argue that the words Ezekiel is to utter are *verbatim* with the words he has received.

The book of Ezekiel as a whole first marks the words that Ezekiel is to utter by the command of Yahweh to ‘say’.⁷⁴ This is expressed either by the imperative אָמַר,⁷⁵ by the imperative דִּבֶּר,⁷⁶ or, when preceded by the imperative of another verb enjoining Ezekiel to speak, by the *w^eqatal*, וְאָמַרְתָּ.⁷⁷ Preceding imperatives include דִּבֶּר (‘speak’),⁷⁸ הִנָּבֵא (‘prophesy’),⁷⁹ הוֹדֵעַ (‘make known’),⁸⁰ חוֹדַר חִידָה וּמִשַׁל מְשָׁל (‘propound a riddle and speak an allegory’),⁸¹ שָׂא קִינָה (‘raise a lamentation’).⁸² There are a number of occasions where there is no explicit command for Ezekiel to speak in the MT, even though what follows is clearly Yahweh’s speech, introduced by the formulaic יְהוָה (אָרְנִי) אָמַר.⁸³ I shall discuss the significance of these below.

Such a command by Yahweh for Ezekiel to speak does not necessarily mean, of course, that Ezekiel is to mark as *Yahweh’s* words the words he is to say. Indeed, in some cases it is debatable whether they should be understood as Yahweh’s words, even

⁷⁴ Much of this data is replicated in Meier, *Speaking*, pp230ff., but Meier omits some examples (such as the lamentation in 19:1) and his primary scope is only Ezek. 11:14-39:29.

⁷⁵ Ezek. 6:11; 11:5, 16, 17; 12:10, 11, 23, 28; 13:11; 14:6; 17:9, 12; 20:30; 21:14 [ET 21:9] (though this is preceded by a command to ‘prophesy and say’ (הִנָּבֵא וְאָמַרְתָּ) and the citation formula); 22:24; 24:21; 28:2; 31:2; 33:10, 11, 12, 25; 36:22; 39:17.

⁷⁶ Ezek. 12:23; 37:19, 21.

⁷⁷ Note that in Ezek. 11:5, the imperative אָמַר introducing the words Ezekiel is to say is preceded by the imperative הִנָּבֵא. However, the sequence is broken by a narrative report of Yahweh’s רִיחַ falling on the prophet. Note also that on occasions וְאָמַרְתָּ is preceded not by an imperative enjoining speech, but by a participle (Ezek. 2:4 (‘I am sending you’)), by another finite verb form (3:27 (‘I will open your mouth’); 12:18-19 (‘You shall eat...and drink’)), by a (projected) report of the words of Ezekiel’s addressees (21:12 [ET 21:7]), by another *w^eqatal* form of a verb of speaking, which in turn is preceded by an imperative (3:11), or by an imperative which does not enjoin speech (Ezek. 44:5-6 (‘mark well and look closely’)).

⁷⁸ Ezek. 14:4; 20:3, 27; 33:2; the instance in 29:3 is also preceded by the imperative הִנָּבֵא.

⁷⁹ Ezek. 6:2; 11:4; 13:2, 17; 21:2 [ET 20:46], 7 [ET 21:2], 14 [ET 21:9], 19 [ET 21:14], 33 [ET 21:28]; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 30:2; 34:2; 35:2; 36:1, 3, 6; 37:4, 9; 37:12; 38:2, 14; 39:1. Of these, the imperative הִנָּבֵא is preceded by ‘set your face’ in Ezek. 6:2; 13:17; 21:2 [ET 20:46], 7 [ET 21:2]; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 35:2; 38:2 (cf. 4:7, where there is the same motif, without direct discourse following).

⁸⁰ Ezek. 16:2-3; 20:4-5 (הוֹדִיעֵם); 22:2-3 (וְהוֹדִיעָתָה) - preceded by a direct question, ‘will you judge?’).

⁸¹ Ezek. 17:2-3; cf. 24:2-3 (וּמִשַׁל...מְשָׁל) - preceded by a command to ‘write’).

⁸² Ezek. 19:1; 27:2-3; 28:12; 32:2.

⁸³ Ezek. 5:5ff.; 7:2ff.; 14:21-23; 15:6ff.; 21:29-32 [ET 21:24-27]; 22:19ff.; 23:22-35; 26:3ff.; 39:17ff.; 43:18-27. Observing that in some of these instances (7:2; 15:6; 39:17) the LXX includes the command to speak, Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p194) takes the omission to be an ‘original ellipse’ subsequently filled out in the versions. Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p247 n19. Block observes the same data, but does not draw specific conclusions.

though Yahweh has instructed Ezekiel to speak them, because Yahweh is not marked as the speaker when they are uttered. So for example in Ezek. 21:12b α [ET 21:7], Ezekiel is told how to respond to the question asked by his addressees about his moaning: ‘And when they say to you, “Why do you moan?” you shall say, “Because of the news that has come...”’. Although Ezekiel is commanded to speak these words, and Yahweh gives them to him, the words cannot be understood to be the words of Yahweh in the same way as the words that Ezekiel is said to relay to his addressees specifically as Yahweh’s words. This is because they are marked differently.⁸⁴ Presumably, the author of the book of Ezekiel would have his readers understand these words as the (future) words of the prophet, although within the book they are subsumed within the word coming to the prophet.

After the command to speak there comes on ten occasions the call-to-attention formula, which we shall look at below. On each of these occasions, and in the vast majority of instances where Ezekiel is given the words of Yahweh to utter, such words are introduced by the formulaic $\text{כֹּה אָמַר (אֲדַבֵּר) יְהוָה}$. This serves to identify Yahweh’s voice in the (hypothetical) rhetorical event in a very consistent fashion.⁸⁵ The only places where Yahweh’s words that Ezekiel is told explicitly to utter are not prefaced by this formula are 17:12, where Ezekiel is instructed to give an explanation for the riddle found in 17:3-10; 21:12b β [ET 21:7], where Yahweh’s words are explicitly identified as such by the signatory formula at the end of the verse; 22:24, where Ezekiel is commanded to speak against the land; 33:2, where Yahweh reintroduces the watchman motif; and 33:11, 12, where Yahweh reaffirms his lack of pleasure in the death of the wicked and the ineffectiveness of the righteousness of the righteous to save the people when they transgress.

Given the high degree of consistency in the marking of divine speech throughout the rest of the book, we must look at how the book portrays the rhetorical event by examining in particular the citation (or messenger) formula, the signatory formula, and the call-to-attention formula.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Other instances include 19:2, where Ezekiel is told what to say in his lament for the princes of Israel; 32:2b, where Yahweh, having instructed Ezekiel to raise up a lamentation over the king of Egypt, does not introduce his own verdict until the citation formula at the start of v.3. Care should be taken, however, here, since such precise demarcation of divine speech based on the citation formula is not always followed in the Old Testament. The most striking example is found in 2 Kgs. 1:2-6, where the location of the citation formula shifts as the narrative moves from the commissioning of Elijah to his fulfilment of that commission. See Meier, *Speaking*, pp295-96.

⁸⁵ Cf. Meier, *Speaking*, p231-34.

⁸⁶ See especially the work by Meier, *Speaking*, pp230-242 on Ezekiel, and pp273-322 on marking divine speech in general. Meier’s work on Ezekiel is hampered by a focus almost exclusively on 11:14-39:29, given that divine speech is also found outside these chapters. It is not surprising that divine speech is marked somewhat differently *within* divine visions (though I note that within the book 11:14-23 is subsumed within the divine vision). Where the formal units are not divine visions, the pattern discernible in 11:14-39:29 is also present (i.e. in chapters 6 and 7).

a) The citation formula

The citation (or messenger) formula (כֹּה אָמַר (יְהוָה) - 'Thus has (the Lord) Yahweh declared') occurs over four hundred times in the Old Testament. Without the double divine designation, it occurs almost three hundred times in the Old Testament; over half of those occurrences are in Jeremiah. Only three are in the book of Ezekiel (11:5; 21:8 [21:3 – ET]; 30:6). The expanded phrase, 'Thus has the Lord Yahweh declared' occurs more than one hundred and thirty times in the Old Testament. Of these, over ninety percent are in the book of Ezekiel. Other occurrences occur in Isaiah (eight, of which five are in 1-39), Jeremiah (7:20), Amos (3:11; 5:3) and Obadiah (1:1). Neither version appears in Hosea, Joel, Habakkuk or Zephaniah, and there is only one occurrence in each of Obadiah, Nahum and Malachi. Though the author of the book of Ezekiel does not coin the expanded version, nor is it unique to the book, yet he makes the phrase his own. Though it does point to 'the subservient role of the prophet,'⁸⁷ it speaks also of the rebelliousness of the people against the one who *is* the Lord Yahweh even though they do not acknowledge him as such.⁸⁸

On most occasions, the formula occurs within a unit introduced by the word-event formula. It can occur, though, within a vision unit (e.g. 11:5). It can function either at the outset of the message that the prophet is to declare, or it can punctuate the message itself, often introducing a new oracle that Ezekiel is to utter within the word that has come to Ezekiel (e.g. 13:3, 8, 13). Further, on some occasions Ezekiel is told to say, 'Thus has the Lord Yahweh declared', while on other occasions, as we observed above (see footnote 83), the citation formula suddenly appears within the unit without any hint that the situation has moved from Ezekiel hearing material which explains a situation to his hearing material he is to proclaim and announce. For example, after the word-event formula in 15:1, vv.2-5 appear to convey Yahweh explaining to Ezekiel how charred wood (i.e. the destroyed Jerusalem) is useless. Only in v.6 does the citation formula come. There is no instruction for Ezekiel to speak anything, yet the presence of the citation formula, along with the 'you' plural in v.7, shows that these words are meant for an audience wider than Ezekiel. The citation formula refers to the putative rhetorical event but does not have the explicit command, 'say', presumably because this ellipsis serves to strengthen the links between the word that came to the prophet and the word that the prophet uttered. The gap between the prophetic event and the rhetorical event is systematically eliminated by such a strategy. Here is evidence of the book itself serving a rhetorical purpose. The focus is not so much on an account of Ezekiel's life and ministry, as to make the force of that word present to the readers and hearers of the book.

⁸⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p34.

⁸⁸ Cf. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp64-65. For more on the rebelliousness of the people, see on page 154ff. below.

There are two somewhat different perspectives on the formula in current scholarship. Differences over the suggested *Sitz im Leben* of the formula lead to different conclusions about how much theological freight can be carried by it. On the one hand is the view that the formula is a messenger formula. This has been most extensively expressed by Westermann, who comments,

‘If one can begin the inquiry about the speeches of the prophets with the basic knowledge that they are messengers who bring a message and speak in the style of a message, then there is a foundation of formulas, speech forms, and speeches which have been passed down, where one can be assured of encountering the self-understanding of the prophets and of being on solid ground.’⁸⁹

For him, this is ‘nothing more than a methodological starting point; but this basis should now be confidently accepted.’⁹⁰ Such a viewpoint has been accepted amongst most OT scholars, as seen for example, in Koch,⁹¹ Zimmerli,⁹² dictionary articles,⁹³ and in the glossary of ‘genres’ in Sweeney’s commentary on Isaiah 1-39.⁹⁴

Westermann has used this ‘starting point’ as one strand in his argument that the prophetic ‘announcement of judgement’ (*Gerichtsankündigung*) ‘is something essentially different from the threat’ because ‘a threat is transmitted very poorly by a messenger’.⁹⁵ He has also used the same ‘starting point’, that the prophets were messengers, to argue that, since ‘it is impossible for a message to be received in a state of ecstasy...in no case may one assume that the reception of the messenger’s speech occurred in ecstasy.’⁹⁶

More significant for our purposes are two other possible implications of regarding the formula as a messenger formula, and the self-understanding of the prophets thereby necessarily as messengers. First, just as Westermann argues from the starting point of messengers in the ANE to draw certain conclusions about prophets and prophecy, so it could be possible to treat the relationship between the words spoken in the prophetic event and the rhetorical event in a similar fashion to the relationship between the words that a messenger received and the words which the messenger delivered. That of course would potentially raise interesting questions about the relationship between Yahweh’s *דבר* and the word of Yahweh in the prophetic event, on the one hand, and the relationship between Yahweh’s *דבר* and the word of Yahweh in the rhetorical event, on the other, in particular, about the verbatim nature of the words. Secondly, and related to

⁸⁹ Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, tr. H.C. White, (London, Lutterworth, 1967), p39. He acknowledges he is building on the work of Köhler and Lindblom.

⁹⁰ Westermann, *Basic Forms*, p39.

⁹¹ Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method*, tr. S.M. Cupitt, (London, Adam & Charles Black, 1969), pp189-90.

⁹² Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, tr. D.E. Green, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1978), p102.

⁹³ Jerome A. Lund, ‘אמר’, *NIDOTTE* 1, pp444-45; H.H. Schmid, ‘אמר’ *mr* to say’, *TLOT* 1, pp159-62.

⁹⁴ Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, *FOTL* 16, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996), p524.

⁹⁵ Westermann, *Basic Forms*, pp66-67.

⁹⁶ Westermann, *Basic Forms*, p63.

this first point, within this viewpoint of the prophet as messenger, the formula is sometimes translated in the present tense, 'Thus says PN', despite the perfect אָמַר.⁹⁷ So, for example, Schmid observes how with verbs of speaking, there is the possibility of 'expressing the coincidence of statement and behavior' with the 'perfectum declarativum' ('I state hereby'), and he suggests that, 'the formula *koh 'āmar yhw'hi* "thus says Yahweh (herewith, through me)" may also belong here.'⁹⁸ In other words, at the moment the messenger relays the message, the sender of the message is *also* speaking, through his messenger. On such an understanding, when Ezekiel speaks as Yahweh's messenger, he is not simply reporting words that Yahweh has uttered, but Yahweh is uttering them at that moment through him. Here again there is potential significance for an understanding of a relationship between Yahweh's רִיחַ and Yahweh's word.

The two most comprehensive recent disagreements with this perspective, that the *Sitz im Leben* of the so-called 'messenger formula' is the messenger in the ancient world are those works by Greene and Meier. Greene takes issue with the notion that prophets are messengers, not least because "messenger speech" [the form-critical category] was neither equal to nor the equivalent of message.'⁹⁹ Meier's basic thesis at this point is that the so-called messenger formula 'PN אָמַר כֹּה is not diagnostic of messenger speech and cannot be used in support of the metaphor of prophet as a messenger' since 'there is no speech form for the introduction of messages in the Hebrew Bible that unequivocally points to messenger activity.'¹⁰⁰ Instead, it needs to be understood within a rather less theologically-rich framework as introducing the 'quoting' of 'another's words that have already been spoken.'¹⁰¹ Therefore, 'as a citation of another's words which have already been spoken, we can be spared the over-theologizing of the verb tense when applied to God's speech.'¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Such a comment is not intended to show my understanding of the Hebrew verbal system as anchored within the confines of a narrow, tense-based approach. Nonetheless, there needs to be an explanation of why אָמַר is translated as 'says' or 'said'. For work on the Hebrew verbal system to 1990, see the summary in *IBHS*, Chapter 29; see also, more recently, Yoshinobu Endo, *The Verbal System of Classical Hebrew in the Joseph Story: An Approach from Discourse Analysis*, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* 32, (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1996); Tal Goldfajn, *Word Order and Time in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, Oxford Theological Monographs, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁹⁸ 'אָמַר', *TLOT* 1, p160. Without using the technical terms associated with speech-act theory, Schmid observes how verbs of speaking can also *do* something. They are a particular kind of performative utterance.

⁹⁹ John T. Greene, *The Role of the Messenger and Message in the Ancient Near East*, *Brown Judaic Studies* 169 (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1989), p226. Although his observation is apposite that form-critical scholars sometimes are sloppy in applying the term 'message' to categories broader than is warranted on the basis of an analysis of ancient near-eastern messages (pp139-46), his work suffers from his own admission (p207) that the sources for his research were letters, rather than narratives. Meier points out that the perspective that is received from letters is very different from that received from study of messengers embedded within narrative. See Samuel A. Meier, *The Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*, *HSM* 45 (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1988), p60.

¹⁰⁰ Meier, *Speaking*, p278.

¹⁰¹ Meier, *Speaking*, p290.

¹⁰² Meier, *Speaking*, p291.

Evidence usually garnered for the designation 'messenger formula' comes from two places. First, in the Old Testament, there are clear instances where an intermediary is commissioned with a message to take to a third-party. One of the most striking examples is in Gen. 32:3-5, where Jacob sends messengers before him to Esau. He instructs them to say upon encountering Esau, "Thus you shall say (כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן) to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob (כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב)...".¹⁰³ Secondly, there are examples in the ANE of a similar pattern. So for example Zimmerli, who locates the original *Sitz im Leben* of the 'messenger formulas' as well as the 'letter formulary' as being the dispatch of a messenger, observes that the letter is not so much A to B, but A instructing a messenger to tell B. He cites an example of this 'memorandum,' 'a letter from the governor Kibridagan to King Zimrilim of Mari begins: "To my lord [i.e., Zimrilim] say: Thus says Kibridagan...]"¹⁰⁴

Meier, while naturally acknowledging the data above, argues strongly for a different interpretation of the data.

First, he observes that the almost total lack of occurrence of the formula in many of the prophetic books points to the fact that 'even within prophetic circles (or circles depicting prophetic activity) there was not a uniform understanding of this phrase and its significance, or...prophecy is a considerably variegated phenomenon.'¹⁰⁵ That is, if it be granted that the formula indicates the self-understanding of those who used it, 'these prophets who did not use the term must not have perceived of themselves as messengers from God, or, if they did, they did not underscore this perception as of great import.'¹⁰⁶

Secondly, the use of the phrase by messengers is optional.¹⁰⁷ He comments that while it is certainly true that at points Old Testament narrative does depict messengers using this phrase, most messengers do not use it.¹⁰⁸ There are broadly two kinds of absence. First, there are those instances where the messengers do not explicitly identify the source of their words.¹⁰⁹ Since 'messengers function in a communication process where a source A (the sender) employs a channel B (the messenger) to reach a target C

¹⁰³ See also Num. 20:14 (Moses sending messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom); 22:16 (officials from Balak coming to Balaam); Judg. 11:15 (Jephthah sending messengers to the king of the Ammonites); 2 Kgs. 1:11 (a captain conveying the king of Samaria's command to Elijah); 18:19, 31 (Rabshakeh's announcement to Hezekiah and then the people of the words of the King of Assyria); 2 Kgs. 19:3 (Eliakim, Shebna and the senior priests convey Hezekiah's words to Isaiah).

¹⁰⁴ Friedrich Ellermeier, *Prophetie in Mari und Israel*, (Herzberg, Jungfer, 1968), p29, cited in Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, p102.

¹⁰⁵ Meier, *Speaking*, p274.

¹⁰⁶ Meier, *Speaking*, p278.

¹⁰⁷ Meier is not wholly consistent here. On p186 of *Messenger*, he comments, 'In biblical literature, one may assume from commands to messengers and from actual performance that they prefaced their message with the formula "Thus says PN"', while on p191, he comments, 'The biblical literature, due to its variety, spontaneity and total lack of adherence to any consistent forms (even "Thus says PN" is more often than not omitted and on one occasion occurs twice), may provide the best insight into actual messenger performance.' In other words, there is variety in 'actual messenger performance', not consistency.

¹⁰⁸ See Meier, *Speaking*, pp278-79.

¹⁰⁹ E.g. Num. 22:5.

(the addressee)',¹¹⁰ it would of course have been essential for some form of self-identification. Without such a self-identification, 'the target C has no clue as to who the message is from.'¹¹¹ Therefore its general absence shows that 'it is an optional narrative feature that biblical story-telling found largely irrelevant for the purposes of its art.'¹¹² It is not possible to make clear judgements on the basis of these absences. There is, however, a second, and more significant, kind of absence. This is where the messengers do identify themselves, but not with the 'messenger formula'. In 1 Sam. 25:40, messengers (cf. v.42) sent by David identify themselves as sent by David, but there is no messenger formula. It is true that the words they utter do not contain the direct speech of David, but this example makes it clear that the 'messenger formula' is not a necessary condition for a messenger.¹¹³

Thirdly, the messenger formula is not the exclusive preserve either of messengers, or indeed of situations where there is an intermediary. So, one problem with calling it 'the messenger formula' is that one may think the phrase was particular to messengers but Meier argues that 'the phrase has a prehistory antedating its appearance in Hebrew texts where messengers use it.'¹¹⁴ A correlation between occurrences in the messenger speeches in the Old Testament and in the prophets' speeches does not imply a causal link between the two. There can be, and is, in Meier's view, an antecedent causal link. He observes that, in diverse genres in Akkadian, the cognate phrase *kītam iqbi* 'never' describes 'a message delivered by a messenger on behalf of another. It is simply a citation formula that marks a statement, often formal, made by an individual.'¹¹⁵ Further, the citation formula is used in other situations where there is no intermediary between two communicating parties, and therefore no message is being relayed. For example, in narrative, in 1 Sam. 9:9, 'the narrator quotes the typical words Israelites used to say when consulting a prophetic oracle: "Formerly in Israel thus said the man (שָׁלוֹם אָרְנִי שְׁלַחְנִי לְאֹמֵר) on his way (בְּלִכְחוֹ) to inquire of God, 'Come, let us go....'"¹¹⁶ This is simply a citation, not a situation involving messengers or intermediaries.

Perhaps more striking, the phrase occurs in the prophets without any link to messenger activity. Meier notes how 'words of Yahweh depicted as specifically addressed to the prophet may be introduced with the phrase, "Thus said the Lord to me" (כֹּה אָמַר אֱלֹהֵי אֲרָנִי; Isa 21:6)'.¹¹⁷ Again, this is no A→B→C situation here, with the

¹¹⁰ Meier, *Speaking*, p281.

¹¹¹ Meier, *Speaking*, p281.

¹¹² Meier, *Speaking*, p279.

¹¹³ Cf. also 2 Kgs. 5:22, and the fabricated words of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, to Naaman, introduced by 'Greetings! My master sent me, saying... (שָׁלוֹם אָרְנִי שְׁלַחְנִי לְאֹמֵר)'. Meier, *Messenger*, pp186-87 notes another example, 1 Sam. 4:16-17, where the self-identification is not by means of the 'messenger formula'. Here, though, the runner with news of the Israelites' defeat is not actually sent by anyone.

¹¹⁴ Meier, *Speaking*, p279.

¹¹⁵ Meier, *Speaking*, p280.

¹¹⁶ Meier, *Speaking*, p282. Meier gives other examples (2 Sam. 16:7; 19:1) and other places with the *yiqtol* form of אָמַר in the phrase כֹּה + אָמַר (Gen. 31:8; 1 Sam. 14:9, 10; 20:7, 22; 2 Sam. 15:26).

¹¹⁷ Meier, *Speaking*, p282. He also notes Isa. 8:11; 18:4; 21:16; 31:4 and Jer. 17:19.

messenger as B relaying the words of A to C. Isaiah is quoting what Yahweh has said to him.

Further, Meier argues that there is no need for the phrase ‘to me’ to demarcate this as different from a messenger situation. He notes a number of examples in Jeremiah where the phrase *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* occurs in an address meant for the prophet alone.

‘In Jer 30:1-3, Jeremiah is told to write in a book all the words that God had given to him. This is not a message from God for Jeremiah to pass on to others, but it is a command that he alone is to hear and obey. But it is introduced with the words, “Thus said Yahweh” (*כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*; 30:2).’¹¹⁸

In these occurrences, the citation formula speaks not of the rhetorical event, but of the prophetic event. On one occasion in the book of Ezekiel, it is possible that the formula introduces words meant for Ezekiel alone as part of the prophetic event. We observed above how the formula on occasions in the book of Ezekiel occurs without an antecedent command to ‘say’. We also noted that one rhetorical function of such instances, where in addition the words are clearly ultimately to be addressed to Ezekiel’s addressees, was to narrow the gap between prophetic and rhetorical event. In Ezek. 39:17, Ezekiel is told, ‘As for you, mortal, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Speak to the birds of every kind...’. The LXX characteristically includes a second command to ‘say’ (*εἰπὼν*) before the citation formula.¹¹⁹ There is some evidence within the MT of a second command to ‘say’ after the citation formula (21:14 [ET 21:9]; 21:23 [ET 21:18]), but as it stands, the MT in 39:17 is an example within Ezekiel of the citation formula being used in a situation where no message is involved, its context being the prophetic, not the rhetorical event.

Meier then refutes the suggestion that these last two sets of examples are variations of or derivations from the basic formula, *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה*, because ‘the unanimous evidence from the cognate phrase in Akkadian demonstrates that the phrase’s citation function is standard and demonstrably prior to any function as a “messenger formula” in the Bible.’¹²⁰

Fourthly, he argues that the ANE parallels have not been understood rightly, because ‘scholars have unfortunately confused a written epistolary style with the oral despatching of messengers.’¹²¹ There are a number of strands to his argument, but the main point is that, even if it be granted that the parallel in Akkadian is not with the cognate *kīam iqbi*, but with the particle *umma*, characteristic of the introduction of

¹¹⁸ Meier, *Speaking*, p283. Other places he notes are Jer. 26:2; 33:1-3, 23-26; 34:1-2a; 35:12-13; 37:6-7. To these can be added Hag. 2:10.

¹¹⁹ Cf. footnote 83 above.

¹²⁰ Meier, *Speaking*, p283.

¹²¹ Meier, *Speaking*, p284.

Mesopotamian letters, this particle 'typically introduces in Babylonian any quotation made by anyone, whether messenger or not.'¹²²

Finally, 'the repetition' of the phrase 'within single units', as found particularly in Ezekiel, Haggai and Zechariah, 'has no counterpart in messenger activity.'¹²³ Rather, it 'is attested as a literary phenomenon in royal inscriptions of the Persian period.'¹²⁴

In summary, Meier concludes that phrase does not by its very presence point to messenger activity. Usually it does not have a messenger function. 'One must look to the context to determine if messengers are using this formula as a part of their commission to identify the one who sent them. The formula is simply used to make citations of other's words.'¹²⁵ Meier's powerfully argued conclusions mean that Ezekiel cannot be assumed to be Yahweh's messenger merely by the use of this formula. He also insists that the translation of the verb must be 'past' because what is introduced is simply the citation of the words of another, uttered in the past.¹²⁶

This in turn leaves us with two main tasks or questions. The first one is whether Ezekiel is portrayed as Yahweh's messenger, given that the 'messenger formula' is probably better rendered 'citation formula'. The second is whether we are compelled by the designation 'citation formula' to regard the tense as past, such that the words spoken by the prophet in the rhetorical event are (merely) a *report* of words spoken to the prophet by Yahweh, or in fact Yahweh speaking *through* the prophet.

One problem with arguing that the prophets *en bloc* regard themselves as messengers is the lack of concern of many of them to identify the words of Yahweh, as opposed to their own. A further concern is that only in the post-exilic period are prophets clearly acknowledged as messengers.¹²⁷ While Ezekiel explicitly speaks of himself as a prophet, a נְבִיא (Ezek. 2:5; 33:33), he is nowhere explicitly designated a messenger of Yahweh. Nonetheless, there are three strands of evidence that would support the conclusion that Ezekiel is in some sense Yahweh's messenger.

First, there is in the book of Ezekiel the same care to identify and distinguish Yahweh's voice as that found in Haggai, a book that clearly speaks of Haggai as Yahweh's messenger (Hag. 1:13). While it is true that the citation formula is not the exclusive preserve of messengers, its consistent use by Ezekiel certainly mirrors the usage found amongst messengers elsewhere in the Old Testament, and mirrors that of one prophet who is explicitly identified as a messenger. Secondly, there is the temporal

¹²² Meier, *Speaking*, pp285-86. He notes the exceptions of poetic myth and epic, where 'umma is eschewed' (p286 n1).

¹²³ Meier, *Speaking*, p297.

¹²⁴ Meier, *Speaking*, p298.

¹²⁵ Meier, *Speaking*, p284.

¹²⁶ Meier, *Speaking*, p290.

¹²⁷ In Haggai 1:13, Haggai is described as 'the messenger of Yahweh' (מְלַאֲכֵי יְהוָה) who spoke 'with Yahweh's message' (בְּמִלְאֲכֹת יְהוָה); in Mal. 3:1, the messenger going ahead of Yahweh is probably a prophetic figure (see David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 & Malachi*, OTL, (London, SCM, 1995), pp209-10); cf. Koch, *Growth*, p216; 2 Chr. 36:15-16.

proximity of Ezekiel to Haggai. Given the points of similarity above about identifying Yahweh's speech, such proximity makes it more likely that Ezekiel should be understood as Yahweh's messenger. Thirdly, Meier, in his study on the messenger in the ancient Semitic world, observes that 'characteristic of West Semitic literature was the phrase, "Thus says PN", while characteristic of Akkadian was the statement, "I will send you".'¹²⁸ This background accords well with the picture that is found in Ezekiel. Three times within Ezekiel's commission (2:4; 3:11, 27), Ezekiel is told that he will say to the people 'Thus has the Lord Yahweh declared.' Four times, he is described as 'sent' (שלח) by Yahweh (2:3, 4; 3:5, 6). It is therefore not an unreasonable working assumption that the prophet Ezekiel is indeed Yahweh's messenger, notwithstanding the fact that the usage of the citation formula does not mirror precisely usage by messengers, nor the fact that Ezekiel, unlike messengers, did not have the same liberty to rephrase or enter into dialogue.

The second question is over the precise relationship of the words to be uttered by the prophet (or messenger) to the God who has given them to him.

Broadly, we have met two contrasting views so far. The first, that the tense must be 'past', and the translation must be 'thus has Yahweh said', is that of Zimmerli and Meier. Zimmerli comments,

'It points back to the moment when he [the messenger] received the message and was used at the time of delivery in order to appeal back to this moment. From this the perfect tense of the messenger formula becomes intelligible. At the moment of delivery of his message the messenger identifies himself with the time when he was entrusted with it by the person who commissioned him.'¹²⁹

The clear implication is that there is some distance between Yahweh, the sender of the message, and the words actually spoken. The words the prophet utters are the reported speech of Yahweh, not Yahweh actually speaking in the present in and through the prophet's words.

The second view, that it ought to be translated as a present tense, 'thus says Yahweh', is expressed by a number of scholars. Schmid, as we saw above, links it to the 'perfectum declarativum', linking 'statement and behavior'.¹³⁰ Koch comments that 'the sender of the message is brought as near to the recipient of it, and speaks to him in just the same tone, as if the two were face to face.'¹³¹ Thus for him,

¹²⁸ Meier, *Messenger*, p248. Meier consciously avoids relating his work to the question of whether the prophets were messengers, however: 'The perception of the prophet as a messenger sent from God (Hag. 1:13) is a subject which can also benefit from this study but is not appropriate as a primary source for this investigation. We wish to remain precise and deal with messengers *per se* and not with possible permutations of the social reality as employed by the prophets who may have used the notion as a metaphor for their social status and message' (p9).

¹²⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p133. Cf. Meier, *Speaking*, p290.

¹³⁰ 'אמר', *TLOT 1*, p160.

¹³¹ Koch, *Growth*, p190; cf. R. Rendtorff, 'Botenformel und Botenspruch', *ZAW 74* (1962), p167: 'it [the messenger formula] makes him present in his message' ('sie [die Botenformel] macht ihn in seiner Botschaft gegenwärtig').

‘the Hebrew perfect does not in this case refer back to a particular point in time when the originator of the message first spoke to the messenger alone. Here the perfect is intended to express the absolute validity of the pronouncement. Thus it can only be used by a man of superior or of equal rank.’¹³²

Two intermediate positions between these two can be found in Westermann and Bjørndalen. Westermann observes two occasions for using the ‘messenger formula’, and so discerns two possible translations.

‘In the process of sending a message, then, the messenger formula has a twofold place; it occurs two times: the sender first introduces his speech with it – that means that in the presence of the messenger whom he sends he authorizes the speech that is introduced with this formula as *his* speech; then when the messenger has arrived, he introduces the message that has been entrusted to him with the formula, and in this way authorizes it as the speech of the person who had sent him. Because of these two places in which the messenger formula occurs, the Hebrew perfect *’āmar* cannot be clearly rendered by our present or perfect tense. If we are thinking of the moment of the commissioning, then we must say, “Thus says NN”; but if we are thinking of the moment of the delivery, then it is more exact to say, “Thus said NN.”’¹³³

However, he does not take adequate account of the fact that in the vast majority of cases the citation formula occurs *within* direct speech that the messenger (or prophet) is to utter, and therefore, even at the point of commissioning, the timeframe envisaged by the phrase is no different from that at delivery.

Bjørndalen, on the other hand, regards the presence of the vocative as the key element in determining a translation in the present tense: ‘Where the citation formula introduces a message with the vocative of the recipient, and the sender is identical with the cited person, the citation formula must have a present timeframe.’¹³⁴ Meier, however, regards such a view as ‘remarkable’ given the citation function both of the Akkadian, *kīam iqbi*, and the cognate phrase in Hebrew, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה.¹³⁵

It should be clear from what we have seen above that the formula is best spoken of as the ‘citation formula’, rather than the ‘messenger formula’. Nonetheless, we are faced with the disputed question whether the particular usage in this situation should extend beyond mere citation to describe the coterminous act of prophet and sender speaking in the present.

Evidence from the use of the citation formula with the prophetic event points towards this as a possibility. For example, in Jer 30:1-3, the citation formula in v.2

¹³² Koch, *Growth*, p190 n9.

¹³³ Westermann, *Basic Forms*, p102.

¹³⁴ ‘Wo die Zitatformel eine Botschaft im Vokativ des Empfängers einleitet, und der Absender mit der zitierten Person identisch ist, muß die Zitatformel die Zeitstufe Präsens haben.’ A.J. Bjørndalen, ‘Zu den Zeitstufen der Zitatformel... כֹּה אָמַר im Botenverkehr’, *ZAW* (1974), p397. Bjørndalen discusses five different groups of texts involving the ‘Zitatformel.’ His chief exception is the fifth of these, where the formula also has אָמַר.

¹³⁵ Meier, *Speaking*, p291.

clearly occurs within direct speech of Yahweh to Jeremiah marked by לְאֹמֵר in v.1.¹³⁶ The context therefore of the citation formula is not the reporting by B of words spoken in the past by A, whether the words were for B or for C. Rather, it introduces words spoken in the *present* by Yahweh to Jeremiah. Although this is an extension of the citing of the words of another, it demonstrates the necessity, at points, of a translation of the citation formula in the present tense.¹³⁷

Further, Bjørndalen rightly highlights the significance of the vocative in the relaying of A's speech by B to C. It is not as if the identity of the prophet has been lost in the delivering of the words. After all, in scenarios involving messengers in everyday life, it is obviously essential that the messenger is *not* identical with the sender. Rather, the implication is 'that the speech of the messenger should be regarded as the speech of the sender, in the vocative: as his actual address to the recipient.'¹³⁸

We need to revisit again speech-act theory and performative utterances, because they can assist us at this point. It is true that Talstra has criticised a definition of 'performative' that embraces this formula on two grounds.¹³⁹ First, he observes that usually a performative can be discerned when 'the one who speaks is identical with the subject of the verb', but in this case 'the speaker (the messenger) is not the subject of the verb (the sender).'¹⁴⁰ Secondly, the identification of a performative is confirmed by the possibility of adding 'hereby'.¹⁴¹ Talstra states that '*k/h* does not refer to the very moment of speaking and acting, but introduces a quotation.'¹⁴² This might seem to preclude a performative understanding for the citation formula. However, it is possible to translate as 'Yahweh hereby says as follows...', with Yahweh's words, spoken through his prophet, following. The speech act represented by the formula is a declaration, and what is happening in this phrase is rather different from what is happening in a phrase like 'I apologise', or 'You are fired', or 'I hereby name this ship *Joan of Arc*'.¹⁴³ He is asserting that the words that follow are Yahweh's words. The notion of 'deputized discourse' enables a conception of Yahweh's spokesperson

¹³⁶ For further examples, see footnotes 117 and 118 above. For the significance of לְאֹמֵר in introducing direct speech, see Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis*, HSM 55, (Atlanta, Scholars Press, 1996), pp163-232.

¹³⁷ Cf. Bjørndalen, 'Zeitstufen', pp400-401.

¹³⁸ 'daß die Botenrede *als Rede des Absenders gelten darf*, bei Vokativ: *als seine aktuelle Anrede an den Empfänger*.' Bjørndalen, 'Zeitstufen', p402 (his emphasis).

¹³⁹ E. Talstra, 'Text Grammar and Hebrew Bible. II: Syntax and Semantics', *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 39 (1982), p28.

¹⁴⁰ Talstra, 'Text Grammar', p28.

¹⁴¹ *IBHS*, p489 n17, in speaking of this test, notes the contrast between, 'I hereby renounce title to the estates' and 'I renounce title to the estates by marrying the woman I love.' Only in the first instance are the speaking and the acting 'identical.'

¹⁴² Talstra, 'Text Grammar', p28.

¹⁴³ Cf. E.A. Levenston, 'The Speech-Acts of God', *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts* 12 (1984), pp133-34.

speaking words that ‘count as’ Yahweh’s words.¹⁴⁴ I have argued above that such words are introduced by the citation formula.

To summarise and conclude, the messenger formula is better spoken of as the ‘citation formula’, but this does not preclude the notion that Ezekiel himself appropriated the metaphor of Yahweh’s messenger, at least implicitly. Such a possibility should be borne in mind when comparing, for example, the words spoken to Ezekiel in the prophetic event, and those to be spoken in the rhetorical event. Further, although on certain occasions the citation formula does simply introduce words spoken in the past, when the vocative, in particular, is present, there is a strong indication that the words of the prophet are to count as the words of Yahweh in the present. Though the citation formula, like other formulae, may have served in one way as a means of aligning the prophet with a particular tradition (and the false prophets clearly used the same formula, too; see 13:6), its primary function was to assert the authenticity the prophet and his message.¹⁴⁵ It asserts that, at that moment, what the prophet says, Yahweh says. It serves to mark divine speech, whether, for example, announcing the grounds for judgement (e.g. 13:3-7, 18-19) or the actual judgements themselves (13:8-12, 13-16, 20-23).

b) The signatory formula

The signatory formula (אָרְנִי יְהוָה) - ‘the declaration of (the Lord) Yahweh’), like the citation formula, occurs in two forms.¹⁴⁶ The first, ‘the declaration of Yahweh’, occurs only four times in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek. 13:6, 7; 16:58; 37:14), of which two are citing the claims of the false prophets (13:6, 7). It occurs more than two hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament, with more than one hundred and sixty instances in Jeremiah. The second, ‘the declaration of the Lord Yahweh’ occurs eighty-one times in Ezekiel, and a further eleven times in the rest of the Old Testament.¹⁴⁷ Here again, as with the citation formula, there is a difference between Ezekiel and Jeremiah in usage. Ezekiel stresses the sovereignty of the Lord Yahweh in a way that is characteristic of the book as a whole.

There have been debates about the etymology, morphology, and semantic and syntactic functions of the key element of this formula: אָרְנִי.¹⁴⁸ With regard to etymology, most scholars link it with the Arabic *n’um*, meaning ‘whisper’,¹⁴⁹ while Meier argues that

¹⁴⁴ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, pp42-51.

¹⁴⁵ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p33.

¹⁴⁶ The rendition of אָרְנִי is that of Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p33. For other translations, see Meier, *Speaking*, pp298-99.

¹⁴⁷ Isaiah 2 times (3:15 – ‘the Lord Yahweh of hosts’; 56:8), in Jeremiah, 4 times (2:19; 49:5; 50:31 – ‘the Lord Yahweh of hosts’; 2:22), and in Amos, 5 times (3:13; 4:5; 8:3, 9, 11).

¹⁴⁸ For a discussion of the phrase’s history and details of its usage, see D. Vetter, ‘אָרְנִי *n’um* utterance’, *TLOT 2*, pp692-94 and Meier, *Speaking*, pp298-314.

¹⁴⁹ See ‘אָרְנִי’, *TLOT 2*, p692.

a more satisfactory derivation is from the ‘convergence of two Akkadian particles’,¹⁵⁰ *umma* and *anumma*. Of course etymological links alone are not significant, but Meier observes that these are reinforced by a ‘syntactic and semantic connection as well.’¹⁵¹ In particular, *umma* in Akkadian is, as we have seen already, ‘the particle identifying quoted speech.’¹⁵² Although ‘rarely repeated’ within an utterance ‘in Old Babylonian’, ‘in Middle Babylonian, and particularly in the peripheral dialects,’ it ‘may be repeated within a lengthy quotation or discourse apparently as a reminder that the quotation has not yet terminated.’¹⁵³ Such a pattern can also be seen in Old Testament texts, though the usage of נָא is by no means either identical with the Akkadian particles, nor indeed consistent throughout the Old Testament.¹⁵⁴

Some have tried to locate the function of the phrase within the book of Ezekiel in the marking of the structure of utterances, and in particular, with ending a section or an oracle.¹⁵⁵ However its precise location within the oracles is hard to systematise, although the introductory function that it has, for example, in Num. 24:3-4 has been wholly superseded by the citation formula.¹⁵⁶

What is striking for our purposes is that in its usage in the Old Testament in general, and in Ezekiel in particular, it clearly reinforces the picture of the rhetorical event as Yahweh speaking, thus confirming our understanding of the citation formula above.

This is evident from the fact that there is not a necessarily retrospective glance in the use of this marker of direct discourse. It does not even automatically point to previously-uttered words that are now being related as if in the present. It can be used by a speaker, *within* his speech, to alert his hearers that what follows *are* indeed his words. In Num. 24:3-5, one of the rare occasions when the utterance that follows is not Yahweh’s, נָא occurs within Balaam’s speech, identifying the words that follow as his own words: ‘and he uttered his oracle, saying (וַיֹּאמֶר): “The oracle of Balaam son of Beor (וְנֵאֻם הַנְּבִיָּא שְׂחָם), the oracle of the man whose eye is clear (וְנֵאֻם בְּלָעָם בְּנוֹ בְּעֹר), the oracle of one who hears the words of God (וְנֵאֻם שְׁמֵעַ אִמְרֵי-אֵל), who sees the

¹⁵⁰ Meier, *Speaking*, p303. His principal arguments against links with the Arabic verb are threefold. First, the ‘quality of the utterance’ is different (p300), since ‘one refers to speech while the other refers to sound.’ Secondly, ‘the evidence for this root in biblical Hebrew is overwhelmingly nominal and not verbal.’ (p300). The only occurrence of the verb is in Jer. 23:31. Thirdly, the uniform vocalisation of the word in what he argues at this point is a reliable Masoretic tradition points more to it as ‘a particle’ (p301). He continues on pp302-303 to outline how it might be possible to derive נָא from the two Akkadian particles.

¹⁵¹ Meier, *Speaking*, p303.

¹⁵² Meier, *Speaking*, p303.

¹⁵³ Meier, *Speaking*, pp303-304.

¹⁵⁴ Meier, *Speaking*, p309.

¹⁵⁵ E.g. Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel*, FOTL 19, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1989), p361: the formula is ‘usually...placed at the end of a unit or a major section with a unit.’

¹⁵⁶ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p114 outlines the different occurrences. Meier (*Speaking*, p309 n1), however, criticises some of the categories (‘marking “a change of topic within an oracle”’, “heightening effect” and “anticipatory, false ending” as ‘*ad hoc*’, since many changes of topic are not marked in this way. Further, its usage is ‘highly variable and optional’ (Meier, *Speaking*, p238).

vision of the Almighty, who falls down, but with eyes uncovered: How fair are your tents...”. Such an observation makes probable an interpretation of those occurrences in the rest of the Old Testament and in Ezekiel where the quoted words are indeed to be understood in the present.¹⁵⁷ This is strengthened by the fact that there is no counterexample where the formula must be understood as functioning with a clear time lacuna between the speaker of the formula and the words introduced by the formula. Meier also points to the contemporary nature of the discourse marked by נְאֻם : ‘Not only does נְאֻם introduce speech that follows, precisely like Akkadian *umma*, but one of the peculiar features of the particle נְאֻם is its frequent appearance within a quotation, re-identifying the person who *speaks*.’¹⁵⁸ In other words, the words the prophet utters *are* the words that Yahweh utters. Meier does not, however, seem to recognise the significance of this, for it serves to reinforce the *contemporary* nature of Yahweh’s words introduced by the citation formula.

Although their location within Yahweh’s speeches in the book of Ezekiel is different, the rhetorical function of the citation formula and the signatory formula is equivalent, and the false prophets use both to try to authenticate their message (Ezek. 13:6-7; 22:28): ‘this formula adds solemnity to the prophetic pronouncement by pointing to its divine source.’¹⁵⁹ Further, the signatory formula seems to have displaced over time the concluding truncated citation formula, אָמַר יְהוָה .¹⁶⁰ What the prophet says, Yahweh also says.

c) The call-to-attention formula

The call-to-attention formula $\text{שְׁמַעוּ (אֶת-) דְּבַר (אֲדָנִי) יְהוָה}$ - ‘Hear the word of (the Lord) Yahweh’) accounts for the remaining instances of דְּבַר יְהוָה in the book of Ezekiel apart from those occurring in the word-event formula. The phrase occurs seven times in the book of Ezekiel without אֲדָנִי (‘the Lord’), and a further three times with it.¹⁶¹ The phrase also occurs throughout the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, though it is not nearly as widespread as the first three formulae examined.¹⁶² It closely resembles the introduction to an official proclamation made by a herald,¹⁶³ or the call of a singer about to start.¹⁶⁴ This call-to-attention can be directed to a wide variety of addressees. In 1 Kings, it is addressed to an individual (1 Kgs. 22:19). Within the book of Ezekiel, it can be addressed to groups (e.g. false prophets (13:2), shepherds / leaders (34:7, 9), the

¹⁵⁷ E.g. 2 Sam. 23:1-2 (David); Prov. 30:1-2 (Agur); Ps. 36:2 (transgression); of Yahweh, see e.g. 2 Kgs. 19:33; Isa. 56:8.

¹⁵⁸ Meier, *Speaking*, p306 (my emphasis).

¹⁵⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p33.

¹⁶⁰ ‘נְאֻם’, *TLOT 2*, pp693-94.

¹⁶¹ Without אֲדָנִי : 13:2; 16:35; 21:3 [ET 20:47]; 34:7, 9; 36:1; 37:4; with אֲדָנִי : 6:3; 25:3; 36:4.

¹⁶² 1x in 1 Kings, in 22:19 (Micaiah) (paralleled in 2 Chr. 18:18); 2x in 2 Kings, in 7:1 (Elisha) and 20:16 (Isaiah); 4x in Isaiah, in 1:10; 28:14; 39:5; 66:5; 13x in Jeremiah, in 2:4; 7:2; 17:20; 19:3; 21:11; 22:2, 29; 29:20; 31:10; 34:4; 42:15; 44:24, 26; 1x in Hosea, in 4:1; 1x in Amos, in 7:16.

¹⁶³ Cf. 2 Kgs. 18:28, ‘Hear the word of the great king (הַגָּדוֹל) הַמֶּלֶךְ הַבָּרִיךְ, the king of Assyria!’

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Jdg. 5:3, ‘Hear, O kings (שְׁמַעוּ מְלָכִים); give ear, O princes; to Yahweh I will sing.’

people (e.g. 18:25; 37:4; cf. 25:3)), to the city of Jerusalem (16:35), to the land or the earth (mountains (6:3; 36:1, 4), the forest (21:3 [ET 20:47] – a probable metonymy for Jerusalem¹⁶⁵) and to dry bones (37:4). Within Ezekiel, the only instance of the formula introducing a message of hope, rather than of judgement, is that of 37:4, where the prophet addresses the dry bones.

On each occasion that it occurs, it is followed by the citation formula. The clear implication again is that the word that Ezekiel is to utter is indeed the word of Yahweh, not merely a report or citation of that word. Further, the gap between what the prophet receives and what the prophet is to utter is further reduced by the usage of the same phrase, 'word of Yahweh', to describe both the essence of the prophetic event and the rhetorical event.

d) Verbatim speech

In the discussion of the rhetorical event, I have made three main points. First, these three formulae all stress that what the prophet utters is what Yahweh is saying. When put alongside the repeated assertions by Yahweh that 'I have spoken', there is little doubt that what Ezekiel is to say, Yahweh also says. Secondly, there is some good evidence supporting the notion that Ezekiel is Yahweh's messenger. Thirdly, the gap between prophetic event and rhetorical event is reduced in a number of ways: by subsuming everything within the prophetic event; by the occasional ellipsis of the command to 'say' before the citation formula; by the presence of the citation formula which 'is styled as a literal repetition of the words that were given to the messenger at the time that the messenger was commissioned by the sender'.¹⁶⁶

There is also a fourth way in which the gap is all but eliminated, and that is by the *explicit* depiction of the words that Ezekiel is to utter as verbatim with the words received. There is no gap between the word that the prophet received, and the word that he is to speak. We turn our attention to such a depiction in the book, in order to assist further our aim of locating where Yahweh's word is to be found and how it is to be conceived.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the relationship between the word that comes to the prophet and that which he delivers as Yahweh's word is not necessarily verbatim (e.g. the word that comes to Elijah in 1 Kgs. 21:19, and that which he delivers in 1 Kgs.

¹⁶⁵ Scholars disagree over the referent, principally because there is no evidence of trees in the Negeb, the desert land south of Jerusalem. Craigie argues that Ezekiel was speaking using 'allegory', since there was hardly going to be a forest fire in the desert; see Peter C. Craigie, *Ezekiel*, DSB, (Edinburgh, The Saint Andrew Press, 1983), p154. Block (*Ezekiel 1-24*, p663) notes support for seeing Jerusalem here from the LXX, and from the second half of the oracle that shows 'the correctness of this approach' by making Jerusalem explicit.

¹⁶⁶ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, p524. Sweeney uses the language of messengers, but the substantive point remains the formula is styled as indicating verbatim delivery. The example that follows in the text, from 1 Kgs. 21, makes it clear that the relationship is not necessarily quite so simple.

21:20b-24).¹⁶⁷ Similarly, a messenger did not always simply deliver a message verbatim, but could respond to queries and even be creative in how to frame a particular instruction.¹⁶⁸ In Ezekiel, visions cannot, of course, be reported verbatim. Nonetheless, there are four pieces of evidence with Ezekiel that point to a verbatim relationship between what he is portrayed as hearing, on the one hand, and uttering, on the other.

First, there is the unusual phrase in 3:4, וְדַבַּרְתָּ בְּדִבְרֵי אֱלֹהִים (‘use my very words in speaking to them’¹⁶⁹). According to *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, דַּבַּר ב (pi.) followed by the noun דִּבְרָא can mean ‘speak concerning’ (e.g. Deut. 6:7; 11:19) or speak ‘in, with, by means of’, with the preposition designating ‘accompaniment, method, means, instrument’.¹⁷⁰ The former meaning makes no sense here.¹⁷¹ The latter is less likely than a third view, ‘recite’, as Weinfeld argues in his commentary on Deut. 6:7. Noting parallels with *qr’ b-* (Deut. 17:19) and *hgh b-* (Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2) and from the comparison with Exod. 13:9, ‘where the sign and reminder (compare v 8 here) should serve the purpose, “that the teaching of YHWH shall be in your mouth”’, he maintains that the phrase ‘involves recitation and reading or murmuring.’¹⁷² Although the LXX, the Syriac and the Vulgate reduce the force of the MT here (LXX renders בְּדִבְרֵי with τοὺς λόγους μου), suggesting an original אֶת־דִּבְרֵי (cf. 2:7), they are more likely to reflect a free rendering of the MT, for there is no reason why the more difficult MT reading should have arisen. Zimmerli renders the phrase ‘speak (with the authority of) my words to them,’ deriving such an interpretation from ‘the stereotyped language of prophetic schools’ which is reflected in 1 Kings 13.¹⁷³ However, such an interpretation requires דִּבְרָא to be singular. Greenberg, followed by Allen¹⁷⁴ and Block,¹⁷⁵ is right when he says that ‘the nuance...seems to be verbatim repetition of the message.’¹⁷⁶ The force of this phrase is that Ezekiel is to speak with the ‘very words’ which Yahweh had spoken to him. Ezekiel’s personality is not to obtrude. The mixture of Yahweh’s words and the prophet’s words, seen in, for example, Hosea 9:11-17 (where Hosea utters, ‘Give them, O Yahweh-- what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry

¹⁶⁷ Though of course such a shift could be a narratorial device, highlighting Elijah’s unreliability or the twin aspects of Ahab’s sin, murder (v.19) and idolatry (vv. 20-21).

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Exod. 5:6-13; 2 Sam. 11:7, 20-21, 25. See Meier, *Messenger*, pp205, 250. We shall see below how the words of the messenger can still count as the words of the one sending.

¹⁶⁹ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p4.

¹⁷⁰ *DCH*, vol. 2, p392. Ezek. 3:4 is placed under the second of these categories.

¹⁷¹ Cf. G.A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ICC, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1936), p40.

¹⁷² Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, AB 5, (New York, Doubleday, 1991), p333.

¹⁷³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp92-93.

¹⁷⁴ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p4.

¹⁷⁵ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p128.

¹⁷⁶ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p68; so too *idem*, ‘On Ezekiel’s Dumbness’, *JBL* 77 (1958), p103, ‘The *b* of *bid’bārī* is...unexampled...but it would seem far better to regard it as written with a special purpose, than as a mistake: The prophet may speak only what God has put into his mouth, in the very words that God has spoken. This is also the meaning of the remarkable image of eating the scroll of prophecy, which immediately precedes these words.’

breasts' (v.14)) is absent from Ezekiel. The words of Yahweh in Ezekiel are carefully marked out. He is to speak precisely and only what Yahweh speaks to him.

The second piece of evidence that Ezekiel is to utter verbatim what Yahweh says to him is the incident within the commissioning vision of Ezekiel swallowing the scroll (2:8-3:3). This links closely with the observations above about 3:4. Yahweh's word coming to Ezekiel 'as a text'¹⁷⁷ serves to limit and constrain the freedom of the prophet to modify or reshape the words. The scroll having writing on both sides symbolises a complete message to which Ezekiel may not add.¹⁷⁸ 'This gloomy scroll is full; it contains *nothing but* desolation and there is no leftover space. No amendments will be made; no codicil will be added; the sentence is final.'¹⁷⁹ The exclusivity of the words, and the exhaustive nature of them is further reinforced by the image of 'filling' (3:2) his stomach with them. He may not, indeed he cannot, internalise any other word before uttering it. The words that Ezekiel has swallowed, he is to utter, using precisely those words that he has been given (3:4).

Such an interpretation, linking the scroll with the *message* that Ezekiel is to utter, though popular with most commentators, has been challenged by Odell.¹⁸⁰ She argues that the event with the scroll should be understood as a test of the prophet rather than as the legitimation of his message, seen in the consuming of the contents of the message. She advances a number of arguments to support her view.

First, she argues that the parallelism in the phrases 'hear', 'do not be rebellious' and 'open your mouth and eat' (2:8) 'emphasizes Ezekiel's obedience, not the synonymy of eating and hearing.'¹⁸¹ Secondly, in 3:1, the command 'eat...eat' and 'go, speak' (3:1) 'simply outlines a series of actions Ezekiel is to perform',¹⁸² rather than entailing that what is eaten is what should be spoken. Thirdly, the noun דְּבַר is absent from this section, though very prominent in 3:4-11. Fourthly, the sequence of the narrative, in which the scroll-event precedes instructions outlining to Ezekiel what he is to do when he hears Yahweh's word, suggests that he has not yet received that word. Fifthly, the internalising of the divine message is expressed in 3:10 by taking into the heart and ears, not into the belly.¹⁸³ Finally, her interpretation resolves, she says, the

¹⁷⁷ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p51 (her emphasis).

¹⁷⁸ Cf. William H. Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, WBC 28, (Waco, Word, 1986), p30; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p124.

¹⁷⁹ Baruch J. Schwartz, 'Ezekiel's Dim View of Israel's Restoration', in *BETAP*, p44.

¹⁸⁰ Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', pp229-48. Eichrodt criticises the notion that there is a 'theory of prophetic inspiration' enshrined in the procedure (*Ezekiel*, p62). What the scroll-event indicates to him is 'on the one hand, a proof of the obedience of the person who has been chosen and, on the other hand, an assurance that the message with which he is entrusted is independent of his own subjective judgments, and is divine in origin.'

¹⁸¹ Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', p242.

¹⁸² Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', p242.

¹⁸³ Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', p243.

‘apparent conflict that has long been noted between Ezekiel’s message of judgment and the description of the scroll as lamentations.’¹⁸⁴

Her alternative, which forms part of her thesis that the whole call vision from 1:1-5:17 marks the transition of Ezekiel from a priest to a prophet, is that ‘what Ezekiel eats...is not the message of divine judgment but the judgment itself.’¹⁸⁵ He does this as a priest, bearing the guilt in a way parallel to the ordination ceremony in Lev.8-9. ‘By eating the scroll, Ezekiel takes into his inner being the fate of his people.’¹⁸⁶ The phrase ‘words of mourning and lamentation and woe’ (קְנִיִּים וְהִנְיָה וְהִי) ¹⁸⁷ speaks of the consequences, not the essence, of the message, and this precludes an understanding of the scroll as Ezekiel’s message.

Odell’s arguments concerning the scroll are not conclusive, however. First, although it is true that the terms used to describe what is written on the scroll speak more of the anticipated *consequences* of the message that Ezekiel is to utter than the content itself, it is possible that ‘mourning and lamentation and woe’ are instances of metonymy for the events that bring about these effects (cf. Ezek. 7:27, where the king shall ‘mourn’ (קָנָה)), or synecdoche, where the whole of Ezekiel’s message is spoken of by means of a part of it.¹⁸⁸ Such figures of speech are not alien to the book of Ezekiel, for in 23:24, the prophet speaks of ‘wheel(s)’ (וְגִלְגָּלִים) as a synecdoche for ‘wheeled vehicles’.

Secondly, while it is true that there is a dimension of ‘obedience’ that is emphasised here,¹⁸⁹ this does not preclude the scroll being the divine message.¹⁹⁰ Within the framework of Ezekiel receiving God’s word and then speaking it in 2:8-3:3, the eating of the scroll (3:1) most naturally functions as receiving God’s word. This is reinforced by two observations. First, these verses are at the centre of what Schwartz terms ‘the concentric structure’ of the verses from 2:1-3:15, framed by words of encouragement (2:6-7; 3:4-9), the charge to speak (2:3-5; 3:10-11), and assistance given by רִיחַ (2:1-2; 3:12-15).¹⁹¹ The ‘focus’ lies in 2:8-3:3, thus it makes greatest sense if this

¹⁸⁴ Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat’, p244.

¹⁸⁵ Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat’, p244.

¹⁸⁶ Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat’, p244.

¹⁸⁷ There are a number of textual issues here – LXX (and Targum) read the singular of קְנִיִּים (θρηνησις); the final word is a hapax, which LXX confuses and reads καὶ οὐαί. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp91-92.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p135), who follows Koch and Fahlgren in adopting an interpretation based on the ‘synthetic view of life’ for the close link between cause and effect; Allen (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p40) comments that ‘the title refers not the content of the prophetic revelation but obliquely to its effect’; Block (*Ezekiel 1-24*, p125) comments, ‘the words...describe the effects of the judgments he will pronounce upon his people.’

¹⁸⁹ See further pp172f.

¹⁹⁰ Note particularly the discussion in Gregory Y. Glazov, *The Bridling of the Tongue and the Opening of the Mouth in Biblical Prophecy*, JSOTSup 311, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp226ff.

¹⁹¹ Baruch J. Schwartz, ‘The Concentric Structure of Ezekiel 2:1-3:15’, in *Proceedings of the tenth world congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 16-24, 1989*, ed. David Assaf, (Jerusalem, The world union of Jewish students, 1990), pp107-14. Lind similarly regards the swallowing of the scroll as central, but for him it is central in the commissioning narrative, from 1:1-3:15 (Millard C. Lind, *Ezekiel*, Believers Church Bible Commentary, (Scottsdale, Herald Press, 1996), pp25-26, 381-82). Certainly the inclusio

section contains 'both charge and encouragement'. 'The Scroll-eating both orders the prophet what to say and at the same time relieves him of the responsibility of figuring out how to say it, since he has been infused with God's own words.'¹⁹² The second observation is the fact that throughout the book, Ezekiel is a prophet, priest and lawgiver like Moses.¹⁹³ In these verses it is Ezekiel who is a prophet 'among them' (2:5; cf. Deut. 18:18) in whose 'mouth' Yahweh has placed his 'words' (2:8-3:3; cf. Deut. 18:18).¹⁹⁴

The other objections outlined above, based on a comparison between 2:8-3:3 and 3:4-11 fail to account for the fact that what is figuratively expressed in the scroll-event is then literally expressed in 3:4-11. So, for example, the observations about the apparently irreconcilability between the two narratives of the organs for internalising God's word fail to account for the imagery used.

Finally, Odell's own interpretation contains a significant shift in the referent of the words on the scroll. Initially, 'the scroll contains something that is decreed, fixed by having been written'.¹⁹⁵ This she takes to be 'the judgment itself'.¹⁹⁶ However it is difficult to see precisely how *words* of 'lamentation, mourning and woe' are 'the judgment itself'. So Odell then asserts that what he eats is 'the judgment itself *and its consequences*,'¹⁹⁷ and in reality, her analysis speaks more of the consequences of the judgement than the judgement itself. Although her interpretation is aimed at avoiding the 'conflict' as she sees it between the message that Ezekiel is to utter and the description of the scroll, in reality her interpretation involves a similar conflict.

Before concluding that the scroll is indeed a metaphor for the message the prophet is to utter, there is, though, a third possibility that should be considered, and another objection to the notion of scroll as Ezekiel's message.

A third way of understanding the scroll is to see the words of 'lamentation, mourning and woe' as relating to Ezekiel's experience, and his alone, by virtue of his being commissioned. They describe neither the message that he is to utter (most commentators), nor Ezekiel's embodying of the judgement on Israel and its

provided by Yahweh's hand and the location by the Chebar river is striking (1:1-3; 3:14-15). The next 'ring', of the movement of the chariot and the glory of Yahweh, is tenuous, partly because of the difference in length between the two descriptions (1:4-28; 3:12-13), and partly because the action of רָוַח is in the foreground in 3:12-13, not the movement of the glory of Yahweh (see Schwartz, 'Concentric Structure', p110). Finally, the correspondence between the two commissioning narratives is much clearer with Schwartz's divisions (2:6-7 // 3:4-9; 2:3-5 // 3:10-11) than with the Lind's 'ring' units (1:28b-2:7 // 3:4-11).

¹⁹² Schwartz, 'Concentric Structure', p112.

¹⁹³ Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p432; Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, pp38-39; J. Gordon McConville, 'Priests and Levites in Ezekiel: A Crux in the Interpretation of Israel's History', *TynBul* 3 (1982), pp28-29; H. McKeating, 'Ezekiel the "Prophet like Moses"?', *JSOT* 61 (1994), pp97-109; Levitt Kohn, *New Heart*, p109.

¹⁹⁴ See Levitt Kohn, *New Heart*, p109. It should be noted that there is not a verbal but a conceptual link with the notion of 'among' (מִקְרֵב אֶחָיִים - Deut. 18:18; בְּחֻקָּם - Ezek. 2:5).

¹⁹⁵ Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', p243.

¹⁹⁶ Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', p244.

¹⁹⁷ Odell, 'You Are What You Eat', p244 (my emphasis).

consequences (Odell), but the experience of the prophet in his ministry. With this interpretation, the fact that the scroll is covered on both sides with writing points simply to the fact that his ministry from beginning to end will be marked by difficulty, by 'lamentation, mourning and woe'. This is true whether his message is one of judgement, or of reassurance and hope. Ezekiel needs to be willing to undergo unremitting hardship in his ministry. His swallowing the scroll is a test of that willingness.

In favour of this interpretation is the fact that this narrative occurs within the commissioning of the prophet, and 2:3-7 and 3:4-11 make it very clear that Ezekiel's ministry is going to be marked by stubborn resistance and hostility. Further, later in Ezekiel's ministry he is told to take up a lament (קִינָה; ch.19), echoing 2:10.¹⁹⁸ Again, the experience of the death of his wife and the command not to mourn or weep (סַפֵּר, בִּכְה) in one sense encapsulates the 'lamentation, mourning and woe' which is to be his lot. The lack of public mourning in 24:15-24 does not preclude inward mourning. In addition, the experience of frustration, of hostility, of rejection seems to have been the reality, as portrayed in the book, from the beginning to the end of Ezekiel's ministry, hence both sides of the scroll are covered with the writing.

There are two difficulties with this third view. First, there are almost no verbal allusions or indicators that the scroll relates to Ezekiel's own experience. This is not insuperable, since there are almost no verbal allusions that link the contents of the scroll to his message, but the gap between the words on the scroll and Ezekiel's own experience is greater than that between the words on the scroll and the judgement announced. Secondly, as highlighted above, the structure of the unit highlights the scroll-eating not just as an act of obedience, but also as an act of equipping the prophet with the message he needs to bring.

A possible further objection to the notion that the scroll speaks of Ezekiel's message is the observation that Ezekiel's message was not exclusively one of doom and destruction. Hölscher resolves this by arguing that the real Ezekiel only announced judgement.¹⁹⁹ Schwartz highlights and then resolves it in a different fashion.²⁰⁰ He believes that there is no basis within the book for the shift in Ezekiel's ministry from oracles of judgement and doom to oracles speaking of Yahweh's purposes to restore and prosper the exiles. Given that the scroll is indeed the message to proclaim, the message of the restoration of Israel is of a piece with the oracles of judgement, wholly and unchangeably melancholic:

'For Ezekiel, the future restoration of Israel is not something distinct from and subsequent to YHWH's punishment of his people, but rather a direct outgrowth of

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Lawrence Boadt, 'Rhetorical Strategies in Ezekiel's Oracles of Judgment', in *EHB*, p195; Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p62 n13. Allen (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p40) observes that Ezekiel's laments, apart from ch. 19, all relate to other nations. As a result, he does not think there is a connection between 2:10 and ch. 19.

¹⁹⁹ Hölscher, *Hesekiel*, pp40ff.

²⁰⁰ Schwartz, 'Ezekiel's Dim View', p43.

it. According to Ezekiel, YHWH's ultimate decision to restore his people's fortunes is not the result of any change in their feelings or behavior towards him or in his disposition toward them. And since Israel's unregenerate evil and YHWH's wrathful resolve to requite them for it remain unaltered, Ezekiel never really alters his message.²⁰¹

It is not necessary to go with either Hölscher or Schwartz. The most common view, often linked with Ezekiel's dumbness, is that the fall of Jerusalem, or news of the fall of Jerusalem, precipitates a shift in the thrust of the message.²⁰² At one level, that is of course true, since the balance of the message clearly shifts. However, it naturally raises questions about the place and function of oracles of salvation in chs. 1-24. Those scholars who regard such oracles as post-587 additions do not have a problem at this point, because until the fall Ezekiel's message was unremitting 'lamentation, mourning and woe',²⁰³ but they lose synchronic coherence if they continue to maintain the scroll spoke of the message. A second view, suggested by Odell, is that a transition in the book is evident in Ezek. 24:15-24.²⁰⁴ For her, the prohibition against mourning is not concerned with limiting expressions of grief. Rather, it has a social function, expressing dissociation from the one who has died.²⁰⁵ In similar fashion, the putting on of a turban has a wider social function. She notes that it occurs in contexts unrelated to mourning, and serves principally to mark a change in the status of the one who puts the turban on.²⁰⁶ For her, Ezek. 24:15-24 'signifies...that God has chosen the exilic community over Jerusalem, and that Ezekiel's actions are a sign of this election.'²⁰⁷ Odell's arguments about the social function of the prohibition against mourning and of the putting on of the turban are well made. However, her suggestive thesis needs further development. In Ezekiel, it is the exiles who are to put on turbans (24:23), yet, in Isa. 61:10, as Odell herself notes,²⁰⁸ it is the *bridegroom* who puts on a turban as a mark of the change in his status, so the parallel is not exact. It is not easy to see how the exiles are to act like a bridegroom, and yet be Yahweh's 'betrothed' after his wife, Jerusalem, has died. Secondly, given that the exiles remain rebellious until the end of the book, the change in status needs to be some kind of proleptic change.

The best solution is to recognise that in view of the anticipated hard-heartedness of Ezekiel's addressees, and the anticipated 40 years in exile (cf. 4:6), even messages of

²⁰¹ Schwartz, 'Ezekiel's Dim View', p55.

²⁰² Cf. especially Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, pp56ff.

²⁰³ So e.g. Hals, *Ezekiel*, pp70-71; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, ppxxviii-ix.

²⁰⁴ Margaret S. Odell, 'Genre and Persona in Ezekiel 24:15-24', in *BETAP*, pp195-219.

²⁰⁵ Odell, 'Genre and Persona', p201.

²⁰⁶ Odell, 'Genre and Persona', p203. Instances where it occurs include 'in the description of the clothing worn by priests' (Ezek. 44:8; Exod. 39:28), 'or in accounts of election or restoration to high office' (Zech. 3:5), 'or in wedding imagery' (Isa. 61:10). This wider perspective concerning change of status explains how turbans can be associated with mourning.

²⁰⁷ Odell, 'Genre and Persona', p196.

²⁰⁸ Odell, 'Genre and Persona', p205.

hope and salvation that, within the timeframe of the book, predated the fall of Jerusalem were not messages of hope and comfort for that generation.

The second piece of evidence, then, pointing to the verbatim communication of Yahweh's words is the motif of the prophet swallowing the scroll and subsequently speaking Yahweh's words.

The third piece of evidence that points towards the verbatim nature of the relationship between the words Ezekiel receives and those he utters is the only instance recorded of the prophet actually speaking to his exilic audience (24:20ff.). There, in response to the people's question in v.19 about Ezekiel's lack of mourning, Ezekiel replies to them by relaying to them his experience of the prophetic event, and the words he received in that prophetic event: 'Then I said to them, "The word of Yahweh came to me...".' Thus the 'rhetorical event' consists of Ezekiel simply repeating verbatim the prophetic event. There is no gap between them.

The fourth and final piece of evidence is the form of the book itself. The readers of the book are not presented with the rhetorical event, of the prophet delivering his words, but with the prophetic event, of the prophet receiving Yahweh's words. Such an approach leaves no gap between the two events. What the prophet received is what confronts the reader (and, presumably, the prophet's audience). The word of Yahweh does not just come to the prophet, it comes to the readers of the book.

e) Summary

In summary, though the book of Ezekiel hardly ever records the prophet actually speaking, yet it is clear, through the use of the different formulae introducing speech, that there is a distinction between the prophetic event and the rhetorical event. However, such a distinction should not obscure the point that Ezekiel was essentially to utter verbatim what he received. Further, the rhetorical event is not simply a repetition of words that Yahweh said to him, and instructed him to relay. Rather, the rhetorical event is Yahweh speaking.

3. Yahweh's ordinances and statutes

Until now, our focus on Yahweh's word in the book of Ezekiel has been exclusively on the prophetic word. It is a mistake, however, when studying the relationship between the word of God and the spirit of God from a theological perspective, to limit Yahweh's word to the 'prophetic word.' Vriezen notes, when writing about revelation by the word, that besides the 'word' to the prophet, there is 'revelation to the priest, who receives *torah* (instruction) from God.'²⁰⁹ Throughout the book of Ezekiel, Yahweh speaks of 'my ordinances / judgements' (מִשְׁפָּטַי)²¹⁰ and 'my statutes' (חֻקֵּי),²¹¹ 'my teaching'

²⁰⁹ Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1958), p252.

²¹⁰ Ezek. 5:6f; 11:20; 18:17; 20:11, 13, 19, 21, 24.

(תּוֹרָתִי),²¹² and ‘my teachings’ (תּוֹרָתִי).²¹³ Thus Yahweh stands behind these words in the same way that he stands behind the prophetic word – he is the author and speaker of both. This broadening of the field of study is not invalidated either by the fact, noted above, that יְהוָה דִּבֶּר is a technical term for the prophetic word, or Gerleman’s contention that the seven passages²¹⁴ where the noun דִּבְרַי, in construct relationship with ‘Yahweh’, indicates unequivocally God’s legal word, are late.²¹⁵ Yahweh’s words are broader than the prophetic ‘word of Yahweh.’²¹⁶ A theological examination of the relationship between ‘word’ and ‘spirit’ will entail looking at the different kinds of Yahweh’s words. Precisely how Yahweh’s רִיחַ relates to these words of Yahweh, we shall examine below in Part III.

4. The book of Ezekiel itself

It has already been noted that the word of Yahweh is primarily a speech event. It needs to be asked, however, to what extent the *book* of Ezekiel, as opposed to the words that the prophet received, was understood as the ‘word of Yahweh’ by the implied author.²¹⁷ In other words, is the book of Ezekiel itself a speech event of Yahweh in its own right, or a record of a succession of speech events? Again, this is important if we are to be in a position to understand precisely at what point, if at all, and in what way, if at all, Yahweh’s רִיחַ relates to such a speech event, if it be such. In this section, I shall look at the two main ways in which the book as a whole might be understood as Yahweh’s word. First I shall look briefly at the proposal of Ellen Davis, that the prophet communicated *in writing*. I shall argue that this approach, while rightly recognising the literary nature of much of the book, is ultimately not adequate. Secondly, I shall look at the significance of 1:3, and shall argue that it makes sense to see it as a superscription for the book of Ezekiel as a whole, and that, while it does differ from the ways of marking direct discourse *within* the narrative, nonetheless, it makes a claim for the book as a whole – the written words of the prophet, along with the biographical information – as Yahweh’s communication to the readers.

Although the prophets wrote some of their oracles down before the exile (Isa. 30:8; Hab. 2:2; Jer. 36), it is likely that the exile was formative and influential in the

²¹¹ Ezek. 5:6, 7; 11:12, 20; 18:9, 17; 20:11, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24; 36:27; 37:24; 44:24. On two occasions (one with ‘my’), Yahweh ‘gave’ them these (Ezek. 20:11, 25), though I regard the second as an ironical recapitulation of 20:18.

²¹² Ezek. 22:26.

²¹³ Ezek. 44:24.

²¹⁴ Num. 15:31; Deut. 5:5; 2 Sam. 12:9; 1 Chr. 15:15; 2 Chr. 30:12; 34:21; 35:6.

²¹⁵ ‘דִּבְרַי’, *TLOT* 1, p331.

²¹⁶ Cf. Claus Westermann, who, though acknowledging that his categories ‘only approximately and inexactly encompass the richness of God’s words’ (p23), divides Yahweh’s words into three: the word of announcement, the directive word (*torah* understood as instruction) and the cultic word (Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, pp17-23); also Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1, pp196-97 for the same points.

²¹⁷ Who is clearly distinct from the narrator in the book, the prophet Ezekiel himself (cf. 1:1-3).

collecting of material. As Eichrodt notes, 'the more during the Exile men were compelled to make reading from the sacred Scriptures the focus of divine worship, the more natural it became to look for the word as a fixed entity in a sacred book.'²¹⁸

In her interesting study, *Swallowing the Scroll*, Davis puts forward the thesis that Ezekiel set out to communicate with his audience in writing. This is not to deny oral features to his oracles, but it is to say that 'Ezekiel's achievement is in making narrative a vehicle of prophecy.'²¹⁹ Central to her thesis is the relationship between ingestion of the scroll and Ezekiel's dumbness (2:8-3:3; 3:26): 'During the period of dumbness, Ezekiel is merely the vehicle of the divinely authored text'²²⁰ since, up to the fall of Jerusalem, his fellow exiles need no new word at all. For her, the move from oral to literary was not so much a response, a reaction to the past and the present but a creative movement, one that shaped the future. By prophesying through a literary work, the focus moved from the prophet to the prophecy, from the person to the text. So she sees it as crucial that we understand 'literary activity as an instrument of social change and not merely a means of reflecting its occurrence.'²²¹ Here, then, Yahweh's word is intimately linked with the book.

Davis' work, though, does not always account adequately for the public dimensions and oral features of the book; some features, such as the great emphasis on marking divine speech, require further explanation.²²² More significantly, as Block points out, it is not obvious that the editors of the book of Ezekiel linked clearly the swallowing of the scroll and Ezekiel's dumbness.²²³ Thirdly, the fact that the word came to Ezekiel 'as a text'²²⁴ does not mean that Ezekiel had to pass it on as text, as Davis argues. It may simply mean that the prophet is not at liberty to alter what Yahweh says, and that, as I argued above, the prophet is to utter Yahweh's words verbatim. Davis' suggestion, then, is not compelling.

If we turn our attention then to Ezek. 1:3, we are faced with two questions. The first is, 'In what sense is this verse a superscription?' The second, which depends on the answer to the first, is 'If it is indeed a superscription, in what way or to what extent does it signal that what follows is Yahweh's speech?'

Many of the prophetic books, as well as other books of different types, have superscriptions. Some have as their introduction a variation of the word-event formula in the 3rd person (e.g. Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1), a formula in superscriptions that is often attributed to the circles associated with Deuteronomy.²²⁵ Thus, these prophetic *books*

²¹⁸ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p76.

²¹⁹ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p126.

²²⁰ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p56.

²²¹ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p131.

²²² Cf. Meier, *Speaking*, p241.

²²³ Daniel I. Block, 'Review of Ellen F. Davis's *Swallowing the Scroll*', *JBL* 110 (1991), p146.

²²⁴ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p51 (her emphasis).

²²⁵ דָּבָר *dābhar*; דְּבָר *dābhār*, *TDOT* 3, p113; Lindblom, *Prophecy*, pp279-80; Gene M. Tucker, 'Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of a Canon', in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament*

could be understood as the ‘word of Yahweh’. In Ezek. 1:3, the word-event formula occurs, from the perspective of the implied author, describing Ezekiel in the 3rd person, ‘...the word of Yahweh came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of Yahweh was on him there.’ Should the book of Ezekiel be understood in a similar way?

In his article examining prophetic superscriptions, Tucker excludes the book of Ezekiel.²²⁶ There are a number of reasons why 1:3 might be excluded. First, superscriptions tend to stand at the head of the book, outside the body of the work,²²⁷ but Ezek. 1:3 does not. Secondly, superscriptions are syntactically unrelated to what follows, but Ezek. 1:3 is incorporated into the text (cf. the 3rd person, ‘the hand of Yahweh was upon *him*’).²²⁸ Thirdly, superscriptions tend not to be clauses in their own right,²²⁹ but Ezek. 1:3 has a main verb. Fourthly, most scholars link v.2 with v.3, thus introducing a specificity to the ‘word’ that came to the prophet, either to the ‘word’ that the prophet received beginning in 2:1,²³⁰ or to the vision as a whole.²³¹ Such a linking of v.2 and v.3 also makes this less like a superscription. Finally, v.3 separates two standard Ezekielian elements introducing a vision, the action of the ‘hand of Yahweh’ which precedes every vision, and the description of the vision as מְרֵאוֹת אֱלֹהִים (cf. 8:3; 40:2), thus apparently delimiting v.3 to the vision that follows.

However, there are a number of strong reasons why Ezek. 1:3 should be treated as a superscription for the book. First, it clearly stands apart from v.1 and v.4 because of the shift in person from 1st (vv.1, 4) to 3rd (v.3); a different voice is heard – that of the implied author, not the narrator. Secondly, it is likely that v.2 is linked more closely with v.1 than with v.3.²³² While it is theoretically possible that the awkward incomplete date in v.2 was added later to specify further the time of the once clear, but now unclear, 30th year in v.1,²³³ it is more likely that v.2 went with v.1 from the beginning, given that the other dates in the book are defined with reference to Jehoiachin. This means that the form is much closer to other prophetic superscriptions. Thirdly, if v.3 were not a superscription, the word-event formula would then introduce a vision, a unique function in the book. Fourthly, where the word-event formula is used elsewhere in Ezekiel, it is

Religion and Theology, eds. G.W. Coats and B.O. Long, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1977), p69; A.A. Mackintosh, *Hosea*, ICC, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1997), p2.

²²⁶ Tucker, ‘Prophetic Superscriptions’, p59.

²²⁷ Tucker, ‘Prophetic Superscriptions’, p58.

²²⁸ Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p82), however, comments, ‘One has to read עלִי “upon me”’. This is based on his reconstruction of the original vision report (p108).

²²⁹ Tucker, ‘Prophetic Superscriptions’, p59.

²³⁰ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p41.

²³¹ Allen comments, ‘It provides a superscription, not for the book, since only one oracle (דְּבַר “word”) is in view, but strictly for the unit 1:1-3:15’ (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p23); Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p89.

²³² Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp100-101; Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp133-34.

²³³ Possibly in a similar fashion to the often-discerned deuteronomic redaction of the superscription in Amos 1:1 made necessary by the relatively short-lived specificity of the reference to the ‘earthquake’. For this point on Amos, see Tucker ‘Prophetic Superscriptions’, pp69-70.

introduced differently (with נִיְהִי not with הָיָה). Fifthly, Allen's observation that the singular דְּבַר signifies only 'one oracle' does not take account of the singular in Hosea, Zephaniah, Micah and Joel. Finally, its location within the text and its different syntax are both explicable in terms of the uniqueness of the literary setting. Not only is the narrative in the 1st person, but a geographical and temporal reference has already been supplied in vv.1-2. By giving the implied author a word that vindicates the claim of the narrator, it furthers the rhetorical purpose of the book.²³⁴

In conclusion, the redactional 'heading' of the book is restricted to v.3, which serves to introduce the book as a whole.²³⁵ It seems likely, then, that the author of the book of Ezekiel saw the book *as a whole* as Yahweh's word. Far from presenting an account of the prophet's ministry in any biographical sense,²³⁶ Yahweh's word is re-presented with fresh significance to the readers of the book.

The second question concerns the way in which or the extent to which such a superscription indicates that what follows is Yahweh's speech.

Meier has rightly observed that these prophetic superscriptions differ from the usual marking of direct discourse in that they summarize what follows, rather than introducing it.²³⁷ Further, he notes that a rubric can *become* a marker of direct discourse, as in Zech. 1:7, 'where Zechariah's autobiographical discourse is disconcertingly introduced as a divine oracle'.²³⁸ For these reasons, he is reluctant to see such superscriptions as indicating that the 'entire text...is enclosed within quotation marks'.²³⁹ However, to say that it is not 'direct discourse' in the same sense as the original oracles does not mean that it does not 'count as' Yahweh's word. Indeed the point in adding the superscriptions is to give authority to the written words, with all their historical specificity, that the words had when spoken. As Mays comments on Hosea, 'The book as a whole is "the word of Yahweh", the message of the God of Israel. The category of "word" (*dābār*) is extended to include the total tradition deriving from a prophet, all his oracles and the narratives which tell of his activity'.²⁴⁰ The book of Ezekiel confronts the readers directly with the same word that confronted the

²³⁴ So Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p135; cf. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, pp77ff.

²³⁵ So, too, Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p5. There is no need to say that such a redactional heading is post-exilic because of the similarities between 1:3a and Hag. 1:1 and Zech. 1:1 (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p110). It is more plausible that the book of Ezekiel has influenced Haggai and Zechariah, particularly in matters of form. Cf. Steven S. Tuell, 'Haggai-Zechariah: Prophecy after the Manner of Ezekiel', in *Society of Biblical Literature 2000 Seminar Papers Number 39*, (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), pp263-286.

²³⁶ The framing of the narrative of the book with reference to Yahweh's word thus contradicts von Rad's suggestion that 'the Book of Ezekiel is practically a long prophetic autobiography' (*Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p265).

²³⁷ 'The rubric supplies a context; the DD [Direct Discourse] marker assumes it'. Meier, *Speaking*, p23.

²³⁸ Meier, *Speaking*, p23.

²³⁹ Meier, *Speaking*, p21.

²⁴⁰ James L. Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1969), p20.

prophet, re-presented to them. Such a perspective points to an understanding of that word speaking afresh to the readers / hearers.

5. The recipients of Yahweh's word

The discussion above reveals how complex the relationship is between Yahweh's word, and those to whom it comes. The book portrays the prophetic word coming to the prophet. It envisages the prophet conveying that prophetic word to his exilic audience. However, such a conveying occurs through oracles addressed, apparently, to a variety of addressees, both animate (*passim*) and inanimate (mountains in ch.6, the Negev in 21:3-5 [ET 20:47-49]), both present (the exiles) and absent (Jerusalemites in ch.16).²⁴¹ It depicts Yahweh's laws and statutes, given long ago to the house of Israel's ancestors (20:11, 19), as being now Yahweh's speech both to the Jerusalemites (5:6-7; 11:12) and to the exiles (18:17; 36:27; 37:24). Further, Yahweh's words to the prophet, and the narrative framework within which they are contained, are also re-presented to the readers / hearers of the book of Ezekiel.

Such complexity renders it necessary to proffer a framework for understanding the functioning of Yahweh's word and its relationship to the different groups, as a counterpart to our discussion of the different communication actions. This is essential because we may find that Yahweh's דבר relates to Yahweh's word at particular points, or in particular communication situations.

Wolterstorff draws a number of helpful distinctions, and provides useful categorisation for different recipients of a word, based on insights derived from speech-act theory.²⁴² He notes, first, that many (not all) speech acts have an *addressee*; so, for example, I promise *someone*. In the book of Ezekiel, Yahweh's speech acts at one level all have the prophet as the *addressee*. The book as a whole is narrated from the perspective of the prophet himself, yet the prophet is portrayed not so much as a communicator of the word of Yahweh, but as a receiver of it. At another level, however, we see how the mountains, Jerusalem and others, as well as the exiles, are also the *addressees* of the speech acts that Ezekiel is told to utter. At another level still, those to whom the book was presented are the addressees of the *book*.

Secondly, often persons other than the addressee will hear / read one's text. These Wolterstorff terms the *audience*. Within this audience, there may be some for whom it was intended that they read or hear what was said. This group he calls the *intended audience*. Within this *intended audience*, there are (potentially) two groups: the speaker or writer may have intended that particular people be in that audience (IA.1), or it may be that anyone of a certain sort would be the audience (IA.2). Where the prophet is

²⁴¹ Pace Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, who argues that Ezekiel did in fact deliver the oracles in person. For a cogent defence of the majority view that Ezekiel prophesied exclusively in Babylon, see Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp27-38.

²⁴² Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, pp54ff.

instructed to address speech acts to addressees other than the exiles, the prophet's intended audience (IA.1) is the exiles in Babylon (3:11); indeed, the addressees are addressees in form only, since there is no indication that the prophet did indeed address his words to those whom he is apparently instructed to address.²⁴³ In these instances, it is not the addressees who are expected to respond to the word of Yahweh, but the intended audience, the exilic community. Where the prophet is instructed to address speech acts to the exiles, the identity of the addressees and the intended audience is the same.²⁴⁴ With regard to the book as a whole, it is likely that the intended audience (IA.1) is the same as the addressees. We shall look at their identity below. Whether the speaker or writer intended that people of a particular sort (i.e. IA.2) would hear / read the book of Ezekiel depends not least on an understanding of the nature of inspiration of the book as a whole, and lies outside the scope of our study.²⁴⁵

Thirdly, a single illocutionary act may have more than one addressee – one may address one's remarks to a number of people. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet himself is, as we have seen, the primary addressee of Yahweh's word. There are, though, other addressees of the prophet's words envisaged.

This, Wolterstorff says, is more obvious than the fourth point, that a single locutionary act may say different things to different addressees.²⁴⁶ He gives the example of a mother at the evening family meal asserting, 'Only two more days until Christmas.' He observes that, to her children, the meaning is presumably something like 'Isn't it exciting?' or perhaps, 'Be patient!', but to her husband, she might mean 'Stop going off to the golf course and get the shopping done instead!' Thus one locutionary act ('Only two more days until Christmas') may contain more than one illocutionary act. An act of imagination, of interpretation, is required on the part of the hearer or reader to discern the illocutionary force of the locutionary act. In the book of Ezekiel, the addressees of a speech act are not differentiated one from another at any point, such that the illocutionary force could be seen to be different for different addressees. Clearly this could not be the case for Yahweh's words to the prophet, since he alone is the

²⁴³ This is not tautological. Because the addressees were not the intended audience, it does not *necessarily* mean that the prophet did not speak to them. It is quite possible for a person to address another, while the addressee is not the intended audience at all. When British Prime Minister Tony Blair replies on television to a question by television presenter David Frost, formally he will be addressing David Frost, but his intended audience is the viewing public, not David Frost.

²⁴⁴ These include oracles that Ezekiel is to address to false prophets (13:2ff.), the leaders ('shepherds') of Israel (34:7, 9), the exilic community as a whole (chs. 14, 18, 20, 36), and princes (45:9). In many of these oracles, it is not surprising, then, that there are direct calls to action aimed at those whom the prophet is to address (14:6; 18:30f.; 20:30, 39; 33:11b; 36:32b; 45:9).

²⁴⁵ Cf. for example, the claim in 1 Peter that 'it was revealed to them [i.e. the prophets] that they were serving not themselves but you, in regard to the things that have now been announced to you through those who brought you good news by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look!' (1 Pet. 1:12).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Thiselton's observations about 'the capacities of a single speech-act to perform a *variety* of illocutionary functions.' See Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics*, (London, Marshall Pickering, 1992), p290.

addressee. It could, though, be the case for Ezekiel's words he is to utter to his addressees / intended audience.

In general, the intended audience is perceived as a unity, as 'the house of Israel.' In that respect, Joyce is right to point to the corporate nature both of judgement and restoration.²⁴⁷ There are, however, hints of a possible 'self-differentiation' within 'the house of Israel' dependent on the attitudes of those hearing Ezekiel's words. One striking example is that found in 3:27. By way of modifying the apparently blanket statement about Ezekiel's dumbness, Yahweh continues in v.27,

“But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh’; let those who will hear, hear; and let those who refuse to hear, refuse; for they are a rebellious house.”

Here is a tacit acknowledgement, even anticipation, that there could be different responses to Ezekiel's words. In 11:14-20, in response to the self-centred, self-satisfied statement of those in Jerusalem who claim that they, and not those in exile, will possess the land, Yahweh promises restoration to those in exile. In the difficult v.21, Yahweh announces, 'but as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads.'²⁴⁸ The most obvious reference here is to those in Jerusalem in v.15, who are marked by 'detestable things' and 'abominations' (v.18). However, Allen and Block are right to see here a reference to those in exile who are also marked by idolatry (14:1-11; cf. 20:32), and whose heart (v.19) needs renewing.²⁴⁹ Thus in the same locutionary act at the same time to the same set of addressees, Ezekiel may be both condemning and promising, depending on the attitude and heart of those addressees.²⁵⁰

Fifthly, a given text (locutionary act) can be used *on different occasions* to say different things (or to re-say the same thing) to the same or different addressees. The important distinction that Wolterstorff wants to maintain here is that saying something by *authoring* a text is different from saying something by *presenting* a text to someone, whether it is a text that one has oneself authored, or one that someone else has authored.²⁵¹ The illocutionary force may change by using someone else's speech, or by a person performing the same locutionary act in a different context. Wenk gives the

²⁴⁷ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp54-55 (judgement / repentance), pp112-13 (renewal).

²⁴⁸ See Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p129 for a discussion of some of the textual issues.

²⁴⁹ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p166; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p355. Other instances where there is evidence of (potential) distinctions in the addressees include 20:38 and 34:17-22. See further Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, pp79-80.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Möller's observation on prophetic judgement oracles that 'it is the addressees who "decide" what the speech act counts as'. Karl Möller, 'Words of (In-)evitable Certitude? Reflections on the Interpretation of Prophetic Oracles of Judgement', in Bartholomew, Green and Möller (eds.), *After Pentecost*, p368. There is a fine distinction between this point, and the closely related one, whereby the same *illocution* has different *perlocutionary* effects, such as hardening or contrition. This would obtain if no distinctions were recognised or envisaged within the intended audience (IA.1), but were only revealed after the locutionary act.

²⁵¹ Cf. Thiselton, *New Horizons*, p41.

example of a joke.²⁵² In the first setting, the force of the joke might be to entertain. However, the same joke could be told in a different setting, whether in oral or written form, to educate, by providing an example of good (or bad) humour. Thus though the prophet was the addressee and recipient of the word of Yahweh, its 're-presentation' within the book of Ezekiel may carry a different illocutionary force.²⁵³ For example, in Ezek. 2:1-7, the call to Ezekiel serves as Yahweh commissioning the prophet. That is the original illocutionary force of such a statement, as the narrative presents it to us. *In* saying these words to Ezekiel in the vision, Yahweh is commissioning the prophet. However, the author, *in* re-presenting these words to his readers, authenticates the prophet. Ezekiel is a prophet who has received Yahweh's call. He also warns the readers, as we shall see, not to be like Ezekiel's addressees but to be like the prophet.

In the same way, what was said previously by the prophet Ezekiel (or, more properly, what was instructed to be said) can now serve to speak to a different community by way of them being *presented* with the finished book of Ezekiel, which includes those same words.²⁵⁴ This is true, even if the audience of the book includes some who heard the words when they were first uttered. For example, oracles initially uttered by the prophet to assert the fall of Jerusalem (a speech act Austin would probably term a 'verdictive'²⁵⁵) can no longer function in that way once Jerusalem itself has fallen. By being re-presented within a larger 'speech event', these same oracles *do* something different. In order to think what, I must look at the related matter of the distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' speech acts. Yule outlines this clearly.²⁵⁶

An indirect speech act is one where there is 'an indirect relationship' between the 'structure' of the speech act and its 'function.'²⁵⁷ An example he gives is the utterance, 'It's cold outside.' When this utterance is used to make the statement, 'I hereby tell you about the weather,' it is functioning as a 'direct' speech act. Its structure is declarative, and it functions to make a statement. However, when this utterance is used to make a command or request, 'I hereby request of you that you close the door,' it is functioning as an 'indirect' speech act. Though its structure is declarative, it functions not to make a

²⁵² Matthias Wenk, *The Holy Spirit and the Ethical / Religious Life of the People of God in Luke-Acts*, PhD, Brunel University, 1998, p106 n41.

²⁵³ Though care needs to be taken here, since questions concerning the historicity of particular events could be raised by distinguishing between events in Ezekiel's ministry and those recorded in the book. We have access only to the literary account.

²⁵⁴ Cf. Ronald E. Clements, 'The Chronology of Redaction in Ezekiel 1-24', in *EHB*, p290. He comments, 'The original prophetic message possessed a clear and firmly defined context dictated by the historical and political situation in which it was given. As a written prophecy, however, preserved through a period when that original context had receded into the past, it acquired a new context, partly provided by the new historical situation that had arisen, but also very substantially affected by the larger literary context in which it was now placed.'

²⁵⁵ Austin, *How To Do Things*, p150. Austin categorises 'verdictives' as 'typified by the giving of a verdict, as the name implies, by a jury, arbitrator, or umpire. But they need not be final; they may be, for example, an estimate, reckoning, or appraisal.'

²⁵⁶ See Yule, *Pragmatics*, pp54ff.

²⁵⁷ Yule, *Pragmatics*, p55.

statement about the weather, but as a request or command that you close the door. In the case of the oracles of judgement on Jerusalem re-presented to the book's audience, they do not function as 'direct' speech acts. Though they are declarative, they do not make a statement, 'I hereby tell you about the destiny of Jerusalem,' *since the book's addressees already know*. Rather, as an 'indirect' speech act, they request or command the audience to repent, to distance themselves from any allegiance to Jerusalem and from what caused such a downfall. In other words, and this is critical to my reading of the book, some oracles acquire a new life, and a new illocutionary force comprehensible by seeing them as 'indirect' speech acts. Through such oracles, the readers of the book are called to repentance.²⁵⁸

This analysis means that it is not *necessary* to posit different addressees (and an intended audience) of the book from those who had, in fact, heard the prophet himself speak. Oracles that they had (mostly) heard before could have been presented again with a new illocutionary force. This observation does not demonstrate that they *were* the same addressees. What it does do is show that the book of Ezekiel need not be simply a collection of the prophet's oracles, even if it be granted that the addressees had heard some (or all) of them before.

If we turn now from categorising the addressees and seeing how Yahweh's word can be understood as coming to them to the *identity* of the addressees, we immediately find ourselves potentially entering complex debates over dating, provenance and historicity. The scope of this thesis, however, will limit our involvement in these debates somewhat. Above, we identified four different communication situations in which Yahweh's word can be seen. The first three, Yahweh addressing the prophet, the prophet speaking to his intended audiences, and Yahweh's statutes and ordinances being re-presented to the exiles, are all wholly 'within' the book, so an examination of the relationship between Yahweh's דְבַר and Yahweh's word that comes in each one of these three situations can be conducted 'within' the book itself. In other words, we can explore the relationship between דְבַר and the word that comes to the addressees / intended audience implied in the text without entering these complex debates. The fourth communication situation, however, which speaks of Yahweh's word as it comes via the book itself, *does* require us to make judgements about the identity of the addressees. Their identity is important for two reasons. First, an understanding of how the oracles or visions that came to Ezekiel function when re-presented to the addressees of the book depends on precisely to whom these words are addressed. There is, though, the problem of circularity at this point. The identity of the addressees is determined by the content of the book. The function of the book is then determined by the identity of the addressees. Such circularity is not ultimately avoidable. The best approach is to

²⁵⁸ See further pp155ff. below.

assess the degree to which the hypothesised addressees fits with the proposed understanding of the book and its oracles within it.

Secondly, the identity of the addressees is important within this thesis not so much in its own right, since we can assess the book's understanding of the relationship between God's רִיבָה and the word that comes to its implied readers without certain knowledge. Rather, I need to make judgements about the book as a whole, and the addressees of the book, because Part II will explore the book's portrayal of word, רִיבָה and prophetic inspiration within the context of possible historical developments. That is only possible when the book of Ezekiel itself is located within the continuum that is Israel's history.

Although a consideration of historical developments might suggest that we do need, after all, to be concerned for the historical location of the individual oracles in the book, this is diminished by the fact that the book *as a whole* points to a *terminus ad quem* of around 538 B.C.E, and not later than 516 B.C.E,²⁵⁹ and to the addressees being the exiles in Babylon. Two factors point in this direction.

First, negatively, the book does not reflect a post-exilic situation. There are a number of strands of evidence that lead to this conclusion. First, nothing in the book points to the return from exile as being an historical fact. Even the Gog oracle, which speaks of the situation where the return to the land has happened, still portrays such a return as future. Secondly, the book reveals no 'hint' of the Persian empire succeeding the Babylonian.²⁶⁰ Thirdly, the book's assertion that the whole population of Judah was annihilated would have made little sense in view of the conflict between those who returned from exile and those who remained (and survived) in Judah.²⁶¹ Fourthly, 'the book does not address any of the specific issues that arose in the post-exilic community in Jerusalem, such as dyarchic leadership, mixed marriages and the deterioration of Judah's economic conditions.'²⁶² Fifthly, the book does not give any indication of a Diaspora setting, speaking neither of how to worship Yahweh in another land, nor how to cope with living in a foreign land with little or no expectation of a return.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ This is not to say that there have not been subsequent textual glosses. It is to say that a distinction can be made between textual criticism and redaction criticism. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, pxxvii; Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp9-10. For the redactional shaping of the book, see also Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetic Books*, The Biblical Seminar 20, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993), ch. 4; and, in particular, chs. 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15 in the collection of essays by Clements (Ronald E. Clements, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon*, (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996)). For Clements, 'virtually all the substantive material in the book belongs to sixth century B.C.' (Ronald E. Clements, 'The Ezekiel Tradition: Prophecy in a Time of Crisis', in *idem*, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p157). In his commentary, though, he dates the Gog oracle to 'at least two centuries after Ezekiel's time' (Clements, *Ezekiel*, p170). Rooker, from a linguistic perspective, concludes that the book typifies 'the transitional link between pre-exilic and post-exilic BH [Biblical Hebrew]' and notes that this is 'consistent with the exilic setting reflected in the book.' Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, p186; so too Hurvitz, *Linguistic Study*.

²⁶⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pxxvi.

²⁶¹ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p9 n28.

²⁶² Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p232.

²⁶³ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p232.

The second factor in arriving at an exilic date and a Babylonian provenance is the converse of the first factor. The book itself makes sense in precisely that situation because it tackles the question of ‘whether “Israel” has a future or would disappear from history.’²⁶⁴ When read from the perspective of an exilic audience located between, on the one hand, Yahweh’s judgement seen in the destruction of Jerusalem and an audience unresponsive to the prophet Ezekiel’s message, and, on the other hand, the return from exile, the book makes best sense. As we saw earlier in our review of English monographs on Ezekiel, the reinstatement of the book of Ezekiel has given rise to a number of studies which in turn serve to reinforce the picture given of a book essentially complete by the end of the exile. The major exception is Tuell, who, although regarding Ezek. 40-48 as having a clear shape and purpose, dates the second of the two sources he discerns in these chapters to the reign of King Darius I in the Persian era (521-486BC).²⁶⁵ However, it is not easy to see how Tuell’s view relates to the first factor above.²⁶⁶ Further, the transmission of holiness envisaged in Ezek. 44:19, a text dated by Tuell to the Persian era, does not sit easily with the historical understanding embodied in Hag. 2:12, where it seems that holiness is *not* transmissible through contact with clothes.

In short, Kuenen’s comment, originally refuting suggestions that the book of Ezekiel is pseudepigraphic, is clearly applicable to all attempts to remove the book from an exilic date and provenance:

‘The book of Ezekiel...if removed from Babylonia and the exilic era to Judaea and a later century, becomes a purposeless and unintelligible piece of writing. Whoever in the future again denies its authenticity should be mindful of the duty to give at least some account of the purpose the alleged author had in mind, of the knowledge he displays, and of the expectations and ordinances he postulates.’²⁶⁷

6. Summary

The relationship between Yahweh’s word, on the one hand, and the different addressees (actual or envisaged) and the different audiences, on the other, is a complex one in the book. Although it is at once apparent that everything is subsumed within Yahweh’s word coming to the prophet, it is also apparent that Yahweh’s word can be seen both in the words Ezekiel is commanded to utter, in the statutes and ordinances that the exiles are supposed to obey, and in the contents of the book itself. Speech-act theory and Wolterstorff’s analysis of issues surrounding the recipients of a speech act provide a helpful framework within which to think about Yahweh’s word and its relation to the different people groups to whom that word comes. In particular, the possibilities that

²⁶⁴ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p232.

²⁶⁵ Tuell, *Law of the Temple*.

²⁶⁶ See further Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p252.

²⁶⁷ Abraham Kuenen, *Histor.-krit. Einleitung in die Bücher des A.T.*, (Leipzig, 1880), I, 2, p302, quoted in Shalom Spiegel, ‘Ezekiel or Pseudo-Ezekiel?’, *HTR* 24 (1931), p252.

one speech event can have a different illocutionary force for different addressees, and that the same words can have a different illocutionary force by virtue of being represented in a different context, perhaps as an indirect, rather than a direct speech act, provide help to explain how the *book* of Ezekiel functions as Yahweh's word. Such a delineation will be valuable later in the thesis in illuminating how Yahweh's word relates to Yahweh's רִיחַ. Finally, the addressees of the book are to be seen, probably, as the second generation of exiles in Babylon.

B. YAHWEH'S רִיחַ IN EZEKIEL

Within the book of Ezekiel, רִיחַ carries a similar breadth of meanings to that found in the rest of the Old Testament. Even within one passage (37:1-14), its meaning oscillates between the transporting 'spirit of Yahweh' (v.1), the animating 'breath of life' (vv.5-10), the 'wind / points of the compass' (v.9), and Yahweh's 'life-giving spirit' (v.14).

Since many instances will recur throughout the thesis, the purpose of this section is not to provide a thorough analysis, but to point to areas of scholarly agreement and disagreement, and to highlight the critical instances to which we must return in subsequent chapters. Four works will serve as the basis for our analysis: those of Albertz / Westermann,²⁶⁸ Block,²⁶⁹ Woodhouse²⁷⁰ and Zimmerli.²⁷¹ The first is a sensitive, comprehensive dictionary article on רִיחַ in the Old Testament. The other three are articles specifically on רִיחַ in Ezekiel providing a good spectrum of opinion. None is simply concerned with theological uses. This is important because it must be remembered that in some cases, anthropological or meteorological uses might have theological importance in view of the fluidity of the categories.

1. Accepted meanings of רִיחַ in Ezekiel

a) Meteorological

There are six occasions in the book where it is generally agreed that רִיחַ is used in the meteorological sense of 'wind.'²⁷² In each case רִיחַ is the superordinate, further defined by a hyponym or qualifying noun to which it is bound. These can be categorised slightly differently, depending, for example, on the significance given to the kind of east wind mentioned (so Block speaks of the east wind in 27:26 as a 'violent gale,' while the east wind in 17:10 and 19:12 is 'the scorching sirocco'²⁷³). There is general agreement that רִיחַ סְעָרָה in 1:4 is a theophanic storm wind, as is apparent from the cloud and fire. This wind is concomitant with the divine theophany, but not in any sense to be confused with

²⁶⁸ 'רִיחַ', *TLOT* 3, pp1202-20.

²⁶⁹ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', pp27-49.

²⁷⁰ Woodhouse, "'Spirit" in the Book of Ezekiel', pp1-22.

²⁷¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, pp566-68 (Excursus: רִיחַ in the Book of Ezekiel).

²⁷² 1:4; 13:11, 13; 17:10; 19:12; 27:26.

²⁷³ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p32.

Yahweh.²⁷⁴ Unlike in the other instances of רִיחַ as ‘wind’, it is neither a punishing nor a destructive wind,²⁷⁵ though there are suggestive links to the next two occurrences to be examined: those of סְעָרוֹת רִיחַ in 13:11 and 13:13. Here there is general agreement that this ‘wind’ is a storm wind, linked with Yahweh’s judgement that will come on the false prophets who whitewash fragile walls. The final three instances, רִיחַ הַקָּרִים in 17:10, 19:12 and 27:26, all speak of an east wind, closely linked with Yahweh’s judgement because of its harsh effects. Particularly striking about these is the clearly masculine gender of רִיחַ in 19:12 and 27:26. The precise significance of the gender is debated, though the meteorological use of רִיחַ often is masculine.²⁷⁶ If a distinction is to be drawn between the winds here and the quasi-theological wind of Exod. 14:21 (cf. Exod. 15:8, 10), it lies in the fact that, although the winds in Ezekiel are carrying out Yahweh’s (destructive) purposes, they are only agents of Yahweh in so far as the enemies of which these winds metaphorically speak are Yahweh’s agents.²⁷⁷

Secondly, there are six instances in the book where רִיחַ has the sense ‘direction.’ This meaning is derived from ‘wind,’ as can be seen clearly in 5:2, where Ezekiel is to scatter one third of his hair ‘to the wind’ (לְרִיחַ); this is interpreted and expanded later (5:10-12) as Yahweh scattering the people ‘to every wind’ (לְכָל-רִיחַ). This meaning can also be seen in 12:14 and 17:21, where again people are scattered ‘to every wind,’ and in 37:9, where Ezekiel is to summon הַרְוּחַ to come from the four ‘winds’ (רִיחוֹת).

Thirdly, there are five instances of רִיחַ in 42:16-20, where the sense is that of ‘side.’ Ezekiel witnesses the man, whose appearance shone like bronze (40:3), measuring the temple area all round. The first four instances, all in the construct state, are qualified by points of the compass in the absolute. The final one describes how the man measured the four ‘sides’ (רִיחוֹת). This meaning is the ultimate extension of רִיחַ as ‘direction.’

b) Anthropological

There are five anthropological uses where there is broad agreement.

In the first example, which is the second occurrence of רִיחַ in 3:14, Ezekiel describes his internal state as he ‘went’ after receiving his commissioning. In contrast with the רִיחַ which lifted him up, his own רִיחַ was somewhat depressed (מַר בְּתַמַּת רִיחֵי).

²⁷⁴ Cf. Lys, *Rûach*, pp121-22.

²⁷⁵ Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p47.

²⁷⁶ Lys notes that when רִיחַ means wind, the gender is ‘uncertain’, and suggests the masculine gender in 19:12 and 27:26 can be accounted for because its usage is metaphorical, and could be hinting at the Babylonian invader (19:12) or the enemies of Tyre (27:26) (Lys, *Rûach*, p123). For a discussion of the masculine use of רִיחַ, see Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAḤ*, pp182-88. He observes that ‘the criterion for classification lying at the base of the change [i.e. of gender] still awaits its discovery’ (‘Das dem Wechsel zugrunde liegende Einteilungskriterium harret noch seiner Entdeckung’) (p186). Nonetheless, he observes that the masculine tends to be used when speaking of ‘wind’, and in particular the east wind (p187). For further attempts to explain the gender, see Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, pp66-70, and, more recently, Erasmus Gaß, ‘Genus und Semantik am Beispiel von „theologischem“ rûh’, *BN* 109 (2001), pp45-55.

²⁷⁷ Lys, *Rûach*, p123.

רוּחַ here speaks of an emotional state or mood, or ‘impulsive...psychic force’ of ‘anger’,²⁷⁸ describing Ezekiel’s reaction to his commissioning. This is one meaning within a ‘rich semantic field’ (i.e. anthropological uses of רוּחַ) which describes ‘an entire range of human frames of mind, from the strongest emotions to the failure of all vitality.’²⁷⁹

In 13:3, רוּחַ describes the source of the false prophets’ prophesying, speaking of ‘their mind’ (רוּחָם) in a way parallel to לֵב (13:2).

A similar sense of רוּחַ is found in 11:5. The prophet, within a vision, is instructed to say to the twenty-five men whom he has ‘seen’ at the east gate of the temple, who are full of pride over Jerusalem, ‘I know the things that come into your mind (רוּחְכֶם).’ Again, there is the contrast between two instances of רוּחַ in the same verse. Here, Yahweh’s רוּחַ falls on the prophet, in an ‘external’ fashion so that Ezekiel can know and speak of what is going on ‘internally’, what is ‘going up’ into the רוּחַ of the addressees, which clearly is in contradiction with Yahweh’s mind.²⁸⁰

In 20:32, רוּחַ again speaks of the ‘intellect’²⁸¹ or ‘mind,’ in this case the mind of the exiles. Woodhouse translates רוּחַ in 20:32 as ‘breath’, given the parallelism with the second half of the verse (“‘What is on your breath shall never happen – that which you are saying...’”²⁸²), but the sense is essentially the same, since what is being spoken of is the generation of thoughts. It is impossible here not to think of the corrupt רוּחַ that the exiles have, a רוּחַ that needs renewing or replacing.²⁸³

Finally, in 21:12 [ET 21:7], Ezekiel is told what to say when the exiles ask him why he is moaning. In his reply, he is to say that, when the news of Jerusalem’s fall comes, ‘every רוּחַ will faint.’ Here רוּחַ is the ‘seat of the emotions’²⁸⁴ or the ‘psychic vigor’²⁸⁵ that is to be destroyed. Rather than appearing synonymous with לֵב, as in the previous two instances discussed, רוּחַ here is in parallel.

2. Disagreements over the meaning of רוּחַ in Ezekiel

We have observed above general agreements among the four commentators on the meaning of רוּחַ in a number of places. In this next section, I shall look at those instances where commentators disagree. There are broadly two kinds of disagreement. The first is where there comes disagreement about how רוּחַ should be understood or rendered

²⁷⁸ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT3*, p1210.

²⁷⁹ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT3*, p1210.

²⁸⁰ Cf. Lys, *Rûach*, p138; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p49.

²⁸¹ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT3*, p1212.

²⁸² Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p14.

²⁸³ It is striking in this regard to note that only Israel ever has a רוּחַ in Ezekiel. When the same conception, of thoughts ‘going up’ occurs in 38:10, the word used is לֵבָב. The owner of the heart is Gog. See Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p49 n134.

²⁸⁴ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p46.

²⁸⁵ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT3*, p1210.

within a particular domain. The second kind is where there is disagreement over the domain *in which* a particular occurrence should be placed.

a) Anthropological

Three almost identical uses of רִיחַ in the book occur in 11:19, 18:31 and 36:26. In 11:19 and 36:26, Yahweh promises to give the exiles ‘one / a new heart and a new spirit (רִיחַ חֲדָשָׁה).’ In 18:31, the exiles are told to get for themselves what Yahweh elsewhere has promised, ‘a new heart and a new spirit.’ While there is agreement that the occurrences are anthropological, speaking of the human ‘spirit,’ there is disagreement about the precise significance. Here, again, רִיחַ occurs alongside לֵב. Some see רִיחַ as essentially synonymous with לֵב as ‘will.’ Such a view is apparent in the expanded rendering, ‘new center of volition necessary for repentance and new obedience to the commandments’ and the accompanying comment about the ‘equation’ of רִיחַ and לֵב.²⁸⁶ Block, however, while seeing רִיחַ as ‘the seat of one’s mental activity’²⁸⁷ in 11:19 and 18:31 (thus closely paralleling לֵב), suggests a distinction between the two in 36:26 on the grounds of the different way לֵב and רִיחַ are developed.²⁸⁸ Certainly the new רִיחַ is not a temporary gift to equip or fortify the people for a particular task. In addition, the presence of a corrupt רִיחַ in 11:5 (albeit in those in Jerusalem) points to the need for an internal transformation and suggests essential synonymity with לֵב. At the same time, it is difficult to avoid the thought that רִיחַ is not essentially human in the same way as לֵב is, and that רִיחַ is somehow ‘complementary’.²⁸⁹

b) Theological / Anthropological

There are four instances in 37:1-10 where רִיחַ clearly speaks of the ‘breath of life’²⁹⁰ or the ‘agency of animation’.²⁹¹ These occur in vv.5, 6, 8 and 10. The dry bones lack רִיחַ, and Ezekiel is told to prophesy to the bones, and declare to them that Yahweh will put רִיחַ in them. In v.10, רִיחַ enters them. All see the sense ‘breath of life,’ too, in the call to ‘the breath’ in v.9 (three instances of רִיחַ), but Zimmerli also notes the sense ‘wind’ too, and even the link with the ‘world of the divine.’²⁹² His comment is a significant one: ‘Here we can ascertain...the remarkable lack of clarity in some statements in the book of Ezekiel which prevents the clear differentiation of areas of meaning.’²⁹³ In somewhat similar fashion, Block, in analysing the occurrences of רִיחַ in Ezekiel, sees a bifurcation (meteorological, non-meteorological), rather than a trifurcation, from the meaning

²⁸⁶ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1212; cf. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel* 2, p567), who observes the parallelism between the two, and notes that the only ‘inconsistency’ is in the qualification of the ‘old heart’ as ‘stone’.

²⁸⁷ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p45.

²⁸⁸ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, pp38-39; cf. p46.

²⁸⁹ Cf. Knierim, *Task*, p282; also Wolff, *Anthropology*, p38; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p125. See further pp213ff. below.

²⁹⁰ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1209.

²⁹¹ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, pp31, 37-38.

²⁹² Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, p567; ‘רִיחַ’, *ThWAT* 7, p394.

²⁹³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, p567.

‘wind’ (p29), such that it is not always clear whether the non-meteorological uses of רִיחַ are essentially anthropological or theological. When he speaks of the ‘agency of animation’, it does seem that he treats it as something essentially ‘theological’, particularly since he speaks of ‘animating effect of the presence of the *spirit*’.²⁹⁴

c) Theological / Meteorological

There are seven occasions in the book where רִיחַ is used in connection with the transportation of the prophet (3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5).²⁹⁵ In six of these (not 37:1), רִיחַ is absolute, anarthrous, and marked as feminine by the finite verb(s) of which it is the subject. In each of these six, רִיחַ ‘carried / picked up’ (נשא) Ezekiel. In 3:14, after ‘picking up’ Ezekiel, רִיחַ ‘took’ (לקח) him; in 8:3, 11:1, 24a and 43:5, after ‘picking up’ Ezekiel, רִיחַ ‘brought’ (בוא – hif.) him; in the seventh (37:1), רִיחַ is no longer the subject, but preceded by the preposition בְּ. In addition, it is in the construct state, with Yahweh as the absolute (בְּרִיחַ יְהוָה). The phrase serves to identify the agent of Yahweh’s action of bringing the prophet out (יצא – hif.) and ‘setting him’ (נח – hif.) in the desert.

These are not actual transportations, but occur in visions that Ezekiel is having. In 3:12 and 3:14, Ezekiel returns at the end of his commissioning vision to the exiles amongst whom he has been all the time (cf. 1:1-3). In 8:3 and 11:24, visions are explicitly mentioned, while in 11:1 and 43:5, such transportation occurs in the middle of a vision. While there is no mention of vision in 37:1, it is clear that the incident with the dry bones takes place within a vision, as we saw above.²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, they are literal transportations in the sense that within the vision there is real movement, as is evident from the parallel in 8:3 between the action of what looked like a hand of the human-like figure, in taking Ezekiel by the lock of his head, and that of רִיחַ, in lifting him up between earth and heaven. Block notes the degree of ambiguity raised by the fact that רִיחַ is anarthrous in the six occurrences, and argues that what transports Ezekiel is Yahweh’s ‘spirit.’ His chief reason is that the masculine verb forms in 8:7, 14, 16 (‘he brought me to...’) suggest ‘that the one conveying him [Ezekiel] about is the same as the person who speaks to him’²⁹⁷ (the nearest masculine antecedent is ‘the Lord Yahweh’ in v.1). Woodhouse, on the other hand, cites Greenberg in rendering 3:12 as ‘wind’: ‘as opposed to “the wind from YHWH” that was believed to transport Elijah (I Kings 18:12; II Kings 2:16 - *ruḥ* YHWH is construed with masc. verbs), the “wind” that transported Ezekiel (construed with fem. verbs) is, to be sure, supernatural in origin, but

²⁹⁴ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p35 (my emphasis).

²⁹⁵ Block (‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p34) and Albertz and Westermann (‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, pp1213, 1207) regard רִיחַ in 11:24b as speaking also of the ‘agency of conveyance’, the others link it with the receiving of the divine vision.

²⁹⁶ See p34 above.

²⁹⁷ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p34; cf. Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p40: ‘On that occasion the three subjects, *iš*, *rvh*, and *yahweh* are not sharply distinguished.’ ‘Dabei werden die drei Subjekte *iš*, *rvh*, und *jahwe* nicht streng unterschieden.’

unattributed – another sign of reserve.²⁹⁸ Zimmerli comments that the anarthrous usage makes רִיחַ appear ‘to be an almost independently effective power’ though ‘in its activity we are dealing with effects brought about by Yahweh.’ Albertz and Westermann speak of the ‘intermediate position’ of רִיחַ ‘between the basic meaning “wind” and the fig. meaning “spirit”’.²⁹⁹ Although the occurrence in 37:1 provides conclusive evidence, in Block’s view, that what is meant is Yahweh’s spirit,³⁰⁰ it is possible for רִיחַ יְהוָה to speak of ‘the wind / breath of Yahweh’ (Isa. 40:7).

d) Theological / Anthropological / Meteorological

In two other instances which Zimmerli sees as closely related to those mentioned above in so far as they all speak of ‘the רִיחַ of the specific, prophetic experience of a call,’³⁰¹ רִיחַ enters the prophet, prostrate before Yahweh’s glory, and sets him on his feet (נִתְבֵּן רִיחַ - 2:2; 3:24). If the transporting רִיחַ acts ‘externally’ on the prophet, lifting him up almost as an object, רִיחַ here acts internally, entering him. In 2:2, the entry of רִיחַ is linked with Yahweh speaking to the prophet, such that Block sees hints of prophetic inspiration here,³⁰² as does Zimmerli, who regards רִיחַ as making the prophet ‘capable of speech’ after being in a ‘state of collapse.’³⁰³ Both, however, consider the predominant notion here as that of רִיחַ as the ‘agency of animation.’ In this respect they are similar to Woodhouse, who regards רִיחַ as ‘breath,’³⁰⁴ and Albertz and Westermann, who regard these instances as examples of the ‘vitality’ of the individual, albeit ‘altered theologically’.³⁰⁵ There is some agreement that the instances here are specifically theological. Block asks, ‘Is it a sudden gust of wind...? Or is it the spirit of Yahweh?’ and concludes it is the latter. The scene is a royal court scene; ‘only the divine spirit could give him the authority or the energy to stand erect before God.’³⁰⁶ There is, though, some disagreement about what is meant. Thus Woodhouse agrees with Block in seeing it as a ‘divine רִיחַ,’ but prefers to see it not as ‘spirit’ but as Yahweh’s ‘invigorating breath accompanying the speech of God’.³⁰⁷ It might seem, then, that these two occurrences ought to be categorised as ‘theological’ disagreement. However, as we shall see below, other commentators regard רִיחַ here either as ‘wind’ or as ‘breath’.

The second main area of disagreement within this category centres around the six occurrences of רִיחַ linked with the movement of the living creatures and the throne in chs. 1 and 10. These will involve our close attention partly because they are the first instances in the book where there is some disagreement, and partly because I shall not

²⁹⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 1-20, p70, cited in Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p14.

²⁹⁹ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1207.

³⁰⁰ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p34.

³⁰¹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, p567.

³⁰² Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p41.

³⁰³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, p566.

³⁰⁴ Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, pp12-13.

³⁰⁵ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1208.

³⁰⁶ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p37.

³⁰⁷ Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p14.

be discussing them later. The first two, in 1:12 and 1:20a, explain the movement of the living creatures (v.12) and the movement of the wheels with them (v.20); ‘wherever אֶל אֲשֶׁר יְהִי־שָׁמָּה הָרוּחַ לָלֶכֶת יֵלְכוּ (1:12)). Zimmerli and Albertz / Westermann propose that הָרוּחַ speaks of the ‘organ of the decision of the will’³⁰⁸ or ‘one’s center of action...the unique inner compulsion’³⁰⁹ that directs the way to be taken, and ensures that all move together. Woodhouse, however, says that this understanding has ‘no basis in the immediate context and seems to overlook the dominance in the whole scene of the storm wind of v.4.’³¹⁰ He prefers the meaning ‘wind.’ The sense, then, is that the living creatures are carried by the storm wind. Block, however, says that the sense ‘wind’ is ‘impossible at this point.’³¹¹ He argues that הָרוּחַ here is ‘the vitalizing principle of life that comes from God himself.’³¹²

Before examining the evidence and arguments surrounding these two instances, we need to look at the other occurrences of רוּחַ in the visions concerning movement of the living creatures and throne, in 1:20b, in 1:21 and in 10:17,³¹³ because Block, Zimmerli and Albertz / Westermann treat all five occurrences together, and Block, in particular, regards these three as determinative of the interpretation of the first two. Woodhouse alone detects a shift in meaning between the occurrences, from רוּחַ as ‘wind’ to רוּחַ as ‘breath’ in v.20b and v.21 (and in 10:17), so that it is the breath of the living creatures that moves the wheels.³¹⁴

In each one of these latter three occurrences, רוּחַ occurs in a construct relationship with the absolute, הַחַיָּה. While some commentators take הַחַיָּה as a collective noun, ‘living creatures’³¹⁵ or a distributive,³¹⁶ and Greenberg takes the singular here as stressing ‘the unity of the ensemble’,³¹⁷ there are five reasons, which, taken together, point towards rendering the whole phrase ‘the breath / spirit of life’, with הַחַיָּה understood as ‘life’. This is not simply something anthropological, but the divinely-given, animating, vivifying breath.³¹⁸

First, the living creatures are until this point in the opening vision always referred to with the plural, חַיִּים (1:5, 13, 15, 19). Although this point might seem to be negated somewhat by 1:22, where הַחַיָּה clearly is a collective noun (also 10:15 and 20), such a shift to the singular is explicable. Lys explains the occurrence of the singular in 1:22 as

³⁰⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p566.

³⁰⁹ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT 3*, p1212.

³¹⁰ Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p9.

³¹¹ Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p36.

³¹² Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p36.

³¹³ The second of the three occurrences of רוּחַ in 1:20 is almost certainly due to dittography. See GKC 123d n2; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p87.

³¹⁴ Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p11.

³¹⁵ E.g. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, pp18, 27; cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p87. So too among modern English versions of the Bible: RSV, NRSV, NIV, ESV, NASV, NJB.

³¹⁶ Suggested by Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p27.

³¹⁷ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p48; cf. also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p87.

³¹⁸ So Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, pp36-37; Lys, *Rûach*, pp127-28; Neve, *Spirit of God*, pp95-96.

an ‘error’ occurring because of the three occurrences in the singular in 1:20-21, and would emend to a plural.³¹⁹ Such an emendation is not necessary for *הַחַיָּה* to be rendered ‘life’ in 1:20 and 21, and ‘living creatures’ in 1:22. The ‘attraction’ to the singular in 1:22 does not mean that the referent need be the same. Nonetheless, evidence from the LXX and Vulgate supports Lys,³²⁰ as does the next occurrence of the word where it refers to the living creatures, 3:13; there it is plural again.

The second piece of evidence supporting the rendering ‘breath / spirit of life’ comes from the LXX and the Vulgate. They both are careful to distinguish ‘living creature(s)’ from ‘life’. In 1:20-21, they render *הַחַיָּה הַחַיָּה* with *πνεῦμα ζωῆς* and *spiritus vitae* (‘spirit of life’), while they render v.22 *הַחַיָּה הַחַיָּה* with *ὑπὲρ κεφαλῆς αὐτοῖς τῶν ζώων* and *super caput animalium* (‘over the head of the living creatures’). Thus they distinguish clearly between two senses of the root *חַיָּה*.³²¹ Further, in chapter 10, where undisputed references to ‘living creature(s)’ are always rendered in the MT by the singular, *הַחַיָּה* (10:15, 20), LXX and the Vulgate distinguish between *הַחַיָּה* as ‘living creature’ (*τὸ ζῷον*, *animal*) in vv.15, 20 and *הַחַיָּה* as ‘life’ in the phrase ‘breath / spirit of life’ (*πνεῦμα ζωῆς*, *spiritus...vitae*) in v.17. Given the distinction between singular and plural found in ch. 10, this provides evidence for Lys’ argument concerning the plural in 1:22. It also indicates, in the case of LXX, a clear understanding of the *הַחַיָּה הַחַיָּה* in 1:20c, 21 and 10:17 as ‘the breath / spirit of life’ and not directly related to the ‘living creatures’.

Thirdly, although the phrase here, *רוּחַ הַחַיָּה*, would be a unique way of designating the ‘spirit / breath of life’ in the Old Testament,³²² and although *חַיָּה* elsewhere in the book does speak of ‘wild animals’ (e.g. 5:17; 14:15, 21) or, in 10:15, 20, explicitly of the living creatures, yet *חַיָּה* can refer in Ezekiel to ‘life’ (7:13).³²³ Further, there are suggestive parallels in Gen. 1, where *נִפְשׁ חַיָּה* designates ‘living creatures’ in 1:24 (cf. LXX: *ψυχῆν ζῶσαν*), but ‘breath of life’ (cf. LXX: *ψυχῆν ζωῆς*) in 1:30.

Fourthly, although the living creatures in chapter 1 are clearly ‘alive’, given their movement (e.g. 1:24), there does seem to be a degree of reticence about their life, seen in the prefacing with *דְּמוּת* (1:5, 10, 13).³²⁴ Further, given Ezekiel’s clear reluctance throughout the book to countenance any rival to Yahweh, and to give no credence to idols or images,³²⁵ it would be strange for Ezekiel to focus on the ‘breath’ (*רוּחַ*) of these

³¹⁹ Lys, *Rûach*, pp127-28.

³²⁰ See below.

³²¹ BDB, p312 regards the meaning ‘life’ to be a subdivision within *חַיָּה*, ‘a living thing, animal’; however *HALOT*, p310 sees these two meanings as deriving from two homonyms. Neither treat the instances here as ‘life’.

³²² Elsewhere rendered by *נִפְשׁ חַיָּה* (Gen. 1:30), *נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים* (Gen. 2:7), *רוּחַ חַיִּים* (Gen. 6:17; 7:15), *נְשָׁמַת רוּחַ חַיִּים* (Gen. 7:22). Other instances use the lexemes *רוּחַ* or *נְשָׁמָה*.

³²³ It seems a late poetic form, closely related to *נִפְשׁ*. See *HALOT*, p310.

³²⁴ Although Lys is right to point out that the living creatures turn out to be inanimate temple objects, cherubim (Lys, *Rûach*, p128), such an understanding is not there for Ezekiel, or for the readers, at this point in the book.

³²⁵ See especially Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*.

living creatures given their subservient role with regard to the throne, their similarity to ANE skybearers and divine beings, and the anti-idol polemic of the prophets that the idols ‘have no breath in them’ (e.g. Jer. 10:14 - וְלֹא־רוּחַ בָּם; cf. also Hab. 2:19; Ps. 135:17).

The final reason comes from the sense. In each of these three instances, the phrase occurs as part of an explanation for the movement of the wheels, ‘and when they (i.e. the living creatures) rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for רוּחַ הַחַיִּים was in the wheels.’ It does not make sense to say that ‘the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels’ if this רוּחַ is to do with ‘the organ of decision of the will’ of these living creatures. The issue here is not the decision-making ability of the wheels, but their animation. This is not solved by arguing that ‘the spirit of the living creatures’ speaks of the ‘vivifying breath of the living creatures’ for as we have seen the independent life of the creatures is somewhat muted; further, nowhere in the Old Testament is anyone other than Yahweh the source of this vivifying ‘breath / spirit of life.’ It makes better sense to say that the ‘breath of life’ (or ‘the spirit of life’) was in the wheels, thus emphasising the fact that everything, even the normally inanimate wheels, is animated by Yahweh’s life-giving רוּחַ. It is for this reason that they move when the whole throne-unit moves.

If it be agreed that רוּחַ in 1:20b, 21 and 10:17 speaks of ‘breath / spirit of life,’ we are still left with the occurrences of הַרוּחַ in v.12 and v.20a. As noted above, some regard the referent here as determined by that of רוּחַ in 1:20b and 1:21. However, this is not necessary, since רוּחַ can shift its meaning within the same verse or even sentence (e.g. 11:5; 37:9), and indeed might seem unlikely, particularly since the first occurrence, in v.12, would then lack an interpretative clue until v.20.

In fact, to a reader or hearer, the context of v.12 and v.20a seems to favour the idea of רוּחַ as ‘wind.’ Where the article is attached to רוּחַ as here, it is either cataphoric, defined further by what follows, anaphoric, referring to a רוּחַ that has already been introduced, or speaks of what is the most obvious referent within the context (e.g. ‘wind’ (Eccl. 1:6; 8:8; Ezek. 37:9); ‘breath’ (Eccl. 11:5; Ezek. 37:10); ‘spirit’ (Hos. 9:7)).³²⁶

In view of the fact that ‘wind’ has already been spoken of in v.4, it is most likely from the context that the article is anaphoric, referring back to v.4. In addition, the only other occurrence of רוּחַ being the subject of הִלֵּךְ is in Eccl. 1:6; there, רוּחַ clearly is ‘wind.’ Although Lys argues that הַרוּחַ in v.12 does not refer to the storm wind in 1:4,³²⁷ none of his arguments is conclusive. That רוּחַ in 1:4 did not ‘propel God’s chariot’ but was an ‘announcer’ (*annonciateur*) of God’s presence is not gainsaid by the references in vv.12 and 20, since all we are told there is that the chariot goes where הַרוּחַ ‘would

³²⁶ Cf. *IBHS*, 13.5.

³²⁷ Lys, *Rûach*, p125.

go'. Further, the presence of the definite article does not serve to distinguish the two, since the indefinite 'wind' of v.4 would now be definite, and marked as such by the article. Even the shift in the gender of רִיחַ, from feminine in v.4 (the participle בָּאָהּ is feminine) to masculine in v.12 (the verb יִהְיֶה indicates a masculine subject), is not determinative since the 'living creatures' in the opening verses are sometimes regarded as feminine (e.g. the pronominal suffixes in vv.5, 12 and the pronouns in vv.5, 6) and sometimes as masculine (e.g. the pronominal suffixes in v.9 and the verb forms in vv.9, 12). It is certainly *plausible* that a distinction is being marked between רִיחַ in v.4 and in v.12 by the shift in gender, so it is right to look for a better understanding, but Block's view that 'wind' is 'impossible' here (see above) is overstated.³²⁸

If for the moment we grant that the use of the masculine רִיחַ, unique in Ezekiel, serves to distinguish the רִיחַ in v.12 from that in v.4, there is the question of referent. The use of the article can hardly be cataphoric, since the explanation is delayed until v.20. If not anaphoric, the article must be 'designating either a particular person or thing necessarily understood to be present or vividly portraying someone or something whose identity is not otherwise indicated.'³²⁹ It is theoretically possible that it could speak of the 'organ of the decision of the will' (Zimmerli) of the 'living creatures'. Certainly in Jdg. 8:3, the singular, רִיחַ, can be used distributively to refer to the רִיחַ of a group, but there the connotation is one of emotion. In Ezek. 13:3, similarly, רִיחַ is used distributively. However, it is hardly likely that רִיחַ referring to the 'center of action' of the living creatures would be introduced in such a fashion, without a pronominal suffix to indicate it. It is much more likely, especially in view of the prominence of the theological use of רִיחַ later in the book, that what is in view here is Yahweh's רִיחַ. This in turn is an unusual picture, that of Yahweh's רִיחַ 'going' from place to place. More investigation needs to be done than the simple equating of this רִיחַ with the vivifying spirit of Yahweh which energises the creatures and the wheels.

This almost independent conception of רִיחַ does have some parallels. In the book of Ezekiel itself, the prophet is to address הָרִיחַ, and summon it from the four winds (37:9). It is this mysterious reality that vivifies the re-formed but lifeless corpses. Certainly there is a parallel between the רִיחַ here that enlivens and directs the chariot and the רִיחַ that will enliven and direct the once-dead bones. At the same time, there are tantalising hints of further developments. In Ps. 139:7, the psalmist seems to regard רִיחַ as Yahweh manifest in omnipresence, parallel to Yahweh's פָּנִים, 'Where can I go from your spirit

³²⁸ Zimmerli explains the masculine gender by suggesting a somewhat convoluted process, whereby the gender comes from the word to which רִיחַ is bound (רִיחַ), which is clearly identified in 10:15 as the masculine כְּרוֹב (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p566). The determination of gender from the absolute is appropriate, but the link to ch. 10 is not established here. Further, it also depends on the identity of referent of רִיחַ in 1:20b with that in 1:12 and 1:20a. In discussing change in gender in Ezekiel, mention should be made of the bones in Ezek. 37:1-14. Here it probably is a rhetorical device linking the bones with the 'whole house of Israel'. The next time רִיחַ occurs, in 2:2, it is clearly feminine.

³²⁹ *IBHS*, 13.5.1e. The quotation is directed towards this chapter.

(מִרְחֹקֶיךָ)? Or where can I flee from your presence (מִפְּנֵיֶיךָ)?’ This correspondence between פָּנִים and רִיחַ can also be seen in Ps. 51:13 [ET v.15] and, in particular, in Isa. 63:10-14.³³⁰ There, רִיחַ corresponds not with ‘angel’, but with פָּנִים.³³¹ רִיחַ seems to designate Yahweh’s presence in the midst of the people of Israel, going with them in the wilderness. What Isa. 63:14 ascribes to the action of רִיחַ, ‘the spirit of Yahweh gave them rest (רִיחַ יְהוָה תְּנִיחֵנּוּ)’, Exod. 33:14 ascribes to the action of פָּנִים, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest (פָּנַי יֵלְכוּ וְהִנַּחְתִּי לָךְ).”³³² In view of the fact that in the exodus, Yahweh guided the people by means of a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, there are potentially close links between רִיחַ and this pillar. Evidence for such a link comes from the hovering (pi. רָחַף) of Yahweh (presumably in the pillar) over the wilderness waste (תְּהוֹמוֹת) (Deut. 32:10-11) being paralleled to רִיחַ hovering (pi. רָחַף) over the waters, with the earth being a wilderness waste (תְּהוֹמוֹת) (Gen. 1:2). These are the only places in the Torah that the words occur.

Given, then, the links between רִיחַ and the theophanic pillar accompanying those in Exodus from Egypt symbolising the presence of Yahweh, and the striking theophany with which Ezek. 1 opens, including fire and cloud (v.4), I think that, although it is possible in v.12 to see הָרִיחַ as the same wind as the storm wind in v.4, it is more likely that it designates Yahweh’s presence, albeit in a circumscribed and mediated way. That is not to say that there are not close links to the notion of רִיחַ as ‘breath of life’ given by Yahweh, and coming from the four winds,³³³ as we have seen, but there are hints towards something more – to Yahweh’s presence, a presence associated with Yahweh’s leading in the exodus. This means there is a subtle shift in meaning, though both are theological, between רִיחַ in 1:12 and 20a, on the one hand, and רִיחַ in 1:20b, 21 and 10:17, on the other. 1:20 should be understood as follows: Wherever the spirit, that is, Yahweh’s presence, would go, the living creatures would also go. The wheels were not left behind by this. Instead, because they were animated by Yahweh’s vivifying breath, they could rise up and follow.

In view of the importance of רִיחַ throughout the rest of the book, the significance of the references in the opening chapter should not be underestimated. Block comments:

‘The precise connection among this *rûah*, the stormy *rûah* that had borne the apparition to the prophet (v.4), the *rûah* that would later enter and energize him (2:2; 3:24), and the *rûah* that would later lift him up and carry him away (3:12,

³³⁰ Cf. also Ezek. 39:29.

³³¹ See Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p57; Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, pp125-31, 153.

³³² It should be noted that LXX (ὠδήγησεν) and Vg. (*ductor eius fuit*) assume the root נָחַה (‘he led’) in Isa. 63:14. ‘MT takes the verb as hiphil imperfect of נָחַה “he gave us rest”.’ See Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p130.

³³³ It is interesting to note that Westermann dates the ‘almost...independent historical psalm’ of Isa. 63:7-14 to ‘not long after the fall of Jerusalem in 587.’ See Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, tr. D.M.G. Stalker, OTL, (London, SCM Press, 1969), p386.

14) is not clear. However, the reference serves as a harbinger of the role that the *rûah* will play in Ezekiel's ministry...'.³³⁴

What is striking here is that the distinctions that we are forced to make by virtue of translation are not reflected in the acceptations of רוּחַ as evident in the book of Ezekiel. Further, the boundaries are very fluid between the different semantic domains of רוּחַ, and ambiguity, whether deliberate or unintended is clearly apparent.³³⁵

e) Theological

The remaining five instances of רוּחַ in the book are all explicitly theological. In 11:5, within his temple vision, Ezekiel is told to prophesy to the twenty-five men who give wicked counsel in the city. Before Yahweh tells the prophet what he is to say to them, Ezekiel relates how 'the spirit of Yahweh fell upon me (וַתַּפֹּל עָלַי רוּחַ יְהוָה), and he said to me...'. All are agreed that this reference is theological, and most see here a reference to Yahweh's 'spirit,' particularly the 'prophetic spirit.'³³⁶ Woodhouse, however, notes the close connection with the word coming to Ezekiel, and suggests that the phrase 'makes explicit what was already implicit in 2:2 and 3:24' - רוּחַ as Yahweh's 'breath.'³³⁷

In 11:24, there is the only occurrence of the phrase רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים in the book of Ezekiel. רוּחַ has lifted the prophet up, and has brought him 'in a vision בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים' to Chaldea, to the exiles, mirroring his transportation to Judah at the start of the vision in 8:1-3. Block sees the reference here to רוּחַ as the 'agency of conveyance.' He notes that, by analogy with the 'divine visions' of 1:1, 8:3 and 40:2, it is possible that the phrase here may not mean any more than 'divine wind,'³³⁸ but prefers to see the reference being to Yahweh's 'spirit' because of the determinative (for him) 37:1. Zimmerli sees בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים as speaking of the 'spirit' of God in the sense of 'enveloping sphere' in which the process of transportation takes place, and links it with the pre-Israelite linguistic usage characteristic of the pre-classical prophets.³³⁹ For Woodhouse, it is 'the breath of God', which seems to be linked with the prophet's transportation, not inspiration.³⁴⁰

The other three of these five instances of the theological use of רוּחַ are those in which Yahweh speaks of 'my spirit / breath' (רוּחִי). In 36:26, Yahweh has promised the house of Israel 'a new heart and a new spirit.' In the next verse, Yahweh promises that 'I will give my spirit within them' (וְנָתַתִּי רוּחִי אִתָּם בְּקִרְבָּכֶם). In 37:14, at the end of the vision of the dry bones, in words very similar to those of 36:27, Yahweh promises that

³³⁴ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p101.

³³⁵ Cody speaks here of 'multivalent ambiguity.' See Aelred Cody, *Ezekiel*, Old Testament Message 11, (Wilmington, Michael Glazier, Inc., 1984), p29.

³³⁶ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p41; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567.

³³⁷ Woodhouse, "'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel", p15.

³³⁸ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p34; he seems to relate it more closely to the reception of the vision in his commentary (Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p359).

³³⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567.

³⁴⁰ Woodhouse, "'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel", pp15-16.

'I will put my spirit in you' (וְנָתַתִּי רוּחִי בְכֶם). Block regards both of these references as examples of רוּחַ as 'spirit' with 'animating' effect that brings about a 'radical spiritual revitalization of the nation.'³⁴¹ While the link between 36:27 and 37:14 is clear, Woodhouse prefers to see in both a reference not so much to Yahweh's 'spirit' as to Yahweh's 'breath.' On 36:27, he notes the links with Jer. 31:31-34 and comments, 'there is little obvious difference between God writing his law on the heart, and placing his (speaking) breath within. Any difference seems to fade when the consequence of the latter act is seen to be obedience to the law (Ezek. 36:27b)!'³⁴² On 37:14, Block suggests that רוּחַ here undergoes 'an extremely significant shift in meaning. The *ruh* that will revitalize Israel is not the ordinary, natural life-breath common to all living things; it is the spirit of God himself.'³⁴³ Woodhouse, however, does not see why such a shift is demanded.³⁴⁴ While it may seem that Block and Woodhouse are very close to each other in their conceptions, since Block is conceiving of רוּחַ at these points as the 'agency of animation' while Woodhouse conceives of them as Yahweh's 'breath,' the substantial difference is apparent when it is seen that for Woodhouse the 'breath' that is spoken of is tied closely to Yahweh's word.

In 39:29, the reference to רוּחַ is again clearly theological. Yahweh is announcing that he will never again hide his face from the house of Israel again. In this context, he speaks of pouring out 'my spirit' (שָׁפַכְתִּי אֶת־רוּחִי). Although the precise relationship between such a promise and the outpouring of Yahweh's רוּחַ will be examined in Part III, it is worth observing again the differing perspectives on רוּחַ here. Block, noting the significance of 'pouring,' regards רוּחַ here as the 'sign of divine ownership,'³⁴⁵ yielding a substantially different force from רוּחַ in 36:27 and 37:14. Zimmerli regards the phrase here as a 'late redactional formulation' by which the earlier statements are 'transformed'.³⁴⁶ Albertz and Westermann, however, see no such shift, preferring to see 'spirit' as the 'bestowal of the spirit on the entire people of God.'³⁴⁷ Woodhouse again prefers to see the notion of Yahweh's 'breath,' though he does note that 'this breath represents nothing less than the saving presence of God himself.'³⁴⁸

3. Conclusions

It will be apparent from our discussion of the fifty-two occurrences of רוּחַ within the book of Ezekiel that, even within the perspective of four works looking at רוּחַ, there are

³⁴¹ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p39. However, in the table on p31, both instances of רוּחַ in ch. 36 are categorised under רוּחַ as 'mind'.

³⁴² Woodhouse, "'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel", p17.

³⁴³ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p38.

³⁴⁴ Woodhouse, "'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel", p18.

³⁴⁵ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', pp46-48.

³⁴⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567.

³⁴⁷ 'רוּחַ', *TLOT 3*, p1218; cf. Lys, *Rûach*, p132, who cross-references 36:27 and 39:29 to 37:14 when commenting that what Ezek. 37:9-10 expresses in a vision, 37:14 expresses in 'reality' (*réalité*).

³⁴⁸ Woodhouse, "'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel", p19.

substantial points of difference on how רִיחַ is to be understood and translated. Some of the disagreements are over the particular domain in which the occurrences should be placed, whether meteorological, anthropological or theological (e.g. on the ‘transporting’ רִיחַ). Others are over the nuance of רִיחַ within a particular domain (e.g. Yahweh speaking of ‘my רִיחַ’). Some of the ambiguity may be resolved by sharper exegesis. Some of the ambiguity may be explicable in terms of a deliberate ploy on the part of the author of the book. Some may be regarded as unintended. Some may be seen as a product of our conceiving of רִיחַ in too sharply defined categories. As Albertz and Westermann point out, it is possible to translate רִיחַ as ‘spirit’ when the ‘concrete meanings “wind” and “breath” advance to a no longer empirically perceptible realm, without, however, becoming less real’ provided that ‘one must be clear that the transitions are fluid because the force mysteriously effective in the wind and the breath points toward God from the outset.’³⁴⁹ They maintain that ‘the specifically theological usage of *rûah* as Yahweh’s spirit or the spirit of God is markedly distinct neither terminologically nor materially from the profane usage.’³⁵⁰ Judgements, however, must be made, since if Woodhouse’s conclusion is correct, that language ‘usually understood to refer to the “Spirit” of God is better understood when it is seen to be a transparent anthropomorphism to be rendered by an English expression such as “the breath of God,”’³⁵¹ then the connection between Yahweh’s word and Yahweh’s רִיחַ will be more in evidence. In the following chapters, we will explore these issues more fully.

C. WORD NOT RELATED TO רִיחַ?

Having looked at how the word of Yahweh and the רִיחַ of Yahweh can be conceived within the book, we need to pause briefly to revisit the suggestion made by Kaufmann that ‘there is no biblical doctrine of the relationship between the word and the spirit’.³⁵² It could have been possible that, despite the prominence of both Yahweh’s word and (Yahweh’s) רִיחַ within the book, there is in fact no particular notion of a relationship between the two. Two things can be said in response.

First, Kaufmann was speaking in an exaggerated fashion of one particular kind of relationship – that between the prophetic ‘word of Yahweh’ and the spirit. His purpose was to stress the uniqueness of the Israelite religion in general, and of Israelite prophecy in particular.³⁵³ The intelligibility of Israelite prophecy, seen in Yahweh’s ‘word,’ is set in marked contrast to pagan notions of ‘a specific source of mantic power’ (e.g.

³⁴⁹ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1212.

³⁵⁰ ‘רִיחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1212.

³⁵¹ Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p20.

³⁵² Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p101.

³⁵³ Cf. his comment that ‘Israelite prophecy is in every aspect a new phenomenon.’ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p101.

‘spirits’) that characterises ‘pagan prophecy.’³⁵⁴ Such rhetoric, and that is really what it is, conceals other statements that reveal a more nuanced position. In his discussion, for example, he comments that ‘the spirit is the by-product of the word,’³⁵⁵ a statement that clearly implies some kind of relationship.

Secondly, even a preliminary analysis of the occurrences of Yahweh’s word and רִיחַ in the book of Ezekiel reveals possible links between the two. In 2:2, there is רִיחַ that enters the prophet when Yahweh speaks to him (cf. 3:24). On a number of occasions in the book, the prophet, who is to be Yahweh’s mouthpiece, is transported by the רִיחַ. In 11:5, the ‘spirit of Yahweh’ fell on the prophet and Yahweh spoke to him. In 36:27, Yahweh’s רִיחַ is linked with the house of Israel’s obedience to Yahweh’s word. In short, it is simply not correct to say that there is ‘no...relationship.’ What needs to be explored is precisely what kind of relationship the book envisages. It is to one possible domain that we now turn, to that of the inspiration of the prophet.

³⁵⁴ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p95.

³⁵⁵ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p100.

PART II: WORD, SPIRIT AND INSPIRATION

‘Among all the wonders of the spirit the proclamation of the word of Yahweh came more and more to take the central place. That the “men of the spirit” were at the same time the mediators of the word, and that not simply in cases where a divine oracle was explicitly ascribed to the spirit, explains the profound influence both on individuals and on the nation at large which enabled them to determine decisively the pattern of religious thought.’¹

CHAPTER 3: INSPIRATION AND EZEKIEL

In Part I, we observed how the book of Ezekiel is marked to a great degree by the presence of רִיחַ. We noted, too, that many of the occurrences are either explicitly theological, or may have theological significance even when apparently not theological. Further, we saw that this emphasis sets the book of Ezekiel apart from both Jeremiah and Leviticus. There is another dimension, though, to this distinctive emphasis. This dimension is connected to the fact that many of these theological, or theologically significant, references to רִיחַ relate directly to the life and ministry of the prophet Ezekiel himself. רִיחַ set Ezekiel on his feet when confronted by a vision of the glory of Yahweh (2:2; 3:24). רִיחַ transported him from place to place, lifting him up (3:12), carrying him away to the exiles in Babylon (3:14; 11:24), to the temple in Jerusalem (8:3; 11:1), to the inner court within the ‘new’ temple (43:5), and to a valley filled with dry bones (37:1). While it is true that all these occur within the context of visions, ‘that does not affect the underlying conception of the function of the spirit.’² Further, the temple vision (8:1-11:25) came about בְּרִיחַ אֱלֹהִים (11:24), and, in 11:5, רִיחַ יְהוָה fell on Ezekiel as Yahweh was instructing him to speak and telling him what to say. The new dimension can be seen by comparing the prophet Ezekiel’s experience of רִיחַ, ‘where almost every word and action of the prophet is attributed to the spirit,’³ with that of the pre-classical and that of the classical prophets. Such a picture has attracted a good deal of scholarly attention. I shall briefly sketch the main currents before I outline my aims and direction for Part II since these currents provide essential context.

First, as Zimmerli and Carley, in particular, have pointed out, the emphasis on רִיחַ within Ezekiel’s ministry, as with many other features of that ministry, serves to align the prophet closely with the pre-classical prophets.⁴ Just as Yahweh’s רִיחַ is seen (by popular opinion of their day) as the ‘transporting’ spirit, which can snatch Elijah up and deposit him somewhere else (1 Kgs. 18:12; 2 Kgs. 2:16), so too רִיחַ transports Ezekiel.

¹ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p53.

² Schoemaker, ‘Use of רִיחַ’, p25.

³ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p261.

⁴ Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, pp515-27; *idem*, *Ezekiel 1*, pp42ff.; Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*.

In this way, and in other ‘dramatic animation[s]’ such as swallowing the scroll, Zimmerli sees a recall of ‘the רוּחַ-theology of the older prophets.’⁵

Secondly, the book of Ezekiel’s portrayal of the influence of רוּחַ on Ezekiel appears very different from all the pre-exilic classical, writing prophets. In the classical prophets, there is an almost complete absence of theological uses of רוּחַ, especially with regard to the their own inspiration. This is true of Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah. There are a few disputed instances in Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. Eichrodt summarises the distinction when he comments of Ezekiel that, ‘in his case the spirit plays a part unknown in the records of the other prophets.’⁶ Substantial scholarly debate about this absence in the pre-exilic classical prophets can be summarised by focusing on two questions.

First, there is the question of what the Old Testament actually says. Mowinckel argues that

‘pre-exilic reforming prophets never in reality express a consciousness that their prophetic endowment and powers are due to possession by or any action of *the spirit of Yahweh, rūḥ yahweh*. There is, on the contrary, another fundamental religious conception upon which the whole of their consciousness and prophetic message rest, namely *the word of Yahweh*.’⁷

Many others have broadly followed him. So, for example, Albertz and Westermann assert that the relationship between Yahweh’s רוּחַ and his word is ‘completely absent in the writing prophets from Amos to Jeremiah. Only the post-exilic period understood prophecy as the obvious work of the divine spirit.’⁸ In effect, they maintain that the classical prophets do not speak explicitly of any role for רוּחַ in their inspiration. Such an understanding depends on eliminating any possible reference to the divine רוּחַ and inspiration in the prophets’ self-understanding. Important passages in this regard are Hos. 9:7, Mic. 3:8 (cf. 2:6-11), Jer. 5:13 and Isa. 30:1-2. A second view sees references to the divine רוּחַ within the classical prophet’s self-understanding as present, but not at all prominent.⁹

The second question relates to how this relative (or complete) absence of רוּחַ from the classical prophets should be interpreted: Why do the classical prophets talk so little (or not at all) about the divine רוּחַ when speaking of their inspiration, especially when

⁵ Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, p520.

⁶ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p50 n1. However, according to Eichrodt, it is not רוּחַ that ‘endues him [Ezekiel] with the gift of prophecy.’

⁷ Mowinckel, ‘“The Spirit” and the “Word”’, p199 (his emphasis).

⁸ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1215. So too Wolff, *Anthropology*, p35; Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology*, p101; Scharbert, ‘Der “Geist” und die Schriftpropheten’, pp82-97; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, pp129-65; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, NIBC, (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1996), p321.

⁹ Kapelrud, ‘The Spirit and the Word’, pp40-47; Lindblom, *Prophecy*, pp177-78; Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp25-28.

רוּחַ is prominent in the ministry of the pre-classical prophets?¹⁰ Broadly four lines of interpretation have been proposed.

The first interpretation, which we might term the *antithetical* view, has been stated most famously by Mowinckel.¹¹ This view is that the classical prophets not only saw no place for רוּחַ in their own inspiration, but they also essentially repudiated רוּחַ.¹² Central to it is the perceived radical discontinuity between the classical prophets and the ‘spirit-inspired’ נְבִיאַיָּהּ. The classical prophets not only rejected inspiration in the form of the רוּחַ of Yahweh, since they did not like the ecstatic phenomena, but they also spoke out against the נְבִיאַיָּהּ who were inspired by רוּחַ, since they were false prophets. Couturier argues that this does not mean that רוּחַ within prophecy always had negative connotations. He maintains that there are three quite distinct prophetic types, the ecstatic prophets, associated with Samuel (חֶבְלֵי נְבִיאַיָּהּ) and Elijah / Elisha (בְּנֵי הַנְּבִיאַיָּהּ), the professional prophets and the ‘individual, or called prophets.’¹³ The involvement of רוּחַ in the first type, who were around until the end of the 9th century, is not criticised. It is the role of רוּחַ in the numerous professional prophets (הַנְּבִיאַיָּהּ), who were often in groups, who plagued the individual prophets from the end of 9th century until the exile, and who, above all, peddled lies, that was instrumental in the repudiation of רוּחַ by the individual prophets.

The second view, the *historical* view, also finds a complete absence of רוּחַ in the classical prophets. However, the issue here is not so much one of a repudiation of רוּחַ found in the false prophets. Rather, it is simply a matter of history: ‘when this objective reality, the spirit, whose presence had to be attested by a prophet’s associates, *ceased to operate*, then the prophet of the word had to rely much more on himself and on the fact that he had received a call.’¹⁴ In other words, the lack of mention of רוּחַ points to a fundamental historical reality.

The third and fourth views, like the first, acknowledge the significant role of רוּחַ within false prophecy, but regard the classical prophets as downplaying the role of רוּחַ within their own inspiration, albeit for slightly different reasons. The third view argues

¹⁰ It should be noted, though, that the inspiration of the pre-classical prophets is sometimes carefully circumscribed, such that it does not relate to communication of words (so e.g. ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1215). See further below.

¹¹ Mowinckel, “The Spirit” and the “Word”, pp199-227.

¹² A similar ‘repudiation’ was suggested earlier by Volz (*Der Geist Gottes*, pp62-69), though in his case it was because of the demonic associations of רוּחַ: ‘It can therefore be said, the prophets did not need *rûah*, because they had Yahweh, and they rejected it, because it was foreign to them and their Yahweh’ (‘Man kann daher sagen, die Propheten brauchten die Ruḥ nicht, weil sie Jahwe hatten, und sie lehnten sie ab, weil sie ihnen und ihrem Jahwe fremd war.’ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p68). Although Mowinckel slightly tempered his criticism of ecstasy after experience of the prophecy of the Oxford Group (see Mowinckel, ‘Postscript’, pp261-65), the article by Couturier (‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’) argues in support of Mowinckel’s 1934 article. Further, the reprinting of Mowinckel’s 1934 article in *The Spirit and the Word*, pp83-99 suggests ‘repudiation’ will continue to be one way of interpreting the data.

¹³ ‘prophètes individuels, ou de vocation’; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p163.

¹⁴ Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p57 (my emphasis).

that the absence of רִנָּה was due to a loss of confidence in prophetism arising from false prophecy.¹⁵ Certainly 1 Kgs. 22 makes it clear that what are portrayed as ‘false prophets’ laid claim to רִנָּה יְהוָה (1 Kgs. 22:24). In consequence, רִנָּה is downplayed for what might be termed *practical*, or *rhetorical*, reasons. Although רִנָּה could ‘reveal’ what was ‘true and right’,¹⁶ inspiration by רִנָּה was no longer seen as determinant of true prophecy. Indeed the classical prophets were so reticent in speaking about the action of רִנָּה in their own inspiration because the inspiration of רִנָּה had ‘come into disrepute through the old ecstatic and false prophets, who attributed their “salvation prophecy” to the spirit of the Lord.’¹⁷

The fourth view, which might be termed the *theological* view, summarised well in Zimmerli’s tentative suggestion of ‘another part of the explanation’ for this silence, is that the prophets are ‘so directly constrained by the message of Yahweh that they simply do not reflect on the notion of a mediating spirit.’¹⁸ A modified version of this can be found in Jacob:

‘It is clear that for all the prophets it is not the spirit but the word which qualifies them for their ministry, because only the word creates between the prophet and God a relationship of person with person. But the word presupposes the spirit, the creative breath of life, and for the prophets there was such evidence of this that they thought it unnecessary to state it explicitly.’¹⁹

It is, then, ‘that the thought of these prophets was essentially theocentric’ that explains the absence of רִנָּה.²⁰

For these last two views, there is not necessarily an inherent discontinuity between רִנָּה and the prophetic word of the classical prophets. It should be acknowledged, though, that there is not always clarity amongst scholars here. For some scholars, there is in the classical prophets an implicit belief in רִנָּה-inspiration which is hardly (or not at all) articulated.²¹ For others, particularly those who speak in terms of the rhetorical avoidance of רִנָּה, it is often unstated or unclear whether they think belief in רִנָּה-inspiration was present within the self-understanding of the classical prophets.²²

This background to the book of Ezekiel, both of the pre-classical prophets, on the one hand, and the classical prophets, on the other, has led many scholars to conclude that the book of Ezekiel recovers the notion of רִנָּה linked with prophetic inspiration

¹⁵ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p56.

¹⁶ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p56.

¹⁷ ‘weil sie durch die alten Ekstatiker und die Pseudopropheten, die ihre “Heilsprophetie” auf den Geist des Herrn zurückführten ..., in Verruf gekommen war.’ Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p59; cf. Neve, *Spirit of God*, pp34-38.

¹⁸ Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology*, p102.

¹⁹ Jacob, *Theology*, p125. So too Kapelrud, ‘The Spirit and the Word’, pp40-47; ‘Holy Spirit’, *ABD* 3, p263; Chevallier, *Souffle de Dieu*, pp28-29; Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p28.

²⁰ Lindblom, *Prophecy*, p178.

²¹ Cf. van Imschoot, ‘L’action de l’esprit de Jahvé’, pp570ff.; Lys, *Rûach*, p68 n1; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p55.

²² E.g. Briggs, ‘The Use of רִנָּה’, p140; Schoemaker, ‘Use of רִנָּה’, p20; Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, p517.

after a long absence.²³ Montague asserts that ‘especially does the spirit return as the instigator and the animator of prophecy.’²⁴ The reason for this renewed emphasis is not often articulated.²⁵ Many scholars are content simply to observe the links. For Carley, however, such a picture is intimately linked with the need for the prophet to authenticate his ministry: ‘We have seen that he [Ezekiel] was concerned to authenticate his prophetic activities in the face of contemporary rivals. Recourse to older concepts and modes of expression would have helped establish him in the succession of earlier, and perhaps well-respected, prophets of crisis.’²⁶

It is with the above in mind that I shall examine in Part II the place of Ezekiel within prophetic רִיחַ-inspiration. There are three main questions that I shall endeavour to answer. The first relates to the subject with which this study opened. It is the question of whether רִיחַ in Ezekiel is or can be understood as Yahweh’s breath on which his word is carried. Naturally this will be restricted to the prophetic and the rhetorical events. The second is whether Ezekiel recovers רִיחַ as foundational in prophetic inspiration. Within this is the question of whether the classical prophets did indeed repudiate רִיחַ in their own inspiration. The third is whether the emphasis on רִיחַ within the prophet Ezekiel’s ministry is best explained in terms of the authentication of the prophet. To try and answer these questions, I shall proceed as follows.

In this chapter, I shall endeavour to bring sharper definition to discussions by examining the concept of inspiration, and then shall examine the role of רִיחַ within the ministry of Ezekiel himself, as the book portrays it. In chapter 4, I shall turn to the picture of inspiration present both before the book of Ezekiel, within the pre-classical and the classical prophets, and after it.

Taking both chapters together, I shall argue in Part II that the link between Yahweh’s רִיחַ as ‘breath’ and Yahweh’s word is neither made nor exploited theologically in the book of Ezekiel, although there are close links between רִיחַ and Yahweh’s word; that the inspiration of Ezekiel is not qualitatively different either from that of the pre-classical prophets, or from that of the classical prophets; that the emphasis on רִיחַ within pre-classical prophecy has been overemphasised; that the classical prophets were willing to attribute their inspiration to, or to have their inspiration attributed to, the divine רִיחַ, despite a reluctance to speak of רִיחַ; that the picture of inspiration after the book of Ezekiel is also not qualitatively different from that found in Ezekiel; that the prominence of רִיחַ within the prophetic ministry of

²³ E.g. J. Jeremias, ‘נְבִיא *nābī*’ prophet’, *TLOT* 2, p707; Mowinckel, “‘The Spirit’ and the ‘Word’”, p226; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, p42.

²⁴ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p45.

²⁵ Of those that do, Volz is notable for relating it to Ezekiel’s lack of sharp vision of the being of Yahweh, his closer affinity to popular belief, his greater disposition towards extraordinary trance-like experiences. See Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p69. Neve relates Ezekiel’s greater freedom to his being ‘transplanted into a new environment’. See Neve, *Spirit of God*, p38.

²⁶ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p73.

Ezekiel is not explained well by the notion that the prophet recovers an emphasis that had been lost in order to authenticate his ministry.

A. EXPLORING INSPIRATION

First, however, if we are to evaluate the picture of word, spirit and inspiration in the book of Ezekiel and compare the relationship there with that which obtains elsewhere within Old Testament prophecy, it is essential to explore what precisely is meant by inspiration, since scholars use the word in two different senses without distinguishing between them.²⁷

The first, which we might term ‘word-communicating’ inspiration, is that whereby רִיחַ, the divine ‘breath’ / ‘spirit’, effectively ‘breathes’ or ‘utters’ the word to the prophet, or through the prophet to the people. In other words, רִיחַ is involved in inspiring the *words* (of Yahweh), whether such inspiration relates to the words that came to the prophet, or to the words that the prophet delivers.²⁸ So, for example, Neh. 9:30 is sometimes cited as a case that ‘sees the preaching of the prophets as the activity of the spirit’;²⁹ it was בְּרוּחְךָ בְּיַד־נְבִיאֶיךָ (‘by your spirit through your prophets’) that Yahweh had warned the people of Israel.

The second sense, which we might term ‘potentiating inspiration,’ is that whereby ‘the spirit was the supernatural power that evoked the revelatory state of mind’³⁰ in the prophet, and enabled the prophet to speak. Negatively, ‘potentiating’ avoids giving to רִיחַ an anachronistic personal dimension. Positively, it encompasses both the sense of creating the potential for the prophet to receive a word, or creating the situation where the prophet is ready to receive that word, and ‘empowering’ the prophet for the task of delivering that word. In this sense, the spirit’s work here is one aspect of that same spirit’s wider work of empowering and enabling that can be seen, for example, in the book of Judges, where the spirit ‘comes upon’ (היה על) Othniel (3:10) and Jephthah (11:29), ‘clothes itself with’ (לבש) Gideon (Jdg. 6:34), ‘impels’ (פעם) (13:25) and ‘rushes upon’ (צלה) Samson (14:6, 19; 15:4). Thus ‘inspiration’ can be used as the general term to describe the ‘power proceeding from God’ in the life of people.³¹ Such a view of inspiration has been articulated clearly by Kaufmann:

²⁷ The article on רִיחַ in *NIDOTTE* uses inspiration in both the senses I outline without distinguishing between them (‘רִיחַ’, *NIDOTTE* 3, p1076).

²⁸ Ma uses inspiration in this sense: ‘The prophetic inspiration of the spirit of God throughout the Old Testament is for the preaching of Yahweh’s word (e.g. Num. 24.2; Mic. 3.8; Ezek. 11.5; Zech. 7.12; Joel 3.1-2; 2 Sam. 23.2; Neh. 9.30; 2 Chron. 15.1; 20.14)’ (*Until the Spirit Comes*, p121). That he is talking about רִיחַ as the source is clear from what he says later, commenting on רִיחַ in post-exilic times (p152): ‘the claim of the spirit of Yahweh reappears as the *source* of revelation’ (my emphasis). Cf. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p145.

²⁹ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p81. Cf. Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p219: ‘The prophets conveyed the words of the רוּחַ’ (‘Die Propheten haben die Worte der רוּחַ übermittelt’).

³⁰ Lindblom, *Prophecy*, p177 n112.

³¹ Vriezen, *Outline of Old Testament Theology*, p250.

‘We must thus distinguish the action of the spirit of YHWH from prophecy proper. The spirit is the source of activity and creativity; it animates the ecstatic, the judge, the mighty man; it rests on the poet. It rouses the prophet to act, to speak, and endows him with the ability to harangue and poetize. The spirit of prophecy also prepares him to receive the divine word – to see visions, to hear the divine voice in dreams or ecstatic slumber. But the source of prophecy proper is other than these activities. It is in the revelation of God. In this revelation the prophet ideally is entirely passive; he but listens to what is said to him. The frenzy, the physical aberrations, even the visions are not the essence. Of visions and riddles, too, the important part is the explanation that the prophet receives passively. What makes the prophet is not any faculty of clairvoyance, or the spirit that rests on or in him; it is the word that he has heard from God or his agents.’³²

In other words, by ‘potentiating’ inspiration I mean that רִיחַ is involved in inspiring the *prophet*, whether to receive or deliver Yahweh’s words.

Whether ultimately it is possible to distinguish ‘word-communicating’ inspiration from ‘potentiating’ inspiration remains to be seen, however. If the work of רִיחַ within ‘potentiating’ inspiration is to enable the prophet to fulfil the task to which Yahweh has called him or her, as is the case with the judges, it still raises the question of the relationship between word and spirit, since the essence of prophecy (which רִיחַ is said to enable) is to have a word from Yahweh (cf. Jer. 18:18). Thus ‘potentiating’ inspiration may not necessarily preclude ‘word-communicating inspiration.’

There is a second question about inspiration that needs to be addressed, too, and that is the *point* within the ‘life’ of the ‘word’ to which the term ‘inspiration’ refers. We have already seen how Yahweh’s word can be understood both as the word from Yahweh to the prophet (the prophetic event), and as the word which the prophet utters (the rhetorical event). Any discussion about the role of רִיחַ and inspiration needs to explore at which point the influence of רִיחַ can be seen. Such a distinction between the two stages of prophecy is not always preserved or highlighted in the Old Testament, whether in what has been termed ‘ecstatic prophecy’ (e.g. 1 Sam. 10), or in later accounts of prophecy (e.g. Neh. 9:30). This should not be surprising, since, if there was a discernible ‘gap’ between the prophetic event and the rhetorical event, false prophecy would not have been an issue. Nonetheless, there are occasions, particularly in narrative, where a distinction is explicitly made between the two events (e.g. 1 Kgs. 21:19-24). Further, there are other occasions where רִיחַ is linked particularly with either the prophetic event (e.g. Ezekiel (Ezek. 11:5)) or the rhetorical event (e.g. Balaam (Num. 24:2)). Maintaining a distinction, then, between the two stages, is important.

Our discussion of inspiration is summarised in Table 1 and in Figures 1 and 2 below.

³² Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p99.

Table 1. The inspiration of a prophet.

	'Potentiating' inspiration רוּחַ יְהוָה inspires prophet		'Word-communicating' inspiration רוּחַ יְהוָה inspires words	
Prophetic Event	General equipping of the prophet to receive Yahweh's word	General equipping of the prophet without any direct reference to Yahweh's word	The linking of רוּחַ יְהוָה with the 'telescoped' reception and delivery of Yahweh's word	רוּחַ יְהוָה breathes / speaks / utters the words to the prophet
Rhetorical Event	General equipping to deliver Yahweh's word			Explicit 'double agency discourse' – רוּחַ יְהוָה speaks the words the prophet speaks

The table illustrates the distinction between 'potentiating' and 'word-communicating' inspiration and the distinction between the prophetic and rhetorical events. As we have already noted, such distinctions may not always be evident. More specifically, the prophetic and rhetorical events are not always distinguished when the work of the divine רוּחַ יְהוָה is mentioned, but are sometimes 'telescoped' together (the third and fourth columns in rows two and three). Further, רוּחַ יְהוָה may be linked with a prophet's ministry, but not directly with either the prophetic or the rhetorical event (column three). Moreover, 'word-communicating' inspiration may prove to be 'concurrent' with 'potentiating' inspiration (Figure 1), or it may be a 'subset' (Figure 2).³³

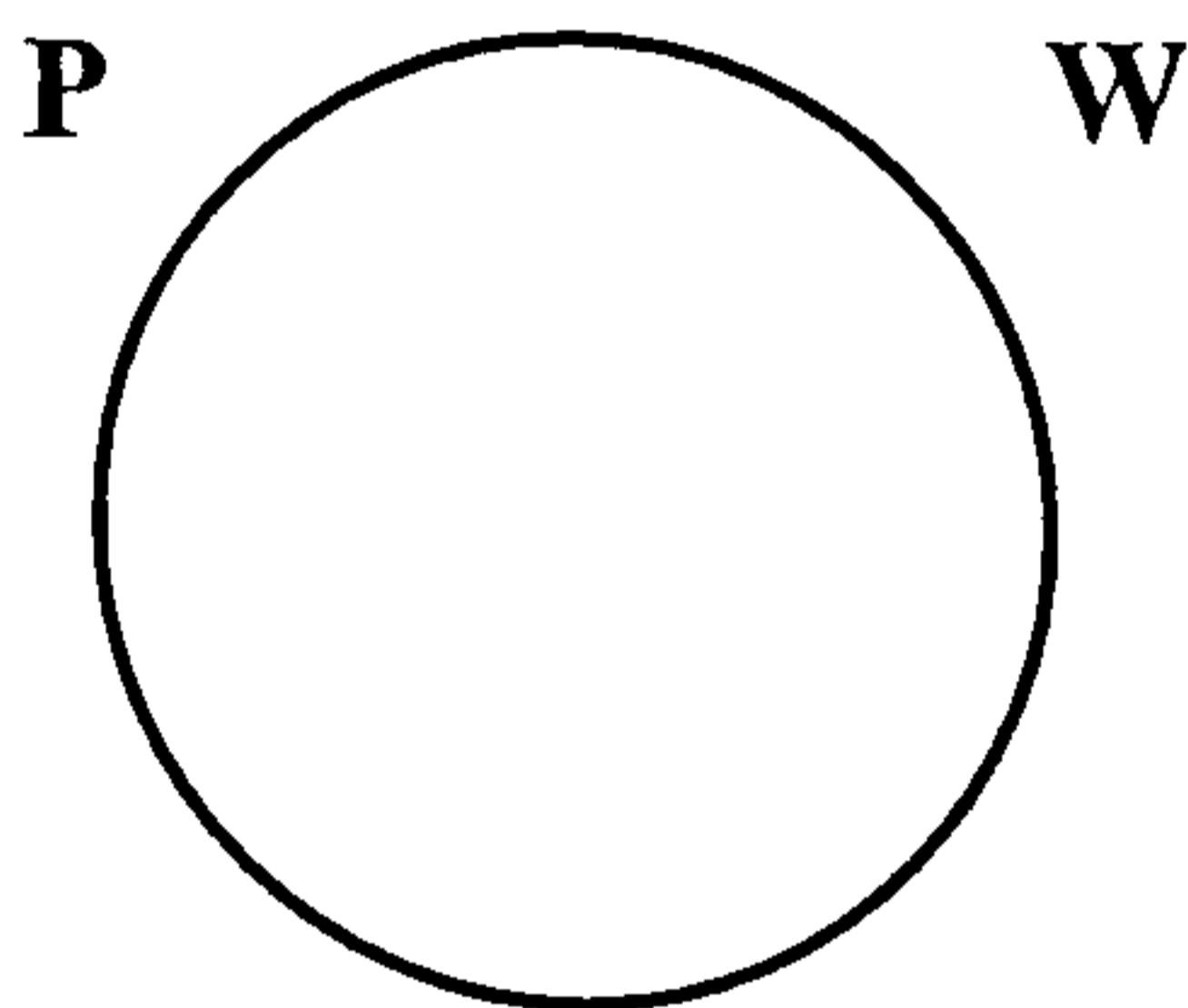


Figure 1. Potentiating (P) and word-communicating inspiration (W) concurrent.

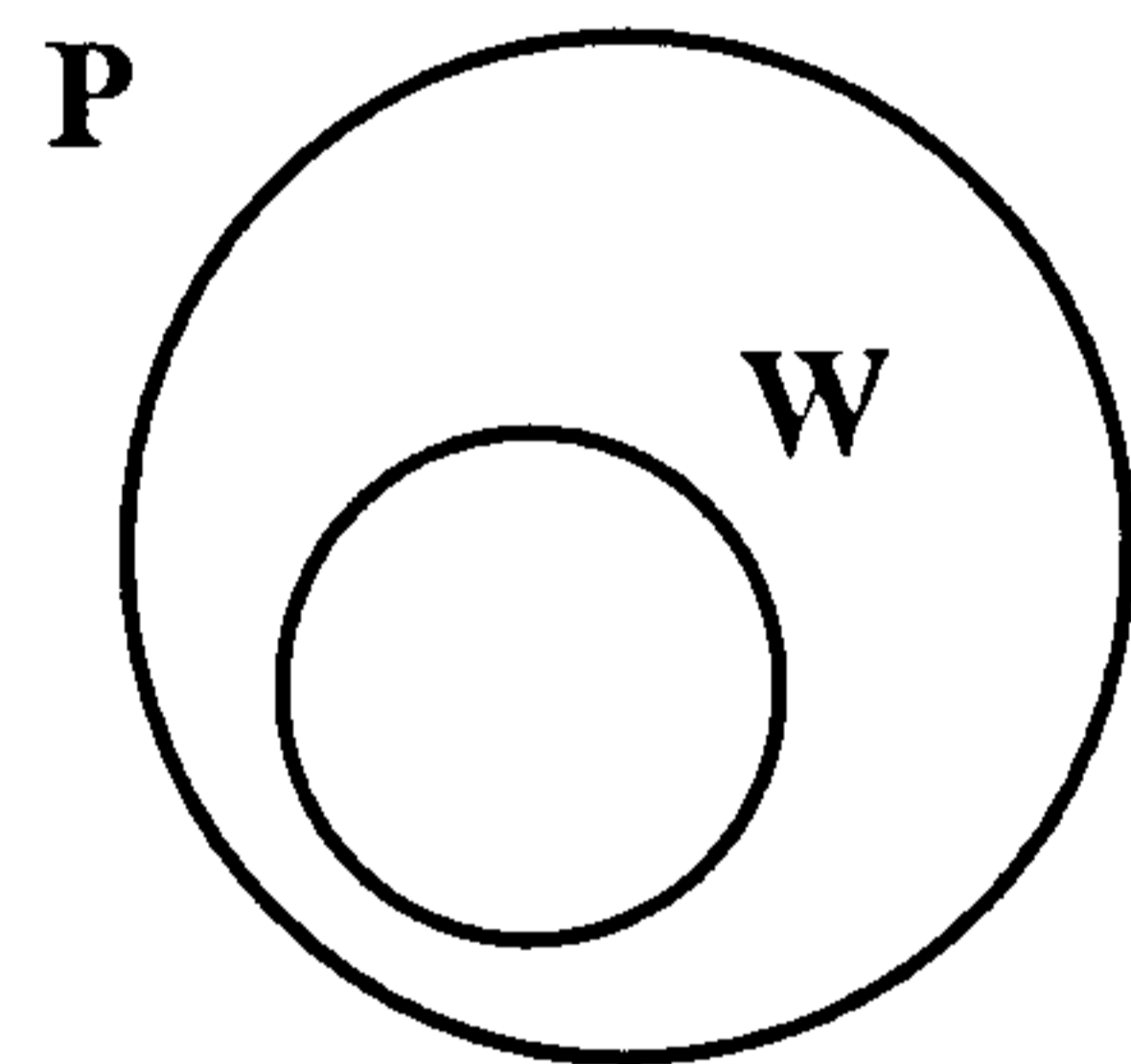


Figure 2. Word-communicating inspiration (W) a subset of potentiating inspiration (P).

Failure to make careful distinctions is a contributory factor in scholars reaching different conclusions. Hildebrandt seems to focus on 'potentiating' inspiration when he observes the role of רוּחַ יְהוָה in 'commissioning, inspiring, motivating and guiding' the prophets (especially Ezekiel), and concludes that 'the relationship between the word and the Spirit in the prophet's [sic] estimation was very intimate.'³⁴ Kaufmann appears to focus on 'word-communicating' inspiration when he concludes, on the basis of the same

³³ By 'concurrent', I mean that every instance of 'word-communicating' inspiration is also an instance of 'potentiating' inspiration and vice-versa. By 'subset', I mean that some, but not all, instances of 'potentiating' inspiration are also instances of 'word-communicating' inspiration. I owe the correct mathematical expressions to Dr. Paul Dale.

³⁴ Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, p167.

data, that there is no relationship between Yahweh's word and Yahweh's רִנָּה.³⁵ It is with these distinctions in mind that we turn to the book of Ezekiel.

B. THE INSPIRATION OF EZEKIEL

Our analysis of prophetic inspiration within the book of Ezekiel will focus on four areas. The first two relate to Yahweh addressing the prophet, in visions and in 'word.' The third relates to other instances of links between רִנָּה and prophecy. The fourth relates to Ezekiel communicating Yahweh's word. Given every commentator's acknowledgement that רִנָּה is strikingly prominent in the book, a degree of unanimity might be expected here, but there is in fact significant disagreement with regard to the prophet's inspiration and רִנָּה. Koch confidently declares of Ezekiel, 'At every turn, he emphasizes standing, talking and acting under the effect of *rûah Yahweh*.'³⁶ Scharbert, on the other hand, while noting the action of רִנָּה on the prophet in a number of respects, adds, 'but nowhere is the prophetic preaching to his own fellow-believers itself characterised as a gift or even as a task of the "spirit of God".'³⁷ I shall be arguing that neither of these is accurate. There is some evidence of both 'potentiating' and 'word-communicating' inspiration, and such inspiration relates both to the prophetic and to the rhetorical events. However, such inspiration is rather less prominent than Koch states.

1. Ezekiel's visions and רִנָּה

We saw above, with Zimmerli, there are five vision 'units' within the book of Ezekiel.³⁸ Within these, both the hand of Yahweh and the spirit of Yahweh have a significant role in their reception, as can be seen from Table 2.

³⁵ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p101.

³⁶ 'Auf Schritt und Tritt betont er, [sic] unter der Einwirkung der *rûach Jahweh* zu stehen, zu reden und zu handeln.' Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p60.

³⁷ '...aber nirgends wird die prophetische Verkündigung an die eigenen Glaubensgenossen selbst als eine Gabe oder auch als Auftrag des „Geist Gottes“ charakterisiert.' Scharbert, 'Der "Geist" und die Schriftpropheten', p92.

³⁸ Zimmerli, 'Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character', p516.

Table 2. The genesis of Ezekiel's visions.

The vision	The vision and רוח	The vision and יד
1:1-3:15 – of chariots; Ezekiel's commission. One of three major visions described as מראות אלהים.	רוח is the 'storm wind' of 1:4. Within the vision, רוח enters Ezekiel and energises him (2:2); it also transports him (3:12, 14). רוח is not involved directly in the reception of the vision.	The editorial comment in 1:3a affirms that the book as a whole is Yahweh's word. ³⁹ The comment in 1:3b ('the hand of Yahweh was on him there (וַיָּחֶי עָלָיו שָׁם) (יְדִי־הוֹדָה)') asserts that the vision, introduced by Ezekiel in v.1, is authentic.
3:22-5:17 – the instructions to portray the different sign-acts. The vision element, in the sense of what Ezekiel sees, as opposed to what Yahweh says to him, is restricted to seeing Yahweh's glory in 3:23.	רוח energises Ezekiel (3:24) so as to hear Yahweh's word. The phrase is parallel to 2:2. Here, too, רוח is not involved directly in the reception of the vision.	As Ezekiel relates how Yahweh told him to rise and go into the valley, he also relates, using the same phrase as 1:3, how, again, Yahweh's hand was upon him (3:22). This directly precedes his seeing Yahweh's glory (v.23).
8:1-11:25 – abominations in the temple; slaughter of idolaters; Yahweh's glory leaving the temple and the city. The second of the three מראות אלהים.	רוח involved here as the transporting רוח (8:3); such a transportation is במראות אלהים; רוח also brings Ezekiel back 'in a vision by the spirit of God' (11:24); רוח is also involved within the narrative of the vision itself, in transporting him around the temple (11:1), and when Yahweh speaks to him (11:5).	As Ezekiel was sitting in his house, with the elders around him, 'the hand of Yahweh fell upon me (וַיִּפֹּל עָלַי שָׁם יַד אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה)'. At once, he 'looked' and had a vision. Significantly, the figure whom he sees in the vision stretched out a hand, and took Ezekiel (וַיִּקְחֵנִי) by a lock of his head. There is a close link here between רוח and יד.
37:1-14 – dry bones back to life	רוח is involved in transporting the prophet (37:1), within the experience of Yahweh's hand coming upon him.	The opening phrase, 'the hand of Yahweh came upon me (הַיָּד הָיְתָה עָלַי יְדִי־הוֹדָה)' serves to identify the beginning of the vision, before Yahweh sets the prophet down in a valley 'by the spirit of Yahweh.'
40:1-48:35 – vision of a new temple. The third of the three מראות אלהים.	רוח is not mentioned directly here in connection with the reception of the vision; instead, there is the lesser 'he brought me in visions of God...and set me down...'; within the vision itself, רוח transports Ezekiel to the inner court within the 'new' temple (43:5).	The hand of Yahweh was upon the prophet (הַיָּד הָיְתָה עָלַי יְדִי־הוֹדָה), and Yahweh brought the prophet, in a vision, to the land of Israel, to a high mountain.

From the analysis in Table 2, it is clear that the 'hand of Yahweh' has a greater congruence with the reception of visions. In the reception of all of these visions, it is the 'hand' of Yahweh and not רוח, which is the distinguishing feature.⁴⁰ A closer look at one example, 8:3, will help demonstrate this.

³⁹ See further above on pp61 ff.

⁴⁰ The phrase יְדִי־הוֹדָה (or the variant with אֲדֹנָי in 8:1) is always linked in Ezekiel with the prophet's ministry. Apart from the introduction to visions, it only appears at two other points in the book. In 3:14, it occurs at the close of the first vision. In 33:22, it occurs within the only narrative unit in the book, 'presaging this time not an oracle...but a release from the years-long constraint on normal intercourse with his society' (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p681). Yahweh also speaks within the book of 'my hand' (e.g. 6:14; cf. 20:33-35). Zimmerli links the origin of the use of 'hand of Yahweh' with the Exodus tradition (*Ezekiel 1*, pp117-18). Roberts, however, criticises Zimmerli for ignoring non-biblical parallels, and associates it with illness and pathological behaviour (J.J.M. Roberts, 'The Hand of Yahweh', *VT* 21 (1971), pp244-51). Carley notes the two strands of meaning, 'power', or 'alienation' of an individual's mind. He says that references speaking of Yahweh's influence on the prophet fit more easily into the second sense. For Carley, רוח (anarthrous, and without the absolute, 'Yahweh') speaks of conveying the

In 8:2-3, the prophet narrates, 'A figure that looked like a human being⁴¹...stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up (וַתִּשָּׂא אֹתִי רוּחַ) between earth and heaven, and brought me in divine visions (וַתִּבְּאֵ אֹתִי ... בְּמַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים) to Jerusalem' (vv.2-3). Within the context of the book, the vision that these verses introduce extends to 11:25, where Ezekiel told the exiles all that Yahweh had shown him. With the elders sitting before the prophet (8:1), the hand of Yahweh fell upon him, and he saw the 'figure' strikingly similar to the one he had seen in 1:26-27. Then the 'figure' and רוּחַ together lift him up, and this רוּחַ transports Ezekiel in divine visions. While visions occurred within earlier prophecy (e.g. 1 Kgs. 22:17, 19-22; Amos 7:1-9), and Elijah was regarded as having experienced transportation by רוּחַ (1 Kgs. 18:12; 2 Kgs. 2:16), Ezekiel is unique in experiencing 'visionary transportation' – that is, within the vision Ezekiel sees himself as transported by רוּחַ.

Our concern here is not so much with the precise nature of what Ezekiel experienced,⁴² but to ascertain the role of רוּחַ with respect to the reception of the vision. At one level, the distinction between רוּחַ and יָד is clear.⁴³ Here, the role of רוּחַ is to do with the *movement* of the prophet *within* the vision, rather than with the reception of the vision itself. It is when the hand of Yahweh comes upon him that he receives the vision in 8:1. Thus רוּחַ here is more properly seen as the 'transporting' רוּחַ, and not the prophetic or inspiring רוּחַ. It is the 'hand of Yahweh' that introduces each of the five vision reports in the book of Ezekiel. Further, it was a 'hand' stretched out to Ezekiel that gave him the scroll containing the words of his message (2:8).

However, there are three reasons why our attention should not move too quickly away from רוּחַ and the reception of the prophet's visions. First, there is a close association in the Old Testament between Yahweh's רוּחַ and Yahweh's יָד.⁴⁴ Secondly, there is one instance in the book where Yahweh's רוּחַ does seem to be linked explicitly with the prophet's reception of a vision (11:24). Thirdly, in one of the visions (37:1-14), the transporting רוּחַ, usually anarthrous, is in construct relationship with, and made definite by, the absolute יהוה (37:1). The identity and function of this רוּחַ points to a closer link between Yahweh's transporting רוּחַ and inspiration than is sometimes recognised. We turn first to the similarity of Yahweh's רוּחַ and Yahweh's יָד.

prophet, while 'hand' has to do with 'awareness of an extraordinary state of mind' (*Ezekiel Among the Prophets*, p29).

⁴¹ Reading אִישׁ, with LXX. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p216.

⁴² For a discussion of this, see Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp31-37.

⁴³ Cf. Neve, *Spirit of God*, pp97-98.

⁴⁴ Lindblom, *Prophecy*, p58; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp11-18; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, pp153ff.; *idem*, 'יָד', *NIDOTTE 2*, pp403-404; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, pp45f., 67; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rúah*, p54. This is not to say that they are identical. Lys (*Rúach*, p133) tentatively suggests that the difference is to be found in the nature of the action, 'la main son action sur l'homme, l'esprit son action en l'homme'; Schüngel-Straumann (*Rúah*, pp54-55) suggests the difference lies in the fact that Yahweh's hand designates Yahweh's power ('Macht'), while רוּחַ is used in a more multifarious way, and is less strongly identified with Yahweh.

The close association of Yahweh's רִיחַ and Yahweh's יָד can be found outside the book of Ezekiel. Prophetic inspiration is linked with music and the action of Yahweh's רִיחַ in 1 Sam. 10:6ff., but with Yahweh's יָד in 2 Kgs. 3:15. Divinely-assisted movement is associated with Yahweh's רִיחַ in 1 Kgs. 18:12 and 2 Kgs. 2:16, but with Yahweh's יָד in 1 Kgs. 18:46. Similarity is also found within the book, both in the transportation of the prophet and in the reception of visions. It is the form of a hand (יָד) stretched out from the figure on the throne that 'takes' (לָקַח) Ezekiel by a lock of his hand, then רִיחַ picks him up (נָשָׂא) (8:3). This is very similar to 3:14, where רִיחַ picks him up (נָשָׂא) and takes (לָקַח) him. In 8:1, Yahweh's יָד falls (נָפַל) on the prophet at the start of his vision, signalling the reception of the vision. In 11:5, Yahweh's רִיחַ falls (נָפַל) on Ezekiel, the only time such a collocation occurs in the Old Testament. Further, in 11:24, the divine vision attributed at the start of chapter 8 to Yahweh's יָד, is attributed to רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים. Finally, the words used to describe the action of Yahweh's hand coming on the prophet (הָיָה עָלַי)⁴⁵ is elsewhere in the Old Testament used of the coming of Yahweh's רִיחַ.⁴⁶

The second point linking Yahweh's רִיחַ with divine visions is, as we have just seen, in 11:24. At the end of the vision that began in 8:1, the prophet recounts, 'The spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles (וְרִיחַ נִשְׂאָתָנִי וַחֲבִיאָנִי כְשִׁדְיָמָה אֶל-הַגּוֹלָהּ בַּמְּרָאָה בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים). Then the vision that I had seen left me' (11:24). Here within the same verse are two occurrences of רִיחַ which are slightly awkward together. The significant phrase for us is בַּמְּרָאָה בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, but how we render it depends in part on how we are to interpret the 'transporting רִיחַ' which picks the prophet up. Those who favour a theological understanding of the 'transporting רִיחַ', such as the 'divine energy' that transported the prophet,⁴⁷ or as Yahweh's spirit,⁴⁸ face a difficulty over the second occurrence of רִיחַ in the verse. Neve sees the phrase בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים as referring to the prophet being 'brought,' rather than to the notion that the 'spirit' brought about the vision, claiming that the spirit is not 'the source of the visions that Ezekiel saw.'⁴⁹ Support for this might be seen to come from 37:1, where the subject of the sentence qualifies an agent in a way similar to Neve's construal of 11:24: 'he (i.e. Yahweh) brought me out by the spirit of Yahweh (בְּרוּחַ יְהוָה)'. However, the similarity of the two instances should not be overplayed. In 37:1, the agent of translocation is juxtaposed with the verb expressing the translocation, while in 11:24, if Neve's interpretation is accepted, the agent is distant from the verb. Further, this reading of 11:24 introduces substantial redundancy in the description of the agent of Ezekiel's

⁴⁵ Ezek. 1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 37:1; 40:1; cf. also 3:14; 33:22.

⁴⁶ Num. 24:2; Jdg. 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; cf. 1 Sam. 16:16, 23. Eichrodt suggests that the downplaying of רִיחַ within classical prophecy is evident here, in so far as the 'overwhelming effect' of Yahweh has come to be described by the 'hand of Yahweh', rather than by רִיחַ (*Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p56).

⁴⁷ Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p127.

⁴⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p230; Lys, *Rûach*, pp129-30; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p129; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp358-59; Hosch, 'RŪAH in the Book of Ezekiel', pp109, 112-13; cf. the discussion in chapter 1.

⁴⁹ Neve, *Spirit of God*, pp97-98.

visionary movement, a redundancy that makes *בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים* seem like a gloss.⁵⁰ However, it is hard to discern what the function of such a gloss might have been, and there is no textual evidence for a corruption, so we should endeavour to make sense of the MT. Allen captures the force of *בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים*, when he says that the phrase “‘by means of the spirit of God’” can hardly qualify the verb of which *רוּחַ* “spirit” is subj. It seems rather to qualify the “vision,” which virtually has a verbal force, “that which was seen (by means of).”⁵¹

Here, then, is evidence of at least a ‘potentiating’ view of inspiration. In 11:24, the ‘spirit of God’ is seen as responsible for giving the vision that is seen in 8:1 as due to the ‘hand of Yahweh.’ We can, however, go further. As we saw in the last chapter, Kaufmann’s distinction between ‘seeing’ a vision and ‘hearing’ the word of Yahweh is overstated. A prophetic vision is not always merely the vehicle within which the ‘word’ comes, as Kaufmann effectively suggests, but can also be seen itself as Yahweh’s ‘word’, a divine ‘speech event’. Thus if the ‘spirit’ is seen here as responsible for giving the vision, and the vision is understood not merely as a vehicle for Yahweh’s word, but as Yahweh’s ‘word’ or ‘speech event’, then it is better to see ‘word-communicating’ inspiration articulated here.

At the same time, it should be noted that such a reading does not diminish the awkwardness of the double mention of *רוּחַ*, if the first *רוּחַ* is interpreted theologically. Renz, therefore, follows Greenberg⁵² in rendering the transporting *רוּחַ* here as ‘wind.’ He regards this verse as confirming that the *רוּחַ* ‘operative on Ezekiel in the visions is a “wind” rather than “the Spirit”’ because of the ‘differentiation made in 11:24 between this *רוּחַ* and the *רוּחַ* through which the vision was communicated.’⁵³ This certainly accounts for the shift in gender and the lack of the divine name between the transporting *רוּחַ יְהוָה* in 1 Kgs. 18:12 and 2 Kgs. 2:16, on the one hand, and the feminine, anarthrous, unspecified *רוּחַ* in Ezekiel.⁵⁴

The third reason why Yahweh’s *רוּחַ* can and should be related to Ezekiel’s visions is derived from the account of the vision of dry bones in 37:1-14. In 37:1, as we noted above, the reference to the transporting *רוּחַ* is articulated in unique fashion. The transporting *רוּחַ* is said explicitly to be Yahweh’s. There must be significance in such a reference, since it was obviously possible to speak of the transporting *רוּחַ* in vaguer fashion. Such a reference certainly serves to orient the reader to the other nine

⁵⁰ Cf. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p127; Georg Fohrer, *Ezechiel, mit einem Beitrag von Kurt Gallig*, HAT 13 2nd edn., (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1955), p55; Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp30, 88 n72; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p112.

⁵¹ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p129. Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p359; Hosch, ‘*RŪAH* in the Book of Ezekiel’, p112.

⁵² Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p186.

⁵³ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p201 n178. Others seeing the anarthrous transporting *רוּחַ* as ‘wind’ include Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p25; Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p30; Woodhouse, “‘Spirit’ in the Book of Ezekiel”, p14.

⁵⁴ For a different perspective, grounded in Ezekiel’s monotheism, see Lys, *Rûach*, p130. How such a view can be reconciled with the pointers towards it being Yahweh’s *רוּחַ* we shall look at below.

occurrences of רִיחַ in the thirteen verses that follow, and in particular to highlight Yahweh's sovereign action behind these events.⁵⁵ Two questions, though, remain. One relates to the identity of רִיחַ here. Is it a wind sent by Yahweh or Yahweh's spirit that transports the prophet in visions? The second relates to the significance of this occurrence for other instances of רִיחַ within Ezekiel's visions. Is this instance determinative or significant for the interpretation of the other instances?

With regard to the first question, to say that רִיחַ is Yahweh's רִיחַ does not necessarily remove it from the principally meteorological realm, although the only other instance of רִיחַ יְהוָה in Ezekiel, in 11:5, is theological. The same phrase can designate the wind at Yahweh's beck and call (Isaiah 40:7), and Yahweh's control over רִיחַ *qua* meteorological phenomenon is apparent in texts such as Exod. 15:8 and Num. 11:31.⁵⁶ A more fruitful approach is to explore more fully the *characteristics* and *function* of רִיחַ in v.1 in the light of the rest of the vision. In his article 'Geist und Leben nach Ezechiel 37,1-14', Wagner does just that.⁵⁷ He notes that רִיחַ in v.1 bears many of the characteristics of a storm wind, but argues that it cannot be simply a storm wind because it is not random in its action, since it takes Ezekiel to "the plain" (with the definite article).⁵⁸ This is not a necessary conclusion, since we have seen Yahweh's control over רִיחַ, and Elijah is transported to heaven in a 'whirlwind' (בְּסַעֲרָה). However, it is in his analysis of the function of רִיחַ that he makes a significant contribution. He argues that '*rûah* seems here to be the principle of revelation of prophetic experience.'⁵⁹ Since Block distinguishes clearly between the transporting רִיחַ and the רִיחַ of prophetic revelation,⁶⁰ we need to follow Wagner's argument closely here.⁶¹

Although there is obviously a shift between vv.1-10 and vv.12-14, in terms of the 'picture' ('Bildmaterie'), Wagner asks why we should assume unity of 'Bildmaterie' as one of the presuppositional criteria of authenticity. Both sections have slightly different emphases, which can explain the shift. At the same time, both sections speak of 'the same reality of death'.⁶² In view of the fact that the exiles have experienced death (37:11) in the form of 'history that has died, belief that has died, hope that has died,

⁵⁵ Cf. Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p202.

⁵⁶ Ma (*Until the Spirit Comes*, p19) notes the particular difficulty in the categorisation of רִיחַ 'where the function strongly implies the "wind" reference, but also has a strong indication that the רִיחַ is specifically used by Yahweh.'

⁵⁷ Siegfried Wagner, 'Geist und Leben nach Ezechiel 37,1-14', in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament*, ed. D. Mathias, BZAW 240, (Berlin, de Gruyter, 1996), pp151-68, reprinted from *Theologische Versuche X*, hrsg. Von Joachim Rogge u. Gottfried Schille, (Berlin, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979), pp53-65.

⁵⁸ '>der Ebene< (mit best. Artikel)'. Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', p155.

⁵⁹ '*rûah* scheint hier das Offenbarungsprinzip prophetischer Erlebnisse zu sein.' Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', p154.

⁶⁰ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p373.

⁶¹ What follows is taken from Sections II-III of his article, i.e. Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', pp151-56.

⁶² 'die gleiche Todeswirklichkeit'. Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', p153.

promises of salvation that have perished',⁶³ the picture of the field of bones in vv.1-2 is utterly appropriate. Having demonstrated the coherence and congruence of the different 'pictures' he then makes the crucial point that it is by Yahweh's רִיחַ that Ezekiel is brutally confronted with the reality of death.

The significance of the storm wind motif for him, which he insists should not be done away with, is that it symbolises Ezekiel being seized by Yahweh and torn away from his environment and his existing conditions.⁶⁴ But רִיחַ goes beyond that, for 'the *rûah* tears away all illusions and unlocks reality, making reality experienceable, comprehensible, visible. It is precisely the act which can be understood as ecstasy, as mystical experience, that leads Ezekiel into the illusion-free actual, historical situation.'⁶⁵ In other words, רִיחַ brings Ezekiel to the point of greatest reality, when Ezekiel sees the situation for the exiles as it really is. For Wagner, the transporting רִיחַ merges into the prophetic spirit of revelation.⁶⁶

Using the categories of inspiration devised above, we can refine Wagner's conclusions. Although it is true that רִיחַ brings Ezekiel to the place where he sees the reality of the situation for the exiles, and although what Ezekiel sees can be understood as Yahweh's speech event, רִיחַ is not the source of what he sees. In that sense, the transporting, even the prophetic, רִיחַ should be understood in terms of 'potentiating' rather than 'word-communicating' inspiration.

This perspective sheds further light on our second question, on whether 37:1 is determinative or significant for the interpretation of the transporting רִיחַ in other visions, too.

We have already seen that the transporting רִיחַ plays a significant part within the visions; indeed, the only places we encounter this רִיחַ are in the visions. We should notice that רִיחַ, within the visions, takes Ezekiel to (8:3; 11:1; 43:5) or from (3:12, 14; 11:24) a place where Yahweh reveals something to the prophet or speaks to him. In that sense, there is little difference in terms of *function* between the רִיחַ יְהוָה in 37:1 and the anarthrous transporting רִיחַ elsewhere. Given that in 11:24 the first occurrence of רִיחַ most naturally seems to be that of a 'wind' moving the prophet, yet functionally it acts in a way similar to the transporting-cum-potentiating spirit of 37:1, here is clear evidence of deliberate ambiguity surrounding the use of רִיחַ. In the earlier passages

⁶³ 'gestorbene Geschichte, gestorbener Glaube, gestorbene Hoffnung, verstorbene Heilszusagen'. Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', p156. For more on the image of death in 37:11, see Saul M. Olyan, "'We Are Utterly Cut Off': Some Possible Nuances of לָנוּ נִזְרַנּוּ in Ezek 37:11', *CBQ* 65 (2003), pp43-51.

⁶⁴ Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', p155.

⁶⁵ 'Die *rûah* reißt aus allen Illusionen und schließt die Wirklichkeit auf, macht die Wirklichkeit erlebbar, erfassbar, anschaulich. Gerade *der* Akt, der als Ekstase, als mystisches Erleben begriffen werden kann, führt in die illusionslose vorfindliche tatsächliche geschichtliche Situation.' Wagner, 'Geist und Leben', p156.

⁶⁶ So too Lys, *Rûach*, pp130-31. Although Hosch does not specify what kind of 'spirit' is in view within the semantic domain 'supernatural beings', he argues for the presence of a second semantic domain, 'motion' (earlier defined as 'movement of air'). Hosch, '*RÛAH* in the Book of Ezekiel', p114.

where the prophet is transported, there is notable reticence to define further what is meant by this רִיחַ. Though a meteorological sense seems most natural, we should not regard the awkwardness in 11:24 as a definitive statement that the transporting רִיחַ is exclusively meteorological. Deliberate play on the different meanings of רִיחַ is clearly part of the author's agenda, as is most obvious in 37:1-14, and references to 'wind' do not, of course, connote a 'natural cause' of Ezekiel's movement.⁶⁷ Retrospectively, we should see Yahweh's direct involvement by his 'spirit', something more than hinted at earlier in the book given the close links between Yahweh's רִיחַ and Yahweh's יָד, and the near-interchangeability of אִישׁ, רִיחַ, and יְהוָה as agents at the start of ch. 8.⁶⁸

In summary, I have argued that the exploration of רִיחַ-inspiration and Ezekiel's visions yields two main conclusions. First, the role of רִיחַ within the visions, the transporting רִיחַ, points towards the 'potentiating' inspiration of the prophet, with particular reference to the prophetic event. Secondly, רִיחַ in 11:24 demonstrates the involvement of Yahweh's רִיחַ in the reception of the visions themselves, that is, in the prophetic event. Insofar as these visions are Yahweh's 'speech event', the inspiration envisaged here is 'word-communicating'.

2. Ezekiel being addressed in 'word' and רִיחַ

There are three instances within the book where רִיחַ is closely linked cotextually to Yahweh addressing Ezekiel. Whether such a cotextual link is reflected in a theological link will need to be examined. I shall argue that Ezekiel the prophet is clearly impacted by רִיחַ. However, in each one of these three instances, there is evidence not of 'word-communicating', but of 'potentiating' inspiration.

a) Ezekiel 2:2

Within the opening vision (1:1-3:15), Ezekiel had fallen prostrate before the vision of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh (1:28). Then Yahweh spoke to him, and told him to stand on his feet. The prophet continued, 'And when he spoke to me (כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלַי),⁶⁹ a spirit entered into me (וַתָּבֵא בִי רִיחַ) and set me on my feet (וַתַּעֲמִדֵנִי); and I heard him speaking to me.'

There are two questions that need to be addressed if the relationship to Yahweh's word is to be discerned. The first is the identity of רִיחַ. The second concerns the relationship between Yahweh's speaking and רִיחַ entering. We turn first to the identity of רִיחַ.

In the preliminary discussion on pages 75f., we noted some degree of consensus on the theological nature of this רִיחַ, even if some disagreement on the precise nature of it. Looking at commentators more broadly, there is some debate as to whether this רִיחַ is

⁶⁷ Cf. Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p30.

⁶⁸ Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p40. Note in particular אֲחִי וַתָּבֵא (v.3) and אֲחִי וַיָּבֵא (v.7).

⁶⁹ LXX omits this phrase, but adds καὶ ἀνέλαβέν με καὶ ἐξήρπέν με, most of which appears in Ezek. 3:14.

theological. There are really three main views adopted: רִיחַ as a 'wind' that set the prophet on his feet, רִיחַ as 'breath of life, vigour, courage' given by Yahweh and רִיחַ as 'spirit of Yahweh.'

Carley observes Ezekiel's 'curious reluctance' to use the phrase 'spirit of Yahweh', and thinks that people 'too readily' equate 'spirit' here with 'the spirit of Yahweh.'⁷⁰ He prefers the meaning 'wind,' linking it with the translating 'wind' mentioned elsewhere in Ezekiel. He insists, however, that this does not attribute Ezekiel's movement to a 'natural cause,' since Yahweh is responsible for the wind, too. The reluctance to speak of Yahweh's own רִיחַ until chapter 36 serves to emphasise the 'spirit of Yahweh' as instrumental within Israel's revival.⁷¹ For him, the 'word-play' on רִיחַ reveals 'the prophet's intention of associating some forces with common physical phenomena.'⁷²

Greenberg regards רִיחַ as 'vigor or even courage...infused into the prophet by the address of God.'⁷³ This might seem to suggest, as it does to Allen,⁷⁴ a 'subjective' understanding of רִיחַ, but language of Yahweh infusing Ezekiel makes it clear that what is in view is a vigour or courage from Yahweh. In a similar vein, Woodhouse notes the links between 2:2 and 37:10, and the contiguity with Yahweh speaking, and prefers to see רִיחַ as Yahweh's breath that enters the prophet.⁷⁵ While it should not be assumed that this 'breath' that enters the prophet is necessarily related to the word that is spoken, there is support for the rendering 'life-breath' from other occurrences of רִיחַ as the subject of בּוֹא (qal) followed by the preposition ב. Apart from this reference, there are four others, all in Ezekiel (3:24; 37:5, 9, 10). All the instances point to רִיחַ as life-breath.⁷⁶ Knierim, in his discussion of Old Testament spirituality, makes the important point, based on Ps. 104:29-30, that ontology is not always in view when the Old Testament speaks about רִיחַ, whether it is described as Yahweh's רִיחַ or the human רִיחַ. In Ps. 104, whose רִיחַ it is depends on the *location* of that רִיחַ at a particular moment. The critical point, according to Knierim, is that 'the spirit essential for human life is given and taken by God, and is not under the control of humans' (cf. נְשָׁמָה in Gen. 2:7).⁷⁷ Here, then, it might be that this רִיחַ-breath that has come from Yahweh revitalises

⁷⁰ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p30.

⁷¹ Carley regards the clearly theological instances in 11:5 and 11:24 as 'out of character' (*Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p30) and hence secondary (*Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p25, p88 n72).

⁷² Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p30. His comment raises the question of deriving an author's intentions from a text. Here is not the place to pursue it.

⁷³ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p62; cf. Fohrer's 'göttliche Lebenskraft' (*Ezechiel*, p15).

⁷⁴ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p38.

⁷⁵ Woodhouse, "'Spirit' in the Book of Ezekiel", pp12-13.

⁷⁶ Other instances where רִיחַ is the subject of בּוֹא involve the 'wind' or 'air' that comes (Job 1:19; 41:8; Ezek. 1:4; Jer. 4:12; Hos. 13:15) or that Yahweh brings (Jer. 49:36) or that brought (hif.) Ezekiel (Ezek. 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5). Note that some language of רִיחַ being 'in' (ב) a person points to רִיחַ as 'life-breath' (e.g. Gen. 6:3, 17; 7:15, 22); at other points רִיחַ clearly is God's רִיחַ (e.g. Gen. 41:38).

⁷⁷ See Knierim, *Task*, p273.

the stunned prophet. Infused with renewed vitality and vigour, he can stand on his feet.⁷⁸

The third view, that of רִיחַ as Yahweh's 'spirit,' is derived chiefly from the fact that רִיחַ retains its identity in setting the prophet on his feet. Thus Ohnesorge comments that רִיחַ here 'means not only "vitality", but more. It has here a dynamic character, so should be understood not only anthropologically, but also theologically – in the sense of a particular working of Yahweh.'⁷⁹ He goes on to observe that there are close links with 37:10, but the difference lies in the fact that 'רִיחַ in 2,2aβ (3,24aβ) is the subject of עָמַד hi.' while 'in 37,10b the revitalised are themselves the subject of the phrase...'.⁸⁰ Allen argues in similar vein that רִיחַ is Yahweh's 'spirit', and explains the lack of an article here (and in the references to רִיחַ transporting Ezekiel) as marks of 'the stereotyped style of spirit-control.'⁸¹ Block, too, sees רִיחַ here as Yahweh's רִיחַ, the 'spirit of Yahweh': 'The text notes that the raising of the prophet occurs simultaneously with the sound of the voice, which suggests that this *rûah* may be the source of the word's dynamic and energizing power. This can be none other than the Spirit of God...'.⁸² Before attempting to decide between these three possible meanings, it is necessary to look at the second question relating to this passage.

The second question relates to the timing of the two events of Yahweh speaking and רִיחַ coming. In particular, it relates to the force of כִּפְאֶשֶׁר. On about two hundred occasions in the Old Testament כִּפְאֶשֶׁר is followed by one of three verbs of speaking, אָמַר (piel) or דָּבַר (piel); eighty of these involve דָּבַר. The vast majority of these two hundred yield the meaning 'just as,' since the subordinate clause introduced by כִּפְאֶשֶׁר serves to confirm that a particular action has been performed 'just as' has been said; new elements are not introduced. There are sixteen instances of כִּפְאֶשֶׁר דָּבַר אֵל other than Ezek. 2:2. In each of them, כִּפְאֶשֶׁר has this comparative sense. If כִּפְאֶשֶׁר is to have a comparative sense here, it is necessary that implicit in Yahweh's command to the prophet to stand on his feet is the assumption that רִיחַ will be essential for this to happen. However, prior to 2:2, there has been no mention within Yahweh's command of רִיחַ entering the prophet. כִּפְאֶשֶׁר should therefore be understood in a temporal sense

⁷⁸ So Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p44. Given that elsewhere Ezekiel can respond to God's commands without reference to רִיחַ, she sees רִיחַ here not as replacing Ezekiel's own ability to hear and act, but as giving him *vim* where his own was lacking. The appropriate translation is then not 'Spirit' but '(God's) vitality' ('(Gottes) Lebenskraft').

⁷⁹ 'nicht nur "Lebenskraft" meint, sondern mehr. Sie hat hier dynamistischen Charakter, dürfte also nicht nur anthropologisch, sondern auch theologisch – im Sinne eines besonderen Wirkens Jahwes – zu verstehen sein.' Stefan Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu: Zur Sicht der Zukunft Israels nach Ez 11,14-21; 20, 1-44; 36, 16-38; 37, 1-14. 15-28*, Forschung zur Bibel 64, (Würzburg, Echter Verlag, 1991), p303.

⁸⁰ 'רִיחַ in 2,2aβ (3,24aβ) Subjekt von עָמַד hi. ...ist' while 'In 37,10b sind die Wiederbelebten selbst Subjekt des Ausdrucks...'. Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, p303.

⁸¹ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p38.

⁸² Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p115. Others seeing the referent here as Yahweh's רִיחַ include Lys, *Rûah*, pp130-31; Hosch, 'RÛAH in the Book of Ezekiel', pp105-106.

here.⁸³ Such a rendering, though, has been disputed. The rarity of this temporal usage, along with textual evidence, has led Zimmerli to regard the phrase as a later ‘clarification.’⁸⁴ Allen also rejects the phrase for similar reasons, commenting in addition that ‘it adds little to the narrative and indeed cuts across the future aspect of v 1b.’⁸⁵ However, the temporal use *is* found in Ezekiel, despite the fact that Zimmerli, Tov, Allen and Lust all follow Cornill in denying a temporal usage of כְּאֲשֶׁר in Ezekiel.⁸⁶ In 16:50, כְּאֲשֶׁר introduces an event that preceded in time the main clause, וְאָסִיר אֶתְהֶן כְּאֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי, (‘therefore I removed them when I saw it’).⁸⁷ In 35:11, כְּאֲשֶׁר introduces an event that was to happen simultaneously with that in the main clause, though both would be in the future: וְנִוְדַעְתִּי בָּם כְּאֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁפָּטָם (‘and I will make myself known among them,⁸⁸ when I judge you’). More significantly, in view of the dominance of כְּאֲשֶׁר in the sense of ‘just as’ with verbs of saying, is its occurrence with אָמַר in 37:18 in a clearly temporal sense: וְכִאֲשֶׁר יֹאמְרוּ אֵלֶיךָ בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ לֵאמֹר (‘And when your people say to you...’). Further, the issue of textual evidence does not yield certain conclusions. Though it is clear that the MT includes כְּאֲשֶׁר דְּבַר אֵלַי here while it is not present in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX translators,⁸⁹ and though it is clear that there is a strong Hebrew text tradition other than that of the MT, since the absence of the phrase from the Hexapla suggests that Origen was working from a different Hebrew text, the significance of such a plus with regard to accessing the more original text is disputed.⁹⁰ That one commentator regards the phrase as a ‘clarification’ and another says that it effectively complicates the phrase demonstrates that there is no substantive reason for emending the MT.

With regard to the temporal relationship between the two clauses, Waltke and O’Connor note that when two situations are contemporary, the conjunction used (if an infinitive with a preposition is not used) is usually כְּאֲשֶׁר.⁹¹ However כְּאֲשֶׁר is also often used to describe situations when the event in the subordinate clause (introduced by כְּאֲשֶׁר) *precedes* that described in the main clause.⁹² On syntactical grounds, it is not

⁸³ Cf. Tov’s comment: ‘God did not tell the prophet in so many words that Spirit would enter him, so that these words not only disturb the context, but they are also imprecise.’ E. Tov, ‘Recensional Differences between the MT and LXX of Ezekiel’, *ETL* 62 (1986), p93.

⁸⁴ *Ezekiel 1*, p89. He follows Cornill in regarding the temporal usage as ‘unusual.’

⁸⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p10; so too Tov, ‘Recensional Differences’, p93.

⁸⁶ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p89; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p10; Tov, ‘Recensional Differences’, p93; J. Lust, ‘Notes to the Septuagint: Ezekiel 1-2’, *ETL* 75 (1999), p23.

⁸⁷ Some see here, as in 16:13, the presence of an archaic 2fs ending, and there is some ancient evidence for rendering with 2fs, ‘as you saw’ (see BHS). Zimmerli, however, comments, ‘The meaning “when I saw it” cannot certainly be excluded.’ (*Ezekiel 1*, p332).

⁸⁸ In other words, ‘in Israel’; so Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p168, as *difficillior lectio*. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 2*, p226) deletes בָּם as an inadvertent repetition. LXX has σοι.

⁸⁹ The LXX translators were ‘relatively literal and consistent’. See Tov, ‘Recensional Differences’, pp91-92 (quotation from p92).

⁹⁰ See M. Greenberg, ‘The Use of the Ancient Versions for Understanding the Hebrew Text’, in *Congress Volume, Göttingen 1977*, VTSup 29, (Leiden, Brill, 1978), pp131-48 for a conservative view on the MT.

⁹¹ *IBHS*, 38.7a.

⁹² See BDB, p455.

possible to decide whether Yahweh's speaking precedes רִיחַ entering the prophet, such that רִיחַ is seen as an effect of the word,⁹³ or whether they are simultaneous (as Block assumes⁹⁴).

Drawing the threads of the discussion together, while Woodhouse is right to draw attention to the links with 37:10, Carley has also made an important point in drawing attention to the literary device of 'word-play' at this point with regard to the meaning of רִיחַ.⁹⁵ I would go further, and suggest there is deliberate ambiguity. Such ambiguity will be a significant feature in the book of Ezekiel, especially in Ezekiel 37.⁹⁶ The determining factor in understanding what is meant here needs to be the context. However, the context points in different directions. The fact that, of the occurrences of רִיחַ encountered so far in the book, only רִיחַ in 1:4 has been feminine, points to a link between רִיחַ in 2:2 and 1:4, yielding a meaning 'wind.' However, in the light of the wider literary context given by chapter 37, the meaning 'life-breath' seems (retrospectively) preferable. This, though, should not obscure a third direction which רִיחַ takes, that of the divine רִיחַ as 'spirit.' This is suggested by the increasing role for רִיחַ within the book, and by the fact that רִיחַ functions as an agent acting upon the prophet.⁹⁷ Such ambiguity as is found in 2:2 serves to keep רִיחַ at the forefront of the readers' and hearers' minds. It is also an important reminder that categories we separate readily are in fact rather fluid.⁹⁸

However, though there is deliberate ambiguity here, and though the MT juxtaposes רִיחַ and וְהָבֵא בִי רוּחַ, it is not possible to conceive of 'word-communicating' inspiration here. Such an interpretation would demand that רִיחַ in some sense preceded Yahweh speaking, an interpretation which the syntax of the MT does not allow. Although רִיחַ is here intimately associated with hearing Yahweh speak, the focus is not on 'word-communicating inspiration,'⁹⁹ but rather on the prophet's 'revival,' on his being *enabled* to stand up, to hear and to respond to Yahweh's word.

b) Ezekiel 3:24

This verse, closely paralleling 2:2, occurs as Ezekiel is again confronted with the divine glory, and falls on his face (3:22-23). Ezekiel recounts how 'The spirit entered into me,

⁹³ Cf. Kaufmann's comment that 'The word of God is not brought on by the spirit, the spirit is the by-product of the word.' Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p100; this is a general comment that he makes, not one specifically related to Ezek. 2:2.

⁹⁴ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p115.

⁹⁵ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p30. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p132) notes the 'obscurity' as to whether it is the prophet's own 'vital power' or the 'divine רוּחַ acting under the divine command.'

⁹⁶ See especially Michael V. Fox, 'The Rhetoric of Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of the Bones', *HUCA* 51 (1980), pp1-15.

⁹⁷ That רִיחַ is the subject and agent of both 'entering' and 'causing Ezekiel to stand' does not prove conclusively that it is Yahweh's 'spirit' that is in view. In Job 32:18, the רִיחַ within Elihu that acts as an independent agent to constrain him is none other than 'the breath of Shaddai' (נְשִׁימַת שַׁדַּי) that gives a mortal understanding in 32:8.

⁹⁸ Cf. Chevallier, *Souffle de Dieu*, p25.

⁹⁹ Pace Kapelrud, who says that 'the spirit...spoke to him' ('The Spirit and the Word', p42).

and set me on my feet (וַתִּבֶּן אֶת־רַגְלִי עַל־רַגְלִי); and he spoke with me (וַיִּדְבֶּר אִתִּי) and said to me: Go, shut yourself inside your house.’ Similarities with 2:2 are immediately apparent. Again, רוּחַ enters the prostrate prophet and sets him on his feet. Here, too, this experience is followed by Yahweh speaking with him, though this is subsequent to the experience of רוּחַ. Allen regards רוּחַ here as the divine רוּחַ.¹⁰⁰ Block agrees, commenting that

‘as in 2:2a, the absence of the article leaves the identity of the *rūah* open. However, its activity resolves the issue. As before, the *rūah* represents the divine power that enables and authorizes the mortal to stand in the presence of the *kābôd*, the visible sign of the One Who Is Present.’¹⁰¹

While Block and Allen are right to recognise the objective side to רוּחַ here, it is still preferable to see the same deliberate ambiguity present as in 2:2. Thus, the comments above on ‘inspiration’ in 2:2 obtain here. Although the association between רוּחַ and Yahweh speaking with the prophet is close, there is no hint that רוּחַ is the source of inspiration of that word. The most that can be said here is that this רוּחַ points to ‘potentiating’ inspiration, insofar as the prophet is affected and influenced by its presence and action.

c) Ezekiel 11:5

Within the ‘divine vision’ from 8:1-11:25, Ezekiel was lifted up and brought to the east gate of the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem. There he saw twenty-five men devising iniquity. In 11:4, he was told to ‘prophesy against them.’ Ezekiel, as narrator, continues, ‘Then the spirit of Yahweh fell upon me (וַתִּפֹּל עָלַי רוּחַ יְהוָה), and he said to me (וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי), “Say, Thus says Yahweh...”’ and Yahweh continues, telling him what to say.

The use of נָפַל with רוּחַ is unique in the Old Testament. It is used once with Yahweh’s רוּחַ in Ezek. 8:1. In meaning, the phrase overlaps with the semantic domain covered by צָלַח (עַל), used of the onrush of Yahweh’s spirit, and that of הָיָה (עַל), which is used of Yahweh’s spirit ‘coming upon’ a person. Both phrases can be used with רוּחַ for prophecy¹⁰² or for more general empowerment.¹⁰³ Neither is used of Yahweh’s רוּחַ in Ezekiel. Instead, הָיָה עַל is linked with Yahweh’s hand.

Carley has seen here ‘word-communicating’ inspiration, in that רוּחַ ‘communicates a divine revelation.’¹⁰⁴ While he is correct to see here the prophetic רוּחַ,¹⁰⁵ as well as the

¹⁰⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp60-61.

¹⁰¹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp153-54.

¹⁰² צָלַח עַל - 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 18:10; הָיָה עַל - Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23 (cf. 1 Sam. 16:16, 23, of the ‘evil spirit’ upon Saul).

¹⁰³ צָלַח עַל - Jdg. 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:13; הָיָה עַל - Jdg. 3:10; 11:29.

¹⁰⁴ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p70; cf. his *Ezekiel*, p67. So too Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, p190; Hosch, ‘RŪAH in the Book of Ezekiel’, p117. This, along with this phrase’s unique conception of the spirit ‘falling’, Ezekiel’s awareness of a different mode of operation of רוּחַ in 11:1, and the lack of references elsewhere to רוּחַ falling in connection with calls to prophesy, has led Carley to see it as from a later period. Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp25, 70. So also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p258; Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, pp51, 284. LXX (Codex Vaticanus) reads πνεῦμα.

deliberate linking with pre-classical prophecy, his observation on the relationship between the words Yahweh utters and רִיחַ is mistaken. רִיחַ neither explicitly inspires the words that Yahweh utters, nor the words that Ezekiel is commanded to utter. While רִיחַ ‘fell’ (feminine) on Ezekiel, it is Yahweh who ‘said’ (masculine) to Ezekiel what he should say.¹⁰⁶ While רִיחַ can take both feminine (passim) and masculine (1:12, 20; 19:12; 27:26) verb forms, it is unlikely that there is a shift here, since רִיחַ characteristically in the book retains its gender when it is the subject of two verbs.¹⁰⁷ This verse, though, does provide a clear instance of the inspiration of the prophet Ezekiel as a person; רִיחַ prepares him to receive Yahweh’s word.¹⁰⁸ It is in this sense that ‘the coming of the spirit leads to the prophetic word.’¹⁰⁹ It further reveals the vital role that the divine רִיחַ plays in the life and the ministry of the prophet.

In summary, the three instances where רִיחַ is most closely linked with Yahweh speaking to Ezekiel do not yield a ‘word-communicating’ view of inspiration within the book of Ezekiel. There is, however, a picture presented of a prophet who is powerfully affected by the work of the divine רִיחַ. At the start of his commissioning, Yahweh’s address to him is accompanied by the action of the divine רִיחַ in setting Ezekiel on his feet. In the instances of Yahweh speaking that we have examined, Yahweh’s רִיחַ is associated deliberately and directly with Ezekiel’s ministry, yielding a prominent, if ‘potentiating,’ view of the inspiration of the prophet by רִיחַ.

3. Other instances of links between רִיחַ and prophecy

There is one place where רִיחַ is linked with the inspiration of prophets other than Ezekiel. In this instance, it is the inspiration of the prophets against whom Ezekiel is to inveigh that is in view. In 13:3, Ezekiel recounts what he is to say to the false prophets: ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Alas for the senseless prophets who follow their own spirit (אֲשֶׁר הִלְכִים אַחַר רוּחָם), and have seen nothing!’

This verse serves as the first part of a woe oracle against prophets, who, like Ezekiel, claimed to speak for Yahweh. If the MT is retained,¹¹⁰ then the prophets

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Block’s comment that this is ‘the most explicit statement of his prophetic inspiration’ (‘Prophet of the Spirit’, p41).

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Neve, *Spirit of God*, p97 n34.

¹⁰⁷ 2:2; 3:14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5. Shifts in the gender of a noun within a verse do occur in Ezekiel (e.g. 13:20; 16:58; 18:19; 20:16; 42:4, 11; 43:11; see also p81 n328 above), but tend to be where the noun is feminine, and the anaphoric suffix is masculine. According to Rooker (*Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, pp79-80), this is a mark of late biblical Hebrew. It is implausible to argue, as Hosch does (‘RŪAH in the Book of Ezekiel’, p11), that ‘in such verbs as “to say, to speak” introducing deity as the speaker the masculine gender is required.’ In 3:22, there is no possibility that it is Yahweh’s hand that is ‘speaking’, yet there is an identical surface structure grammar as in 11:5.

¹⁰⁸ Sklba confuses the prophetic event with the rhetorical when he says of this verse, ‘by the breath of God Ezekiel was...forced to...speak’ (Sklba, “‘Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us””, p14).

¹⁰⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567. For Zimmerli, as noted above, it is a secondary addition.

¹¹⁰ So Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp395-96, Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp234-35. Some other commentators follow LXX in reading ἄπο καρδίας αὐτῶν for אֲשֶׁר הִלְכִים אַחַר רוּחָם in v.2, and τοῖς προφητεύουσιν ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτῶν for עַל-הַנְּבִיאִים הַנְּבִלִים אֲשֶׁר הִלְכִים אַחַר רוּחָם in v.3 (Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p188; Cooke, *Ezekiel*,

against whom Ezekiel speaks prophesy 'out of their own imagination' (מִלְבָּם) (v.2), and 'follow their own spirit' (הִלְכִים אַחַר רוּחָם) (v.3).

Though Ezekiel judges them on the basis of the rhetorical event (their 'prophesying'), his assault on them relates to the prophetic event. He attacks the source of inspiration of these prophets. At one level, רוּחַ can be understood effectively almost as a synonym for לֵב here: the messages that these prophets utter come from their own will.¹¹¹ However, by exploiting possible ambiguity in רוּחַ here, Ezekiel could be making a direct assault on their claim to authority.¹¹² They claim to be inspired by the divine רוּחַ, but in reality their inspiration comes from themselves and their own delusions, and not from Yahweh at all. This certainly fits well with the rest of the condemnation of these false prophets, and the condemnation found elsewhere: they have seen nothing (v.3), they are 'fools', (הִנְבָּלִים; cf. Hos. 9:7), they have seen lies and falsehood (v.6; cf. Mic. 2:11), they have claimed inspiration without Yahweh speaking to them (v.7) and they have promised prosperity.¹¹³

Whether this assault on the false prophets' inspiration is matched by Ezekiel claiming the inspiration of רוּחַ for himself cannot be ascertained directly from chapter 13. In view of what we have already seen of the role of רוּחַ within the ministry of Ezekiel, it is likely that Ezekiel is here contrasting the false prophets' inspiration with his own in a direct fashion. Ezekiel's pungent irony, then, serves as a claim that he has the divine רוּחַ inspiring him, unlike the false prophets (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:19-25; Mic. 3:8). This is a significant observation, because here is clear evidence that a prophet who is found attacking רוּחַ-inspiration in other prophets also acknowledged the role of רוּחַ within his own inspiration. The two are not mutually exclusive.

With regard to the nature of inspiration in view here, it is possible that 'word-communicating' inspiration should be understood. If the divine רוּחַ is being contrasted with 'their minds' by direct correspondence, then, since 'their minds' are clearly the *authority / source* of the messages that the false prophets utter, it is apparent that the divine רוּחַ would also be the *authority / source* of the messages that Ezekiel utters. Such a conclusion must remain tentative, given the difficulties over the text, over whether Ezekiel is being deliberately ambiguous and ironical in his use of רוּחַ, and over how exact is the conception of רוּחַ as 'source' between the two different senses of רוּחַ.

pp138, 142; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p160; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p285). Allen comments that the shorter reading is preferable.

¹¹¹ Cf. the parallels in Jeremiah 23:16, 26. Greenberg sees Num. 16:28 as the antecedent of the phrase in Ezekiel (Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p235).

¹¹² Cf. Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p43.

¹¹³ Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', pp159-60.

4. Ezekiel communicating the word and רִנָּה

The first three ways we have examined in which רִנָּה is linked with inspiration in the book of Ezekiel have focused more specifically on the prophetic event. Since, as we have already noted, inspiration often extends beyond the prophetic event to the rhetorical event, our final examination of the inspiration of the prophet in the book looks at the communication of the word of Yahweh and the prophet's inspiration. The question that needs to be addressed is: to what extent does רִנָּה equip Ezekiel (or, indeed, other prophets within the book) to speak, and to what extent does the divine רִנָּה actually 'speak' those words?

The work of רִנָּה in the communication of the word can be seen in two places, the prophet's words themselves and the prophet's life.

As far as the relationship between רִנָּה and the words that the prophet utters is concerned, there are no explicit references. It is straightforward to affirm 'potentiating' inspiration, since the impact of רִנָּה on the prophet in general is clearly apparent. It is possible to move towards 'word-communicating' inspiration for the rhetorical event when two facts are put side by side. First, there is some evidence of 'word-communicating' inspiration in the prophetic event. Secondly, the prophet is to utter verbatim what he has received. These words are not simply the past words of Yahweh (or Yahweh's רִנָּה), but the present words. However, it needs to be acknowledged that there is no explicit suggestion of double agency discourse.

The second place where the work of רִנָּה in the communication of the word can be deduced is from the relationship between Yahweh's word, the prophet's life, and רִנָּה, as seen in the combination of two facts evident in the book.

First, the prophet is not required simply to speak the word, but to embody it. This can be seen from the fact that the prophet actually swallows the scroll (2:8-3:3). The word does not remain external to him, but is internalised within him so that, as Fretheim comments, 'as a person the prophet *becomes* the Word of God.'¹¹⁴ Since God cannot be separated from the word he gives, thus he goes with that word such that in some sense he is '*absorbed into* the very life of the prophet.'¹¹⁵ It can also be seen from the sign-acts that Ezekiel is instructed to perform. The combination of these two, the swallowing of the scroll, and the performing of sign-acts, both point in the same direction: 'it is not only what the prophet speaks but who he is that now constitute the word of God.'¹¹⁶

The second fact pointing towards the role of רִנָּה in the communication of Yahweh's word is that the prophet's movements and actions are constrained and directed by the divinely-controlled רִנָּה, whether as the 'agency of conveyance'¹¹⁷ (3:12,

¹¹⁴ Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective*, OBT 14, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984), p153 (my emphasis).

¹¹⁵ Fretheim, *Suffering of God*, p153 (his emphasis).

¹¹⁶ Terence E. Fretheim, 'Word of God', *ABD* 6, p966.

¹¹⁷ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p33.

14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5), as the רִיחַ that sets him on his feet (2:2; 3:24), or as the רִיחַ that falls upon him (11:5a). Such instances, along with the emphasis on the ‘hand of Yahweh’ and the occasions where Yahweh ‘brought’ (הביא), ‘led’ (הוליך), ‘took out’ (הוציא) and ‘brought back’ (השיב) Ezekiel point to the fact that ‘Ezekiel is a man seized by God.’¹¹⁸

When these two facts are juxtaposed, it can be deduced that the degree to which Yahweh’s רִיחַ is involved in the movement and ministry of the prophet is also the degree to which that רִיחַ is involved in the communication of the ‘incarnate’, visible word. Though neither explicit nor exploited, in the book of Ezekiel there is an implicit understanding of the inspiration of רִיחַ in the ‘word-communicating’ sense. The prophet Ezekiel *is* that ‘word’ which רִיחַ directs, guides and leads.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Within the book of Ezekiel, רִיחַ has a very significant role to play in the experience of the prophet. There is some evidence of a ‘word-communicating’ view of inspiration in the prophetic event, both in the fact that the spirit inspired the vision of chs. 8-11 (11:24), a vision that can be understood as Yahweh’s ‘speech event’, and in the fact that Ezekiel was to inveigh against the false prophets for their auto-inspiration (13:3), whereas the source of Ezekiel’s inspiration and message was not his own spirit, but Yahweh’s. Further, when the focus is shifted from the prophetic to the rhetorical event, ‘word-communicating’ inspiration can also be seen to the extent that Ezekiel is portrayed as one who is constrained by the spirit and yet embodies the word, and to the extent that רִיחַ inspires the words to Ezekiel that he, in turn, is to utter verbatim. However, the three instances where רִיחַ is contextually linked most closely to Yahweh speaking are precisely those which do not yield ‘word-communicating’ but ‘potentiating’ inspiration. In addition, the רִיחַ which transports the prophet within visions is closely linked with Yahweh revealing a situation to the prophet, or to Yahweh speaking, but there is no suggestion of ‘word-communicating’ inspiration. Within the book of Ezekiel, then, רִיחַ is linked both with the prophetic event and the rhetorical event. The evidence for ‘potentiating’ inspiration is strong in the book, but there is also evidence of ‘word-communicating’ inspiration. How such a picture fits within the inspiration of prophets in the rest of the Old Testament is the subject of the next chapter.

Before turning to it, though, we need to revisit one explanation for the relative absence of רִיחַ within the classical prophets, which I termed the *theological* view. According to this view, the silence arises from the ‘theocentric’ thought of the prophets.¹¹⁹ However, Ezekiel is one of the most theocentric of prophets, attributing the

¹¹⁸ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p36.

¹¹⁹ See p90 above.

restoration of Israel to Yahweh acting 'for the sake of his name'.¹²⁰ At the same time, Ezekiel speaks often of לְשׁוֹן within his own ministry. This *theological* explanation does not account for the evidence.

We now turn our attention to the inspiration of prophets in the rest of the Old Testament.

¹²⁰ Ezek. 36:22; cf. 20:9, 14, 22; 36:32. See especially Joyce, *Divine Initiative*.

CHAPTER 4: DIACHRONIC PERSPECTIVES ON PROPHETIC INSPIRATION

In the last chapter, after surveying different scholarly perspectives on the place of רִיחַ within prophecy, I identified three questions that Part II would address. The first was whether רִיחַ in Ezekiel is or can be understood as Yahweh's breath on which his word is carried. The second was whether Ezekiel recovers רִיחַ as foundational in prophetic inspiration. Within this was the question of whether the classical prophets did indeed repudiate רִיחַ in their own inspiration. The third was whether the emphasis on רִיחַ within the prophet Ezekiel's ministry is best explained in terms of his attempts at self-authentication. I began to address these questions in the last chapter by doing two things. First, I examined the concept of inspiration, and suggested two theoretical distinctions should be acknowledged: that between 'potentiating' inspiration, where רִיחַ inspires the prophet, and 'word-communicating' inspiration, where רִיחַ inspires words, and that between the prophetic event, of Yahweh's word coming to the prophet, and the rhetorical event, of the prophet speaking Yahweh's word. Secondly, I examined רִיחַ-inspiration within the book of Ezekiel, and argued that there is evidence of both 'potentiating' and 'word-communicating' inspiration, although more evidence of the former, and that each can be found in both the prophetic and the rhetorical events. Whether such a picture as I have described above is a 'recovery' of that which obtained among the pre-classical prophets and which was subsequently missing from the classical prophets depends on an analysis of both.

In this chapter, as I explore the relationship between רִיחַ and prophetic inspiration diachronically, I will argue that Ezekiel does not 'recover' the inspiration of pre-classical prophets because, on the one hand, pre-classical prophets are not depicted as being as inspired as is sometimes said (section A), and, on the other, because classical prophets are more inspired than is sometimes allowed (section B). I will argue that essentially the same picture is in evidence after the exile (section C). In the fourth section (D), I shall summarise the findings of Part II, concluding that רִיחַ as the 'breath' of Yahweh's mouth is not linked in Ezekiel with Yahweh's word. This will enable me in the final section to revisit the question of רִיחַ and Ezekiel's self-authentication; there, I shall argue that that the relative prominence of רִיחַ within the prophetic ministry of Ezekiel is not explained well by the notion that the prophet recovers an emphasis that had been lost in order to authenticate his ministry. I shall also argue that within the context of the *book* of Ezekiel, רִיחַ-language may well have a secondary function of authenticating the prophet but that the focus lies elsewhere. First, we turn our attention to the pre-classical prophets.

A. INSPIRATION AND THE PRE-CLASSICAL PROPHETS

There are three points that can be made about the role of רִנָּה and its relation to Yahweh's word in the pre-classical prophets. First, there is strong evidence of 'potentiating inspiration.' Secondly, there is strong evidence of 'word-communicating' inspiration. Thirdly, רִנָּה is not especially prominent in the accounts of pre-classical prophets.

1. 'Potentiating' inspiration and the pre-classical prophets

There are a number of passages which point towards 'potentiating inspiration.' We shall look at three in particular: that of Balaam's prophecy in Num. 24, since there is an explicit link between רִנָּה-inspiration and the delivering of oracles; that of Saul prophesying in 1 Samuel 10, since it is representative of a number of instances within the Deuteronomistic History in which רִנָּה is linked with the hitpael of נבא, and ecstatic prophesying seems to be in view; finally, that involving Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kgs. 2, because of these prophets' links with Ezekiel.

a) Numbers 24:2

'Now Balaam saw that it pleased Yahweh to bless Israel, so he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face toward the wilderness. Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then the spirit of God came upon him (וַתְּהִי עָלָיו רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים), and he uttered his oracle, saying...' (Num. 24:1-3).

These verses form the introduction to the third of seven oracles that the prophet Balaam utters. The first one, delivered and addressed to Balak after Yahweh has put a word in Balaam's mouth (23:5), explains how he (Balaam) cannot curse what God has not cursed (23:7-10). The second, again addressed to Balak, explains further Balaam's refusal to curse the people of Israel, for God does not change his mind. What God has blessed, Balaam cannot revoke (23:18-24). Before the third oracle, Balak, in desperation, takes Balaam to another vantage point so that Balaam might curse Israel. Num. 24:1-3 introduces this oracle, which is addressed to Israel camping below Peor. Instead of cursing Israel, Balaam articulates the blessing that will flow to them (24:3-9). In anger, Balak dismisses Balaam. Balaam denies that he can 'go beyond the word of Yahweh (אֶת־פִּי יְהוָה)' (24:13), and declares his fourth oracle, announcing what Israel will do to Balak's people in days to come (24:15-19). The fifth, sixth and seventh (Num. 24:20-24) oracles have a purview wider than the incident between Balaam and Balak.

Although the antiquity of the oracles is not disputed,¹ the question of composition of the Balaam narrative is a complex one.² Evidence for an early date of 24:1-2 includes

¹ Most commentators refer to W.F. Albright, 'The Oracles of Balaam', *JBL* 63 (1944), pp207-33. The exception is 24:21-24 (see p227).

² See Philip J. Budd, *Numbers*, WBC 5, (Waco, Word, 1984), pp256-65 for a detailed discussion; also Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, pp147-50. Whybray notes the difficulty scholars such as Noth had in

the verbal phrase used to describe the arrival of רִיחַ (עַל הַיָּהוָה; cf. Jdg. 3:10³) and the archaic notion of Balaam setting his face toward the wilderness to preserve visual contact.⁴ With regard to the role of the divine רִיחַ here, though, there is some disagreement among scholars. Montague comments, 'here for the first time in our sources, prophecy is attributed to the spirit of God.'⁵ It is not clear whether Montague regards the *contents* of the prophecy as being given by the divine רִיחַ (the 'word-communicating' view) or whether it is the charismatic 'gift' of prophecy.⁶ In similar vein, Baumgärtel sees the spirit here as responsible for 'prophetic or ecstatic speech,'⁷ while Noth comments that 'Balaam is represented as an ecstatic prophet who utters his words under the direct influence of inspiration.'⁸ Such comments do not distinguish between 'word-communicating' and 'potentiating' inspiration. Other scholars seem to go further, intimating 'word-communicating' inspiration. Thus Davies contrasts previous divine communications, 'effected by Yahweh's putting his words in Balaam's mouth (23:5; 16)' with 24:2, where he says 'but now the Spirit of God came upon him.'⁹ He seems to imply that the revelation which earlier came by Yahweh's word now came by Yahweh's רִיחַ. Milgrom, too, points in this direction. He comments that 'the assumption here is that instead of seeking God in a dream (22:9,20) or having God's words "put into his mouth" (23:5,16), Balaam is now invested with the divine spirit and falls into an ecstatic state (vv.3-4), the mark of a prophet (11:25-29).'¹⁰ The result is that in vv.3-9, 'Balaam introduces himself – now that he is invested with the divine spirit – as one who is privy to God's direct revelation.'¹¹ Dreytza is most explicit when he speaks of רִיחַ here 'as personal, speaking agent'.¹²

However others are more cautious about discerning 'word-communicating' inspiration here. Kaufmann, commenting on this verse, says that 'the spirit prepares a man for prophecy' and 'enables him to frame parables and songs' but, he notes, they 'are not properly mantic activities, nor are they peculiar to prophets.'¹³ Thus he denies here that the spirit is the 'source' of prophecy. Rather, in view of his later comment

handling passages such as Num. 22-24 that 'did not seem to yield to documentary analysis'. R.N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*, JSOTSup 53, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1987), p118; see also Dion, 'La *ruah* dans l'Heptateuch', p169.

³ The verb and preposition (עַל הַיָּהוָה) point towards Balaam being possessed wholly by God's רִיחַ when prophesying. See Lys, *Rûach*, pp44-45; cf. Jdg. 11:29; 1 Sam. 16:16, 23; 19:20, 23. The occurrences in 2 Chr. 15:1 and 20:14 have a very different feel. The Chronicler has adopted early forms and adapted them.

⁴ See Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp40-41. Carley notes the importance of visual contact (cf. 2 Kgs. 8:11).

⁵ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p12.

⁶ So Wolff, who says that Yahweh's רִיחַ produces 'the charisma of prophecy' (*Anthropology*, p35).

⁷ 'πνεῦμα, πνευματικός', *TDNT* 6, p362.

⁸ Martin Noth, *Numbers: A Commentary*, tr. J.D. Martin, OTL, (London, SCM, 1968), p189.

⁹ Eryl W. Davies, *Numbers*, NCBC, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1995), p266.

¹⁰ Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary, (New York, Jewish Publication Society, 1990), p202.

¹¹ Milgrom, *Numbers*, p202; cf. Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p49.

¹² 'als personales, redendes Agens'. Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p216.

¹³ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p98.

about the spirit's role, he countenances 'potentiating' inspiration.¹⁴ Neve admits that, at first glance, v.2 might suggest that 'it is the message which has been inspired by the spirit of Yahweh.'¹⁵ However, since Yahweh is the source of the message in Num. 23:5, 12, 16, 17, 26, without any indication of the spirit's work, Neve sees the spirit's activity as bringing about the ecstatic condition described in vv.3-4. Further evidence, he says, comes from the fact that Balaam didn't consult the omens, but 'set his face towards the wilderness,' something that he suggests is 'a position preparatory to the ecstatic condition.' He concludes:

'thus in this chapter the spirit of God is thought of as having occasioned the condition of ecstatic sight under the influence of which Balaam sees visions of God and hears his word. In this sense, the spirit of God spoken of in v.2 does not inspire the word...it rather causes the "enthusiasm" which typifies this early period.'¹⁶

Thus Neve's position is similar to that of Kaufmann, that this is an instance of 'potentiating' inspiration.¹⁷

It is clear from 24:10, 13 that the word of Yahweh had come three times to Balaam, yet on only two occasions is that process described explicitly (23:5, 16). The phrase 'the spirit of God came upon him' (24:2) entails the reception of a word by the prophet *and* the impetus for its delivery. Precisely how the 'spirit of God' relates to the word that came is not certain. Three points may be made.

First, since the 'prophetic' and 'rhetorical' event are merged here, the role of the spirit cannot be reduced to the prophetic event.

Secondly, while there is the possibility of 'word-communicating' inspiration here, such a view is not explicitly articulated. What is certain, though, is that the prophet Balaam himself experiences the action of God's רָחַם, and that this action issued in prophetic words; 'potentiating' inspiration, at the least, is evident in pre-classical prophecy. It is not possible to go further with certainty.

Thirdly, Balaam within the narrative is a figure who does not fit easily within categories. At points the heathen seer seems to be just that: the multiple altars are unique (23:1); he looks for omens (24:1). However, he also seems to be the true prophet: he is the one who speaks of Yahweh in ch. 22, while the narrator speaks of Elohim; he speaks Yahweh's words, and Yahweh's alone (23:8; 24:13). At points, Balaam seems rather like the stereotypical picture of the pre-classical prophets, in his ecstasy (24:3-4), in his maintaining visual contact (24:2; cf. 2 Kgs. 8:11), and in the role of רָחַם within his inspiration (24:2).¹⁸ However, in his emphasis on Yahweh's word,¹⁹ in

¹⁴ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p99. For the quotation, see p93 above.

¹⁵ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p15.

¹⁶ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p15.

¹⁷ This is also the view of van Imschoot, 'L'action de l'esprit de Jahvé', p583; Budd, *Numbers*, p268; Roland K. Harrison, *Numbers*, WEC, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1990), p317.

¹⁸ So Couturier suggests that the oracles were inserted within the narrative because of the influence of the Elijah and Elisha cycles. Couturier 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', pp160-61.

the fact that he is an 'individual' prophet, in his refusal to prophesy for a fee (cf. 22:7, 18) he stands closer to the classical prophets. While it may be true that 'the Balaam tradition cannot be used to define the precise nature of vocation prophecy in Israel and in Judah',²⁰ it is also true that the boundaries are not as sharply defined as Couturier has painted. The רִיחַ of God *can* be linked to the coming of Yahweh's word, even in one who strongly emphasises that word.

b) 1 Samuel 10:6, 10-11

'Then the spirit of Yahweh will possess you (וְנִצְּלָהּ), and you will act like a prophet (וְהָתְנַבֵּיתָ) along with them and be turned into a different person (לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר) (10:6). 'When they were going from there to Gibeah, a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God possessed him (וְהִנְצִלָּהּ), and he (Saul) acted like a prophet (וְהִתְנַבֵּא) along with them. When all who knew him before saw how he prophesied (נִבֵּא) with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?"' (10:10-11).

These references to רִיחַ and prophecy occur within the account of the choosing and anointing of Saul as king over Israel. The first verse, 10:6, is part of Samuel's declaration of what will happen to Saul as signs to Saul to indicate that Yahweh has indeed anointed him as king (v.7; cf. v.1 (LXX)); vv.10-11 are part of the narrative recounting what actually happens. In that sense, they are counterparts, although Eslinger observes the omission of the fulfilment of the first two signs, on the one hand, and the curious recounting of the third sign in v.10 when v.9 has already announced that the signs have been fulfilled.²¹ He, like Fokkelman,²² sees the focus as shifting onto the nature of the reception of the 'new' Saul by the people. The 'rushing' of the divine רִיחַ upon Saul will be, according to Samuel, the third of three signs that Yahweh has anointed Saul as 'ruler' (10:1). The final one is to serve as confirmation to Saul that he has been indeed equipped, not just anointed, to rule. This is why he is 'a different person' (v.6), and why Samuel instructs him in v.7 to 'do whatever you see fit to do.' As Klein comments, 'the instruction for Saul to respond to the fulfilling of the signs by doing whatever his hand finds implies that he is to act according to the strength he has'.²³ Klein sees the fulfilment of this, in the context of 1 Samuel, in the attack on the Ammonites after the spirit has again 'rushed' on Saul (1 Sam. 11:6). Thus, as in Num. 11, the coming of the spirit is to equip, but the manifestation, in Saul's case for his own assurance, is seen in prophesying.

¹⁹ Compare Num 24:13 with 1 Kgs. 22:14.

²⁰ 'nous ne pouvons pas utiliser avec certitude la tradition de Balaam pour définir la nature précise du prophétisme de vocation en Israël et en Juda.' Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', p161. For his sharp distinctions, see p89 above.

²¹ Lyle M. Eslinger, *Kingship of God in Crisis: A Close Reading of 1 Samuel 1-12*, Bible and Literature Series 10, (Sheffield, Almond, 1985), pp328-330.

²² J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, vol. IV, (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1993), p426.

²³ Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10, (Waco, Word, 1983), p92.

Questions of composition and dating are complex, but there is no reason to deny a pre-exilic date.²⁴ Some evidence for this is precisely the same evidence on which we must draw in order to ascertain what kind of inspiration is in view: what is meant here by the different stems of נבא? The literature on the subject is substantial.²⁵ Some try to associate the hitpael of נבא with ecstatic prophetic behaviour, while the nifal is said to relate more closely with verbal utterances, particularly those of the classical prophets.²⁶ By the time of the exile, they can be used synonymously. A more satisfactory analysis is given by Wilson, who rejects such a characterisation.²⁷ For him, the stems do not indicate *per se* particular behavioural characteristics. The nifal is chiefly concerned with communication of oracles, while the hitpael is concerned with manifesting stereotypical prophetic behaviour, whether ecstatic or not.

Wilson's analysis needs nuancing when four factors are borne in mind. Evidence from these factors means that generalisations are somewhat difficult, for the evidence points to some differences, yet a degree of overlap between the stems *throughout*, and not simply towards the exile.

First, there is the question of whether words are communicated or not. Usually the nifal designates the communication of words,²⁸ but sometimes behaviour seems in view (e.g. 1 Sam. 10:11; 19:20; Zech. 13:4). Usually the hitpael seems to designate prophetic behaviour, rather than words, but sometimes words are clearly in view (1 Kgs. 22:8, 18; Jer. 14:14; Ezek. 13:17; 37:10).²⁹ Secondly, and related to this, is the syntax associated with these verbs. The nifal used absolutely, like the hitpael, speaks more of prophetic behaviour (e.g. 1 Sam. 10:11). The hitpael used with prepositions designating the source

²⁴ With regard to composition, Klein regards the incident in vv.10-13 as 'a proverb...explained by an etiological narrative' (Klein, *1 Samuel*, p85). Fokkelman, however, regards the aetiological note as an 'extra' since it comes 'after completion of the plot or narrative chain' and 'the story is still quite independent without it' (J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: A Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses*, vol. II, (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1986), p287. With regard to dating, Birch notes that most scholars see the pericope from 9:1 to 10:16 is from the 'early source' (Bruce C. Birch, 'The Development of the Tradition on the Anointing of Saul in 1 Sam. 9:1-10:16', *JBL* 90 (1971), p55). This is not surprising given the folk-tale characteristics of the pericope, and the contrasting picture of prophecy present between the prophets in the pericope, on the one hand, and the prophet Samuel himself. See P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *1 Samuel*, AB 8, (New York, Doubleday, 1980), pp26-27, 182.

²⁵ See the bibliographies in Gary V. Smith, 'Prophet; Prophecy', *ISBE* 3, pp986-1004; Pieter A. Verhoef, 'Prophecy', *NIDOTTE* 4, pp1067-78. See 'נְבִיא', *TLOT* 2, pp697-98 for the number and distribution of occurrences.

²⁶ E.g. Koch, 'Out of the ecstasy (*nb*', hitpael) there finally emerges the prophecy (*nb*', nifal), which is directed to the people, bringing them a *dābār*, a saying of Yahweh.' Klaus Koch, *The Prophets*, tr. M. Kohl, vol. 2, (London, SCM Press, 1983), p26. Cf. Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', pp157-58 n84, who links the hitpael first of all with ecstatic group prophets and then with the 'machinations' (*agissements*) of the false prophets.

²⁷ Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, pp136-38; so too Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p113; David W. Baker, 'Israelite Prophets and Prophecy', in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, eds. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1999), p276.

²⁸ If followed by a direct object indicating contents, a preposition indicating the subject of the prophecy, a preposition indicating addressees, or a verb introducing what is said. See 'נְבִיא', *TLOT* 2, p703.

²⁹ See further below.

(e.g. Ezek. 13:17) or the subject (e.g. 1 Kgs. 22:8, 18) of the prophecy, like the nifal, speaks more of the communication of words. Thirdly, there is the question of whether ecstatic behaviour is in view or not. Those instances where the nifal is used of prophetic behaviour seem to fit here. Similarly, there are a number of cases where the hitpacl clearly speaks of ecstatic behaviour (e.g. 1 Sam. 18:10, 29; 19:23-24). This is by no means always the case, though, particularly in those instances where the communication of words is in view. Stereotypical prophetic behaviour may change. Fourthly, there is the question of whether there is approval of those prophesying. The nifal can be used of both true prophets (particularly Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and false (e.g. Jer. 5:31 etc.; Zech. 13:3). The hitpacl can be used sympathetically (e.g. Num. 11:25-27; Jer. 26:20), neutrally (e.g. 1 Sam. 10) or negatively (1 Kgs. 18:29; 22:8, 18; Ezek. 13:17). These four factors do not mean that distinctions are impossible. For example, in Jer. 26:20, the distinction between stereotypical behaviour and prophetic speaking seems clear: Uriah 'acted as a prophet' (מְתַנְבֵּא) and 'prophesied (וַיִּנְבֵּא) against the city...in words exactly like those of Jeremiah'. It does mean that hasty conclusions need to be avoided.

In 1 Samuel 10 the hitpacl (vv.6, 10) and the nifal (v.11) of נבא are effectively synonymous.³⁰ Further, the absence of prepositions or words suggesting comprehensible speech suggests that prophetic behaviour is in view, rather than verbal communication. We need to look more closely to see whether this is in fact the case.

Since the band of prophets were prophesying as they travelled down from the shrine (v.5), it does not seem likely that the communication of words in the form of intelligible utterances for the benefit of hearers is meant.³¹ Elsewhere in 1 Samuel, the hitpacl speaks clearly of prophetic behaviour that arose from the agency of an evil ריח (18:10-11), that to some degree incapacitated those 'prophesying' such that they could not arrest David (1 Sam. 19:20-21) and that described Saul's lying before Samuel with clothes stripped off (1 Sam. 19:24).³² Further, our analysis of the root נבא above suggests that prophetic behaviour is in view. Block concurs, suggesting that נבא here is 'not associated with prophetic utterance, but with prophetic action.'³³ For Block, this does not mean, though, that there is no communication involved. Rather, these are 'extraordinary physical expressions of Spirit possession, divinely induced non-verbal declarations. God is speaking through Saul. The witnesses and the readers of these texts are called upon to receive the communication and interpret it.'³⁴ Although this may be possible here, in view of the fact that the function of such prophesying is to show to *Saul*, and not to the people at large, that he has been anointed ruler, it seems more

³⁰ 'נבא', *TLOT* 2, p703. The same is true in 1 Sam. 19:20.

³¹ Pace Verhoef ('Prophecy', *NIDOTTE* 4, p1073).

³² That the incapacitation is not total is evident from the fact that Saul 'prophesied' as he walked along (1 Sam. 19:23).

³³ Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', p47.

³⁴ Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', p48.

accurate to say that through his prophesying God is speaking *to* Saul, not ‘through’ him. It is the prophetic behaviour that counts as Yahweh’s confirmation to Saul.

These verses clearly link the divine רוּחַ to prophecy – it is this רוּחַ that precipitates prophesying. If such prophesying included intelligible words, then it needs to be remembered that ‘no comprehensible saying from them is attested.’³⁵ This case can only be understood to support ‘word-communicating’ inspiration if the action of Saul is understood as a prophetic word to him. If, as seems more likely, such utterances as were uttered were ecstatic and subordinate to prophetic behaviour, then ‘potentiating’ inspiration is portrayed here.³⁶

c) Elijah and Elisha

As we have already noted, some scholars have drawn attention to the parallels between Elijah and Elisha, on the one hand, and Ezekiel on the other, and, in particular, to their experience of the spirit.³⁷ In 1 Kgs. 18:12 and 2 Kgs. 2:16, the spirit of Yahweh is seen (by popular opinion) as the ‘transporting’ spirit, which can snatch Elijah up, and deposit him somewhere else. Such instances are not related to inspiration, in the sense of any link with the prophetic word. In so far as this רוּחַ is involved in the experience of Elijah, we can speak here of ‘potentiating inspiration.’ However, given that when Elijah is in fact transported into heaven (2 Kgs. 2:11), רוּחַ plays no role, caution is needed when considering the transporting רוּחַ with Elijah.³⁸ In 2 Kgs. 2:9-15, however, Elisha makes a request of Elijah, ‘Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit (וַיִּהְיֶנָּה פִּי־שְׁנַיִם) (בְּרוּחְךָ אֵלַי) (v.9). We need to explore what kind of רוּחַ it is, and what kind of inspiration, if any, is in view.³⁹

Broadly, there are three views held. Some hold that this רוּחַ is the ‘human *ruach*’ of Elijah.⁴⁰ Others say it is Yahweh’s.⁴¹ The third view, argued for by Weisman, is that this רוּחַ, like that in Num. 11:16-15, 24-25, is neither Yahweh’s spirit nor the ‘human spirit’ stirred up. Instead, it is a ‘personal’ spirit that acts by ‘imparting authority’, a spirit

³⁵ ‘גביא’, *TLOT* 2, p699.

³⁶ Similar instances of apparent ecstatic behaviour being closely linked with (Yahweh’s) רוּחַ are those in 1 Sam. 18:10 and 19:23-24. Again, there is no attested word spoken as part of Saul’s prophesying. Indeed, there is even less sign there of anything intelligible being said as part of his ‘prophesying.’ There is nothing to link this רוּחַ to a ‘word-communicating’ view of inspiration. Rather, Saul’s behaviour resembled the apparent loss of self-control that marked the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs. 18:29).

³⁷ Zimmerli, ‘Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character’, p517; Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp23-37.

³⁸ Cf. Lys, *Ruach*, p36; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p44.

³⁹ For a discussion of the dating, and a *terminus ad quem* of 721, see Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp8ff.

⁴⁰ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p136; Lys, *Ruach*, pp27, 35-37. For Lys, the action here is still God’s, and *in* rather than *on* the individual. It is to avoid confusion between the human and Yahweh’s ‘spirit’ that 1 Kgs. 22:24 speaks about ‘the spirit of Yahweh’ moving from one person to another, while here the focus is on the spirit of Elijah (p36).

⁴¹ Block, ‘Empowered by the Spirit of God’, p46; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings*, AB 11, (New York, Doubleday, 1988), p32; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p54; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUACH*, pp246-47; Volkmar Fritz, *1 & 2 Kings*, tr. A. Hagedorn, *Continental Commentaries*, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2003), p235.

invoked by later writers because of the almost mythical status of Moses and Elijah.⁴² Others comment, without making their view clear.⁴³

There are certainly features that require an explanation and that for Weisman set this רִיחַ apart. Unlike the human רִיחַ, its impact is not due to stirring up by Yahweh, but to the possession of it.⁴⁴ Unlike Yahweh's רִיחַ, it is not designated as Yahweh's, but 'is defined in relation to the individual.'⁴⁵ There is something both public and permanent about the transfer (cf. רִיחַ).⁴⁶ In the case of the transfer from Elijah to Elisha, Yahweh does not seem directly involved: Elisha's request is directed to Elijah; Elijah does not make it clear that such a transfer depends on Yahweh; the sons of the prophets observe, after Elisha parts the water, that 'the spirit of *Elijah* rests on Elisha.'⁴⁷ Finally, the action of Yahweh's רִיחַ in the narrative is regarded as that of an external force; similarly, the action of Yahweh's 'hand' (1 Kgs. 18:46; 2 Kgs. 3:15), often an equivalent expression to Yahweh's רִיחַ, is rather different from that of רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים.⁴⁸ For Weisman, these constitute a conclusive case that the רִיחַ in 2 Kgs. 2:9, 15 is not Yahweh's רִיחַ. Given that the only other references to Yahweh's רִיחַ in the *Elijah / Elisha* narratives are popular perceptions, not the judgements of the narrator, it would then mean that neither Elijah nor Elisha would have any clear relationship to Yahweh's רִיחַ.

It is preferable, however, to regard the 'spirit of Elijah' here as 'a metonymic figure of speech for "the Spirit of Yahweh which resides upon Elijah,"'⁴⁹ notwithstanding the fact that the depiction of רִיחַ is somewhat different from רִיחַ as 'an "Extension" of Yahweh's Personality'.⁵⁰ Block adduces as evidence Elisha's use of the mantle in parting the waters, the response of the people in v.15, and the actions that Elisha subsequently performed (vv.16-25). Further evidence comes from the fact that here Elisha is presented as the new Joshua completing what Moses had done.⁵¹ The spirit that equipped Moses (Elijah) is now on Joshua (Elisha) (cf. Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9).⁵² The strongest evidence that it is Yahweh's רִיחַ comes from the clear belief elsewhere that Yahweh's רִיחַ can go from one person to another (1 Kgs. 22:24); from the fact that

⁴² Ze'ev Weisman, 'The Personal Spirit as Imparting Authority', *ZAW* 93 (1981), pp225-34.

⁴³ Gwilym H. Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, vol. II, NCBC, (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), p385; Gray thinks the רִיחַ that inspired Elijah was something external, since it 'equipped' him (John Gray, *I & II Kings*, 3rd edn., OTL, (London, SCM, 1977), p475); Couturier seems to regard it as Yahweh's, given that he sees it as bringing about ecstasy ('L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', p153).

⁴⁴ Weisman, 'Personal Spirit', p226.

⁴⁵ Weisman, 'Personal Spirit', p226.

⁴⁶ Weisman, 'Personal Spirit', p227.

⁴⁷ 2 Kgs. 2:15. See Weisman, 'Personal Spirit', p233.

⁴⁸ Weisman, 'Personal Spirit', p233.

⁴⁹ Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', p46.

⁵⁰ Johnson, *The One and the Many*, p15.

⁵¹ Philip E. Satterthwaite, 'The Elisha Narratives and the Coherence of 2 Kings 2-8', *TynBul* 49 (1998), pp8-10.

⁵² Though the parallel is not exact, since in Num. 27:18, Joshua *already* has רִיחַ before Moses lays his hands on him.

Yahweh's רִנָּה can 'rest' (נוּחַ) upon a kingly figure (Isa. 11:2); and, finally, from the fact that the notion of Yahweh's רִנָּה as constant, empowering and authorising has already been present in the narrative of Saul's and David's kingship (Saul - 1 Sam. 16:14; David - 1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:2).

Further, this רִנָּה is intimately related to Elisha becoming a prophet. In 1 Kgs. 19:16, Yahweh has instructed Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his stead (תִּמְשָׁחָהוּ). Elijah proceeds in v.19 to find Elisha, throw the mantle onto him and walk off.⁵³ The narrative does not read, as we might expect, that Elisha became a prophet instead of Elijah.⁵⁴ Instead, after Elisha catches up with Elijah, we are told that Elisha 'followed Elijah and served him' (וַיִּשְׂרָתָהוּ) (v.21). Although the location of the mantle is tantalisingly left in the air, it does seem that Elisha's actions reinstate Elijah as prophet.⁵⁵ The mantle, symbolising prophethood, does not pass to Elisha until 2 Kgs. 2, at the same time as רִנָּה is transferred. In the meantime, Elisha is 'assistant and successor-designate.'⁵⁶

This רִנָּה, while closely resembling the leadership רִנָּה found on Moses, Saul and David, is also the designating and empowering רִנָּה that enables Elisha to function as a prophet. What the mantle symbolises externally is a reality through the agency of Yahweh's רִנָּה. However, though the spirit that inspired Elijah and Elisha is indeed Yahweh's רִנָּה, and is intimately related to the prophetic task, the question of inspiration can get no further than this. The focus of this early narrative is more on mighty deeds than on prophetic words. At no point can a view of the inspiration of the prophet's words go any further than 'potentiating inspiration.'

2. 'Word-communicating' inspiration and the pre-classical prophets

a) 2 Samuel 23:2

'The spirit of Yahweh speaks through me (רוּחַ יְהוָה דִּבְרָרַבִּי),
his word is upon my tongue (וּמִלָּתוֹ עַל-לְשׁוֹנִי).'

This verse starts what v.1 terms 'the last words of David,' a poem celebrating the covenant made with him, and which finishes in v.7. In turn, the poem occurs within what is often termed the 'Appendix' to the book of Samuel, chs. 21-24.

Uniquely in the Old Testament, רִנָּה is followed directly by a verb of speaking.⁵⁷ Here, explicitly, is 'word-communicating' inspiration. Given this striking fact, there are three questions that particularly concern us. The first is over the date of v.2, and, for our

⁵³ There is no explicit mention of 'anointing'. It is apparent that Elijah walked off because Elisha had to leave his oxen and run after Elijah (v.20). See Paul J. Kissling, *Reliable Characters in the Primary History: Profiles of Moses, Joshua, Elijah and Elisha*, JSOTSup 224, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p151.

⁵⁴ A point made well by Walsh in Jerome T. Walsh, *1 Kings*, Berit Olam, (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1996), pp279-80.

⁵⁵ Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, p154.

⁵⁶ Kissling, *Reliable Characters*, p155.

⁵⁷ Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p180.

purposes, whether it is pre-exilic. The second is over the nature of inspiration, whether prophetic or not. The third is over the precise point of inspiration, whether רִנָּה יְהוָה speaks 'through' or 'to / with / in' David.

Although the oracle as a whole shows signs of antiquity,⁵⁸ the traditional dating of v.2 to the second half of the 10th century is disputed. McCarter thinks it is late because 'the notion that David was a prophet has no parallel in the early literature. It arose at a later time when psalms attributed to David were being given prophetic interpretation.'⁵⁹ Further possible evidence for lateness includes the apparent masculine gender of רִנָּה,⁶⁰ the presence of the word מְלָה, which appears elsewhere only in 'late' poetry,⁶¹ and the role of רִנָּה, 'connected exclusively to the revelation of verbal announcements, and to the act of interpretation of the divine utterance.'⁶²

However, Gordon comments, 'there is...no reason to deny it to David himself.'⁶³ Dating on the basis of the genesis of the prophetic interpretation of psalms attributed to David is circular. They may just as well have been given prophetic interpretation because David was considered a prophet.⁶⁴ Certainly, the linking of monarch, prophet and spirit is not alien to the book of Samuel. This is true of Saul (1 Sam. 10), and there are pointers to it with David, in his reception of the spirit (1 Sam. 16:13), and in his music-playing which mirrored that of the prophets.⁶⁵ The masculine gender of רִנָּה has been explained in different ways. Anderson suggests that the 'lapse in gender' with רִנָּה 'is due to the intervening word ("Yahweh")'.⁶⁶ This is, however, unlikely, since there are six other instances in the Old Testament where a verb directly follows רִנָּה יְהוָה,⁶⁷ and there is only one instance where the verb agrees with יְהוָה, not רִנָּה (1 Kgs. 18:12). There are, though, a number of places where רִנָּה יְהוָה is the subject of a masculine verb, so it is not wholly anomalous.⁶⁸ Olmo Lete proposes that the masculine form of דָּבַר can

⁵⁸ So, for example, as McCarter points out, there are no traces of Deuteronomistic language, the divine epithets are consistent with an early date, and there are close verbal links between v.1 and the archaic Num. 24:3, 15 (P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, AB 9, (New York, Doubleday, 1984), p486). Simon, however, tentatively believes the poem to be post-exilic, because he sees the confluence of many diverse streams of thought. See László T. Simon, *Identity and Identification: An Exegetical and Theological Study of 2Sam 21-24*, Tesi Gregoriana Serie Teologia 64, (Rome, Gregorian University Press, 2000), pp292-308. A survey of scholarly opinions on the date is found on p293.

⁵⁹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, p480.

⁶⁰ So, for example, Neve says there are only 2 pre-593 passages with masculine רִנָּה - Isa. 34:16 and Ezek. 1:12 (Neve, *Spirit of God*, p128). Somewhat curiously, then, he dates this verse as a 'transition text' from before the time of Elijah, without discussing the verb form דָּבַר (pp28-29).

⁶¹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, p480; Lys, *Rûach*, p169.

⁶² Simon, *Identity and Identification*, p296.

⁶³ Robert P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary*, (Exeter, The Paternoster Press, 1986), p309; cf. also Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us", p9.

⁶⁴ Cf. Herbert H. Klement, *II Samuel 21-24. Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel Conclusion*, Europäische Hochschulschriften: Reihe 23 Theologie, vol. 682, (Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2000), p215. Klement distinguishes between the 'specific form of the prophetic utterance' here and 'the late evaluation of all David's psalms as prophetic in a general sense.'

⁶⁵ So Klement, *II Samuel 21-24*, pp215-18.

⁶⁶ Arnold A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC 11, (Dallas, Word, 1989), p268.

⁶⁷ Jdg. 6:34, 1 Sam. 16:14, 1 Kgs. 18:12; Isa. 40:7; 59:19; 63:14

⁶⁸ 1 Kgs. 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kgs. 2:16; Mic. 2:7.

be explained by the falling away of the *mater lectionis* from the revocalised feminine form, רַחַה יְהוָה.⁶⁹ ‘His word (מִלָּתוֹ)’ then is Yahweh’s word, not that of רַחַה יְהוָה. Richardson explains the present form within his framework of examining the psalm from the perspective of 11th century orthography.⁷⁰ Further, on literary grounds, both Olmo Lete and Richardson argue strongly that the psalm is a unit, thus making it harder to reach McCarter’s conclusion of a late date. Richardson comments, ‘there is nothing in the passage that denies such a date, while...there are some things that tend to corroborate it.’⁷¹ Particularly striking in this regard is the chiasmic nature of vv.2-3aβ (Richardson’s lines 5-8), where line 5 (= v.2a) has the ‘double subject first, followed by a verb and a prepositional phrase’ (רַחַה יְהוָה דַּבַּר בִּי) while line 8 (= v.3aβ) ‘has the prepositional phrase first, followed by the verb with the double subject last’ (לִי דַבַּר (צַר יִשְׂרָאֵל)).⁷² In between, there are ‘two non-verbal cola in a limited stair-like parallelism’ (וּמַלְחָה עַל לִשְׁנָיִם) (line 6 (= v.2b)) and אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יַעֲקֹב (line 7 (v.3aα)).⁷³ Such structuring incorporates the Aramaic loan-word common in Job, מִלָּה. Finally, the mention of רַחַה here is hardly problematic. The unique collocation makes it hard to date on such a basis. The conception of רַחַה speaking, however, is by no means necessarily late, as we shall see shortly.

With regard to the second question, Neve, although noting that it is an ‘oracle’, regards David’s inspiration not as prophetic but as poetic. He has two main reasons for this: first, because the oracle is described as an ‘oracle of David’ not an ‘oracle of God’ (he notes the parallel with Num. 24:3); secondly, because the nature of the poem is a ‘discourse on kingship.’ His conclusion is that ‘this text serves as the transition from the spirit as it is evidenced in this period [i.e. the early, charismatic, period] to the spirit of the prophets...actual “enthusiasm” as related to the spirit is disappearing but prophetic inspiration is not yet present.’⁷⁴ Neve’s suggestion should be rejected, because the parallel that he draws between ‘oracle of David’ here and that of ‘oracle of Balaam’ (Num. 24:3) points precisely to prophetic inspiration, since Balaam was clearly an ‘inspired’ prophet there. The elaborate introduction and the framing of the book by the only instances of נְאֻם (1 Sam. 2:30; 2 Sam. 23:1) point to David as prophet.⁷⁵ As Anderson comments, ‘The “spirit” in this context is not the source of ecstatic behaviour or experience...but of prophetic inspiration.’⁷⁶

⁶⁹ G. Del. Olmo Lete, ‘David’s Farewell Oracle (2 Samuel xxiii 1-7): A Literary Analysis’, *VT* 34 (1984), pp416-17.

⁷⁰ H. Neil Richardson, ‘The Last Words of David: Some Notes on II Sam. 23, 1-7’, *JBL* 90 (1971), pp257-66.

⁷¹ Richardson, ‘Last Words of David’, p257.

⁷² Richardson, ‘Last Words of David’, p262.

⁷³ Richardson, ‘Last Words of David’, p262. He revocalises the MT אָמַר with אֱמַר. Note that the Hebrew used here follows Richardson’s reconstruction.

⁷⁴ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p29.

⁷⁵ So Simon, *Identity and Identification*, pp275, 289, for the first point; so Klement, *II Samuel 21-24*, p215, for the second.

⁷⁶ Anderson, *2 Samuel*, p268; so also Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, p310; McCarter, *II Samuel*, p480.

If the questions of date and nature of inspiration are significant, so too is the question of the stage of inspiration. In order to ascertain whether what is envisaged here is Yahweh speaking *through* rather than *with* David, the phrase **ב דבר** and its context needs closer examination. The phrase itself is rare.⁷⁷ It can mean 'speak with' indicating 'special intimacy' (e.g. Num. 12:2, 6, 8; Hab. 2:1);⁷⁸ indeed, this is the most common meaning. There are few instances where it might mean 'speak through.' Although the NRSV translates **ב** 'through' in Hos. 1:2, it is more likely to mean 'with,' since what follows are Yahweh's words to Hosea.⁷⁹ In 1 Kgs. 22:28, however, the meaning 'through' is possible. Usually, however, when Yahweh speaks through a prophet, the phrase used is **בְּפִי**; **דבר בְּפִי**;⁸⁰ it can also be **בְּפִי**.⁸¹ Examination of the phrase alone might suggest 'speaks with' is a better translation.⁸² Here, then, would be a celebration of Yahweh's **רוּחַ** involved directly in the prophetic event, 'speaking' to the prophet.

However, the context of the phrase, in parallel with 'his word is upon my tongue' points not so much to the spirit speaking 'with' or 'to' David, as to it speaking 'through' him.⁸³ It is preferable, then, to see the spirit as speaking 'through' David. If this is correct, then this is an instance of double agency discourse: what David says, the **רוּחַ** of Yahweh also says. However, since the claim that Yahweh has spoken to or with someone is often difficult to distinguish from the claim that this person speaks for Yahweh, there is ambiguity here, as we have seen.⁸⁴ Whether the phrase refers to the prophetic event or the rhetorical event, discussion should not mask the very significant fact that here, explicitly, it is the divine **רוּחַ** that 'speaks.'

If an early date is granted, as I have argued, then 'word-communicating' inspiration is clearly evident in pre-classical prophecy.

b) 1 Kings 22 (= 2 Chron. 18)

A second instance of 'word-communicating' inspiration can be found in the confrontation between Micaiah and Zedekiah. Israel and Aram had been without war for three years. Ahab's servants then told him that Ramoth-gilead really belonged to him, so Ahab, king of Israel, asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, to accompany him to war. Jehoshaphat urged Ahab first to 'inquire' (**דָּרַשׁ-נָא**) for the 'word of Yahweh' (**דְּבַר יְהוָה**)

⁷⁷ Cf. p54 above.

⁷⁸ A meaning noted, but not adopted, by Gordon (*1 & 2 Samuel*, p310) and Simon (*Identity and Identification*, p275).

⁷⁹ Cf. Mackintosh, *Hosea*, pp7-8.

⁸⁰ Josh. 20:2; 1 Sam. 28:17; 1 Kgs. 8:53, 56; 14:18; 15:29; 16:12, 34; 17:16; 2 Kgs. 9:36; 10:10; 14:25; 17:23; 24:2; Jer. 37:2; 50:1; Ezek. 38:17; 2 Chr. 10:15.

⁸¹ Deut. 23:24, 1 Kgs. 8:15, 24, 2 Chr. 6:4, 15, Jer. 9:7, 44:25.

⁸² So Richardson, 'Last Words of David', p259; Klement, *II Samuel 21-24*, p212: 'in me'; 'He is himself the recipient of Spirit-imparted speech' (p214).

⁸³ So Simon, *Identity and Identification*, p268; McCarter, *II Samuel*, p476. Robert Alter (*The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York, Basic Books, 1985), p10) rightly points out that the two halves of a verse in Hebrew poetry often undergo 'semantic modifications.' Such a modification can be seen in 2b α , so need not be seen 2b β .

⁸⁴ See Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, p310.

(v.5). Ahab then gathered four hundred prophets, who said with some ambiguity⁸⁵ that Yahweh 'has given into the hand of the king' (v.6). Jehoshaphat asked if there was any other 'prophet of Yahweh' (נְבִיא לַיהוָה) (v.7). In reply, Ahab mentioned Micaiah, and how he hated him because he never prophesied (לֹא־יְחַנֵּבָא) anything favourable about (עַל) him (v.8).

As Micaiah was brought in, all the other prophets were 'prophesying' (מְחַנְבְּאִים) before the two kings (v.10). Their spokesman, Zedekiah, with a dramatic flourish of the horns of iron that he had made, announced success, and all the other prophets prophesied (נְבִאִים) the same (v.12). The messenger urged Micaiah to give the same message, since the other prophets were unanimous, but Micaiah insisted that 'whatever Yahweh says to me, that I will speak (אֲחַת־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר יְהוָה אֵלַי אֲחֹזֶה אֲדַבֵּר)' (v.14). Micaiah, too, then declared success, in almost the same words as the other prophets (v.15; cf. v.12). However, after being urged to swear that he will tell nothing but the truth, Micaiah changed his message, and prophesied doom for Israel. King Ahab then said 'I told you so' to Jehoshaphat, that Micaiah would only prophesy (יְחַנֵּבָא) disaster (v.18).

In response to this, in vv.19-23, Micaiah urged them all to 'hear the word of Yahweh' and, in his reply, revealed the working of Yahweh's council. Yahweh's purpose had been that Ahab would be enticed to his destruction (v.20). A spirit (הַרְוִחַ) had eventually volunteered to be a 'lying spirit (רוּחַ שֶׁקֶר) in the mouth of all his prophets' (v.21).⁸⁶ Micaiah concluded his reply by saying that Yahweh had thus put a 'lying spirit' (רוּחַ שֶׁקֶר) in the mouth of all these prophets (v.22). It was Yahweh that had decreed disaster for Ahab.

In vv.24-29, we see the reaction to Micaiah's words. Zedekiah hit Micaiah on the cheek, and said, 'Which way did the spirit of Yahweh pass from me to speak to you? (אֵי־זֶה עָבַר רוּחַ־יְהוָה מֵאֵתִי לְדַבֵּר אֹתְךָ)' (v.24). Micaiah replied, 'You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber.' Ahab then instructed Micaiah to be imprisoned until his return, whereupon Micaiah replied confidently, 'If you return in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me (לֹא־דַבֶּר יְהוָה בִּי)' (v.28).

There are many complexities surrounding the composition of the chapter, and how it relates to historical events.⁸⁷ De Vries discerns two independent narratives about Micaiah which have been conflated. He dates the 'word-controversy narrative' (vv.10a-14; 19-25) in the reign of Hezekiah.⁸⁸ McKenzie, however, discerns a greater degree of

⁸⁵ Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', p49. LXX removes the ambiguity, ascribing success to King Ahab (see Gray, *I & II Kings*, p445 note f).

⁸⁶ For the identity of the 'spirit', see footnote 96 below.

⁸⁷ See Simon J. De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet: The Role of the Micaiah Narrative (1 Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1978), pp4-10; Simon J. De Vries, *I Kings*, WBC 12, (Waco, Word, 1985), pp265-66; Gray, *I & II Kings*, pp414-18; Jones, *I and 2 Kings*, pp360-62; Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History*, VTSup 42, (Leiden, Brill, 1991), pp88-93.

⁸⁸ De Vries, *I Kings*, pp265-66.

reworking, and suggests that the historical situation which suits 1 Kgs. 22:1-38 best is the later Jehu dynasty, rather than the reign of Ahab.⁸⁹ While precise dating is ‘probably impossible’ (McKenzie), it should be noted here that there are no strong reasons for dating this later than Hezekiah’s reign: the nature of the role of רִנָּה, where רִנָּה is clearly in some sense an objective agent of Yahweh inspiring the 400 prophets is somewhat different from the critique of Jeremiah and Ezekiel against their opponents, who prophesy out of their own imagination;⁹⁰ further, there is no explicit mention of their prophesying for personal gain here;⁹¹ finally, the issue in 1 Kings, that of true and false prophecy, is rather different from the concerns of the post-exilic Chronicler, who barely modifies this chapter, yet shifts the focus towards foreign alliances with the word ‘entice’ (סוּחַ) in 2 Chr. 18: 2, 31.⁹²

Within the narrative, a number of observations can be made about the relationship between word, spirit and prophecy. First, it is clear that the hitpacl of נבא here, accompanied by a preposition and some indication of the content, involves communication of a word (vv.8, 18); although it is used pejoratively, insofar as Ahab does not like the outcome, it cannot be reduced to mere raving. It can hardly be coincidental that the other prophets also are spoken of as ‘prophesying’ (מְתַנְבְּאִים) (v.10)), without there being in their case a clear word produced until v.11. Such a usage points to the similarity, and yet difference, between Micaiah and the 400 prophets.⁹³

Secondly, the nifal is predicated of the false prophets, and relates to the communication of a word (v.12); there is clear semantic overlap with the hitpacl of נבא in vv.8 and 18. At the same time, there seems a distinction in between the hitpacl used absolutely (v.10) and the nifal, used with an indication of content. The stems do not indicate in and of themselves either the truth value of what is being said, nor the precise characteristics of those prophesying. Rather, the instances here fit clearly within the picture I outlined above.

Thirdly, Zedekiah makes it very clear that, from the perspective of these (false) prophets, it was the רִנָּה־יְהוָה that *spoke* with them (v.24).⁹⁴

Fourthly, Zedekiah also makes it clear, from his perspective, that it was רִנָּה־יְהוָה that Micaiah was effectively claiming for himself (v.24b). Zedekiah clearly understands

⁸⁹ McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, p90.

⁹⁰ Jer. 14:14; 23:16, 26; Ezek. 13:2, 3, 17. Only in Ezek. 13:3 is רִנָּה used, though see below for Jer. 5:13. Cf. Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings*, AB 10, (New York, Doubleday, 2001), p498.

⁹¹ Cogan, *1 Kings*, p498 n3.

⁹² See William M. Schniedewind, *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period*, JSOTSup 197, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp94-97.

⁹³ See the eighth observation below.

⁹⁴ Cf. Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p218.

the work of Yahweh's רִיחַ as actually speaking Yahweh's words – 'word-communicating' inspiration.⁹⁵

Fifthly, Micaiah, in narrating the vision that he had of the heavenly court, does not deny the role of רִיחַ in the inspiration of prophets. He merely says that the רִיחַ in the mouth of these prophets is not the divine רִיחַ, but a lying one.⁹⁶

Sixthly, Micaiah does not refute the validity of Zedekiah's question about the time of the transfer of רִיחַ־יְהוָה from Zedekiah to himself, but merely says that Zedekiah will know the reality, that is, of Yahweh's רִיחַ inspiring him, when his (Micaiah's) words come true and Zedekiah is in hiding.⁹⁷ That Micaiah has prophesied the truth will become evident when what he says comes to pass. Implicitly, then, Micaiah claims the inspiration of רִיחַ־יְהוָה. Thus as Neve comments, 'the belief that the word is inspired by a spirit, even in the case of the "weal" prophets, is left standing.'⁹⁸ Albertz and Westermann, however, disagree.⁹⁹ They see the use of רִיחַ as 'solely polemical' here, regarding Micaiah's reference to it as assaulting the 'theological legitimization' of his opponents. Micaiah appeals to Yahweh's speech (vv.14, 28) for his own legitimation.

There are two difficulties with this view. The first is that it assumes Micaiah's vision is simply a rhetorical device which bears no relation to reality, when for its force it needs to be true. The second is that it overemphasises in too neat a fashion the distinction with regard to inspiration between the true, classical, prophets, on the one hand, who received Yahweh's word, and the false prophets who are inspired by the spirit, on the other.¹⁰⁰ False prophecy was a problem because the distinction was not so neat. Rather, in the understanding of Zedekiah and Micaiah, 'it was the spirit that took

⁹⁵ LXX paraphrases with 'What sort of spirit of / from / before the presence of Yahweh is it that spoke with you (καὶ εἶπεν ποῖον πνεῦμα κυρίου τὸ λαλήσαν ἐν σοί).' Here, still, 'word-communicating' inspiration is apparent, even if the meaning of Zedekiah's words is rather different from the MT.

⁹⁶ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p40. Whether רִיחַ is Yahweh's רִיחַ or not is disputed. Debate largely centres around the significance of the article (see Robert B. Chisholm, *From Exegesis to Exposition: A Practical Guide to Using Biblical Hebrew*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1998), pp74-75). Jones takes the article as 'generic', and translates "a spirit" (see Jones, *1 and 2 Kings*, p368). Even if the article indicates that this רִיחַ is well-known, this does not, in my judgement, mean that it must be Yahweh's 'prophetic spirit' of inspiration that is the lying spirit (pace Gray, *1 & 2 Kings*, p452; De Vries, *1 Kings*, p268; Walsh, *1 Kings*, p351; Cogan, *1 Kings*, p497). First, the idea of the divine רִיחַ being an entity independent from Yahweh would be anachronistic (Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, p158). Secondly, the picture is closer to that of the angelic being in Job 1-2; thirdly, the emphasis on Yahweh's trustworthiness and truthfulness in the rest of 1 Kgs. points to some distance between Yahweh and this spirit; even Zedekiah believed that a lying spirit could not be God's spirit (P.J. Williams, 'Lying Spirits Sent by God? The Case of Micaiah's Prophecy', in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture*, eds. P. Helm and C.R. Trueman, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2002), pp58-66, esp. p66). The point is that the false prophets believe they are inspired by Yahweh's spirit, when in fact it is a false, lying spirit. Micaiah, on the other hand, is inspired by Yahweh's spirit. There are two separate 'spirits', rather than two manifestations of the same רִיחַ: Yahweh's רִיחַ, an extension of Yahweh's personality, and the 'evil, lying spirit' inspiring false prophecy. See Evangelia G. Dafni, 'רוח נִקְרָא und falsche Prophetie in 1 Reg 22', *ZAW* 112 (2000), pp365-85.

⁹⁷ The mention of the 'inner-room' as a place of refuge is an echo of Ben-Hadad's hiding place in 20:30.

⁹⁸ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p40.

⁹⁹ 'רִיחַ', *TLOT* 3, p1217. So too does Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', pp157-58.

¹⁰⁰ See further below.

hold of the prophets, and when they spoke it was the words which were given them by the spirit. The process cannot be stated more directly than is done in this narrative. The connection between the spirit and the spoken word is as close as possible.¹⁰¹ ‘Word-communicating’ inspiration is explicit here.

The seventh observation that can be drawn from this narrative is that claiming inspiration, even the inspiration of רִיחַ, was no guarantee that what was said would happen. Not every claim to the ‘spirit of Yahweh’ makes it a word from Yahweh, although strikingly here the lying spirit is commissioned by Yahweh. Further, majority agreement amongst the prophets does not materially alter the situation. This observation paves the way for the relative lack of recourse to רִיחַ within the classical prophets.

The eighth observation concerns the points of similarity and difference between Micaiah and the other prophets. These points illuminate the picture that obtains in the following century and beyond, with Amos and the other classical prophets in their conflicts with the false prophets.¹⁰² The false prophets attribute their inspiration to רִיחַ; they exhibit dramatic behaviour, including sign-acts (22:10-11); they have a reputation of being willing to modify their message (v.13);¹⁰³ they announce triumph and victory; they belong to Ahab’s court (‘his’ v.22);¹⁰⁴ they may even be willing to prophesy for any deity, since Yahweh is not mentioned in v.6, but only after they have been present when Jehoshaphat has asked for a prophet of Yahweh (v.7), and the name of Zedekiah and his father (כְּנִיעָנָה) hint at the blurring of distinctions so characteristic of Ahab’s reign.¹⁰⁵ Micaiah, on the other hand, is distinct from the other prophets (v.8), his characteristic prophecy is one of doom (v.8), he only speaks Yahweh’s word (v.14), he has access to the heavenly court (vv.19-23), he appeals to the Deuteronomic test of whether a prophecy comes true as the mark of his own authentication (vv.25, 28); all these characteristics might suggest a radical disjunction between Micaiah and the 400 prophets. However, Micaiah accepts the notion of Yahweh’s רִיחַ speaking to him (v.25), while making direct appeal to Yahweh’s רִיחַ for his own authentication; in addition, he acts as a prophet in a similar fashion to the others (אָנֹכִי hitp. (vv.8, 18; cf. v.10)). Against such a background, it is hardly surprising that the classical prophets are not too keen to speak of themselves as a נְבִיא or as רִיחַ-inspired, for neither provides conclusive proof that such a person has spoken the truth.

3. The relative insignificance of רִיחַ within pre-classical prophecy

An examination of רִיחַ within pre-classical prophecy with regard to ‘potentiating’ inspiration and ‘word-communicating’ inspiration has demonstrated that both

¹⁰¹ Kapelrud, ‘The Spirit and the Word’, p41.

¹⁰² J.A. Montgomery and H.S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings*, ICC, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1951), p336.

¹⁰³ Walsh, *I Kings*, p348; Cogan, *I Kings*, p497.

¹⁰⁴ Cogan, *I Kings*, p497.

¹⁰⁵ So Walsh, *I Kings*, p347 n5; cf. Jer. 2:8; 23:13.

understandings are clearly present. By focusing our attention here, though, there is a danger of obscuring two facts. First, as Kaufmann notes, the work of the spirit is not always related to the communication of a word from Yahweh.¹⁰⁶ When the ‘spirit’ ‘clothes itself’ (לבוש) with Gideon (Jdg. 6:34) and animates Samson (פעם) (Jdg. 13:25; cf. 14:6; 14:19; 15:14), the effect is that they have strength – but no word of Yahweh is involved. The agency of Yahweh’s רוּחַ is in no way restricted to the prophetic רוּחַ. Secondly, and conversely, words could come from Yahweh without any mention of רוּחַ. This is true for Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, and Samuel. Even within the books of Samuel and Kings, there are no claims for רוּחַ-possession for many of the prophets, such as Nathan, Ahijah (1 Kgs. 11; 14), for the prophets of Judah or Bethel (1 Kgs. 13) or for Jehu (1 Kgs. 16). In other words, the place and significance of רוּחַ within pre-classical prophecy should not be overstated or overemphasised.

B. INSPIRATION AND THE CLASSICAL PROPHETS

At the start of this chapter, we observed how the classical prophets are relatively (or totally) silent on the role of רוּחַ within their ministries, and we saw the four main views of how scholars have interpreted this silence (*antithetical, historical, rhetorical, theological*). In particular, many scholars have seen in the book of Ezekiel a recovery of the role of רוּחַ within Ezekiel’s ministry after an absence within the classical prophets. If we are going to evaluate the significance of the book of Ezekiel, we must examine the significant points within the classical prophets where רוּחַ-inspiration has been observed or denied. I shall argue that, while it is certainly true that רוּחַ-inspiration is not prominent, both ‘potentiating’ inspiration and ‘word-communicating’ inspiration as concepts may be found.

1. ‘Potentiating’ inspiration and the classical prophets

a) Hosea 9:7

‘The days of punishment have come,
 the days of recompense have come;
 Israel cries¹⁰⁷ “The prophet is a fool (אִוִּיל הַנְּבִיאָה),
 the man of the spirit is mad (מְשֻׁנָּע אִישׁ הַרוּחַ)!”
 Because of your great iniquity,
 Your hostility is great.’

¹⁰⁶ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, pp97-98.

¹⁰⁷ On the basis of context, most commentators amend the MT (יָרַע) to יָרַע (‘cry’ / ‘shout’ (hif. imp. of רוּע)); cf. the LXX καὶ κακωθήσεται Ἰσραὴλ (= יָרַע (hif. imp. of רוּע)). See Hans W. Wolff, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1974), p150. Although Mackintosh (*Hosea*, pp351-52) thinks the suggestion ‘dubious’ because רוּע usually speaks of raising a shout, in joy or in battle, Couturier (‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p134) points out that the parallel between Ephraim as a hunter spying on game (v.9) and Israel’s activity in v.7 makes a ‘declaration of war against Hosea’ (une déclaration de guerre contre Osée) more likely than knowledge about Hosea.

This verse occurs as part of a tightly structured unit from vv.7-9.¹⁰⁸ This is in turn part of the section from vv.1-9 which outlines the conflict between Hosea and his addressees about the value of their festivals and their consequent disapproval of his ministry. There are two main questions that concern us. First, who is uttering these words about ‘the prophet’? Secondly, if it is not Hosea himself, how much of this pejorative caricature can confidently be said to be part of Hosea’s self-understanding, especially given the fact that the phrase *איש הרוח* only occurs here?

With regard to the first question, Mowinckel argues that the prophet here is inveighing against ‘the nebhi’im,’ on the grounds that the prophet would hardly accept such a description of himself, given the strong expressions contained in the words ‘fool’ and ‘mad.’¹⁰⁹ However, Mowinckel does not pay sufficient attention to the context, which is of Israel insulting the prophet, thereby showing how guilty she truly is.¹¹⁰

With regard to the second question, Wolff points out that these words are on the lips of the people, and that, therefore, ‘Hosea does not speak of himself as a person filled with the “spirit.”’¹¹¹ Many commentators argue from this fact that Hosea cannot and should not be understood as claiming the inspiration of *רוח* for himself.¹¹² In particular, Couturier looks closely at the adjectives predicated of ‘the prophet’ and ‘the man of the spirit’, and, in addition to noticing the obvious pejorative nature of them, also observes, correctly, that the word ‘mad’ (*מְטֹנֵעַ*) only occurs in carefully circumscribed contexts (1 Sam. 21:11-16; 2 Kgs. 9:11; Jer. 29:26ff.). Within the prophetic context, it is associated with the hitpacl of *נבא*, and, for Couturier, is essentially related to ecstasy within prophecy. From the rarity of the term, and its precise usage, Couturier argues that the people’s accusation is not simply that Hosea is ‘mad’, but that he is part of a band of prophets who go around under the influence of *רוח*. The people’s charge, then, ‘goes beyond the simple accusation of craziness; it refers to a precise tradition in the history of prophecy, whose characteristic is ecstasy accompanied by trances.’¹¹³ Given that for Couturier there is a clear distinction between the three different prophetic groups, it is wholly inconceivable that Hosea, as an

¹⁰⁸ Couturier notes the close structure of vv.7-9 here, which I have summarised in the following table (pp133f.)

- | | |
|----|---|
| 7a | declaration of judgement; <i>ימי; פקד</i> |
| 7b | attack of people against Hosea; verbal threat; Israel; hostility vs. God (<i>מְטֹנֵעַ</i>) |
| 7c | recollection of guilt - reason |
| 8 | attack of people against Hosea; physical threat; Ephraim; hostility vs. prophet (<i>מְטֹנֵעַ</i>) |
| 9 | declaration of judgement; <i>ימי; פקד</i> |

¹⁰⁹ Mowinckel, “The Spirit” and the “Word”, pp204-205 n21; so too, Schoemaker, ‘Use of *רוח*’, p16.

¹¹⁰ So Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p64; G.I. Davies, *Hosea*, NCBC, (London, Marshall Pickering, 1992), p220; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, WBC 31, (Waco, Word, 1987), p145; Wolff, *Hosea*, pp156-57; Mackintosh, *Hosea*, pp336, 351-53; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p133.

¹¹¹ Wolff, *Hosea*, p157.

¹¹² E.g. Mays, *Hosea*, pp129-30; Scharbert, ‘Der “Geist” und die Schriftpropheten’, p89; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, pp132ff.; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, pp32-33.

¹¹³ ‘dépasse la simple accusation de démence; il fait référence à une tradition précise dans l’histoire du prophétisme, dont la caractéristique est l’extatisme accompagné de trances.’ Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p136.

individual prophet, would have identified in any sense with the charge that he was one of the ecstatic group.

However, such a sharp distinction is neither the only nor the best interpretation. While it is, of course, true that he does not *explicitly* claim to be 'a man of the spirit', the point also needs to be made that Hosea does not distance himself from these titles.¹¹⁴ More significantly, elsewhere he identifies himself as a prophet, one of the titles with which, on this analysis, he was being lampooned (9:8; cf. 6:5; 12:11 [ET 10]; 12:14, where he has a positive view of the נְבִיאָה).¹¹⁵ Though it is possible that Hosea accepts the first title ('prophet') but denies the second ('man of the spirit'),¹¹⁶ such that it is the entire mischaracterisation ('the man of the spirit is mad') that serves to demonstrate Israel's guilt, it is preferable to see that he is willing to identify himself as a 'man of the spirit'.¹¹⁷ This is partly because of the synonymy, as Couturier himself notes,¹¹⁸ between 'prophet' and 'man of the spirit' and partly because there is not the contrast between the 'individual' Hosea, on the one hand, and the 'plural' נְבִיאִים (6:5; 12:11) in Hosea that Couturier regards as determinative elsewhere.¹¹⁹

The insult of the people comes not in the title given to Hosea (אִישׁ הַרְוֵחַ, נְבִיאָה), but in the way such titles are predicated. It is presumptuous to argue that Hosea's silence on ascribing רְוֵחַ to himself is tantamount to rejection or repudiation. The verse needs to be understood like this: though Hosea is a נְבִיאָה and a 'man of the spirit,' like Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:12), Micaiah ben Imlah (1 Kgs. 22), and Elisha (2 Kgs. 2:9), he cannot be dismissed as a 'raving ecstatic' like others who claim to be also נְבִיאִים and 'men of the spirit.' The difference between the true and the false is precisely that: one is a true prophet, the other is false. The distinction should not be found in 'ecstasy / strange behaviour' or in the presence of רְוֵחַ.¹²⁰

The picture that emerges here is of a people who recognise the work of the divine רְוֵחַ in a prophet and are scornful, and of a prophet who, while not using the term of his own ministry, does not repudiate such a reference. Nonetheless, the work of the spirit evident here is not necessarily that of 'word-communicating' inspiration. Here, again, it is the prophet who is inspired by the divine רְוֵחַ; how that רְוֵחַ–inspiration relates to the words the prophet utters is not articulated here.¹²¹ Eichrodt puts it well when he says

¹¹⁴ Cf. Jacob, *Theology*, p125.

¹¹⁵ 'Prophecy', *NIDOTTE* 4, p1074. It is of course true that Hosea, like the other prophets, fulminates against false prophets (4:4-5).

¹¹⁶ An example of a person accepting the first title, denying the second, and rejecting both characteristics, might be the scornful, 'A Catholic doesn't think for herself, a Papist just follows authority.'

¹¹⁷ Montague sees this as an 'exception' to cases where classical prophets wanted to distance themselves from the spirit (*Holy Spirit*, p34). Wolff (*Hosea*, p157), van Imschoot ('L'action de l'esprit de Jahvé', p571), Carley (*Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p27) and Mackintosh (*Hosea*, p353) see Hosea as accepting this title, 'man of the spirit'.

¹¹⁸ Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', p134.

¹¹⁹ Cf. 'נְבִיאָה', *TLOT* 2, p702.

¹²⁰ See James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect Upon Israelite Religion*, BZAW 124, (New York, de Gruyter, 1971), pp54-55.

¹²¹ Cf. Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p56.

that the work of the divine רִנָּה in the prophet was principally that of equipping men for the ‘office of messenger and spokesman of Yahweh;’¹²² thus ‘the *man of the spirit* was marked out not so much by his translation into the divine realm as by his particular function’.¹²³

b) Micah 3:8

‘But as for me, I am filled with power,
with the spirit of Yahweh (אֶת־רוּחַ יְהוָה),
and with justice and might,
to declare to Jacob his transgression
and to Israel his sin.’

This verse concludes Micah’s oracle, begun in v.5, against ‘the prophets who lead astray’ God’s people by declaring ‘peace’ when their stomachs have been fed by those who have come to them, but who ‘declare war’ on those who have not fed them. Having spelled out his charge against them (v.5), and the judgement that shall come to them (vv.6-7), Micah now states his own authority (v.8).¹²⁴ There are two significant issues here. The first is the authenticity of the phrase ‘with the spirit of Yahweh.’ The second is, if it is authentic, the implications of such a claim in the ministry of Micah.

With regard to authenticity, many commentators regard it is a gloss. They do so on five main grounds: first, metre, that ‘it interrupts the three-stress colon’¹²⁵ and ‘overloads’ it,¹²⁶ making the first colon much too long in what is otherwise a well-structured chapter;¹²⁷ secondly, grammar, that there is a ‘superfluous אֵם (without a copula!)’;¹²⁸ thirdly, sense, that it confuses the source of the endowment of charismatic gifts (the spirit) with the gifts themselves,¹²⁹ and spoils the ‘matching triad’;¹³⁰ fourthly, chronology, that the linking of רִנָּה with ‘filling’ is only found in (the later) P,¹³¹ or that it is an explanatory gloss for ‘power’ (כֹּחַ) at a time when prophets were held as inspired by Yahweh;¹³² fifthly, sense, for, according to Mowinckel, רִנָּה is linked with ‘lying’ (שֶׁקֶר) and ‘deceit’ (כִּזְבֹּב) in 2:11, and so Micah is contrasting his own authority (‘power’, ‘might’ and ‘judgement’ (3:8)) with the רִנָּה of the נְבִיאִים.¹³³ A claim to רִנָּה ‘in the mouth of Micah’ is ‘suspicious’, ‘since it is associated too clearly with the claims of the

¹²² Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p54.

¹²³ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p54 (his emphasis).

¹²⁴ Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976), p310.

¹²⁵ Hans W. Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary*, tr. G. Stansell, (Augsburg, Augsburg Fortress, 1990), pp91-92.

¹²⁶ James L. Mays, *Micah*, OTL, (London, SCM Press, 1976), p81; Wolff, *Micah*, pp91-92.

¹²⁷ Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p144.

¹²⁸ Wolff, *Micah*, pp91-92; cf. Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, pp144-45.

¹²⁹ Mays, *Micah*, pp85-86; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p145.

¹³⁰ ‘passenden Dreiklang’. Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p65 n1.

¹³¹ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p65; ‘רִנָּה’, *TLOT* 3, p1216.

¹³² Scharbert, ‘Der “Geist” und die Schriftpropheten’, p90; cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, revised and enlarged from 1983 edn., (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p261 n63.

¹³³ Mowinckel, “The Spirit” and the “Word”, pp205-206.

false prophets whom he excoriates and the terminology they used'.¹³⁴ The conclusion, then, is that 'the words are surely an addendum, from the time when it was usual to associate ruach and prophecy.'¹³⁵

However, the authenticity of the phrase has been defended by Hillers¹³⁶ and others.¹³⁷ Hillers maintains that the verse is metrically adequate,¹³⁸ that none of the terms supposed to be 'glossed' are obscure (though there may be reasons for a gloss other than obscurity); that the prophet as man of the spirit can be seen elsewhere (2:11),¹³⁹ and that the expression is not anachronistic (he cites 2 Sam. 23:2). Further to his arguments, רוּחַ as a liquid metaphor, as in the phrase 'I am filled with...the spirit of Yahweh,' is quite common,¹⁴⁰ and need not be late (e.g. Isa. 30:28); the other instances of an individual being 'filled with the spirit' (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Deut. 34:9) do not use רוּחַ, so the unique syntax here guards against a too ready equation of the phrase in Mic. 3:8 with occurrences assigned to P; also, רוּחַ is not necessarily awkward, for it could indicate that Micah is filled with power through the assistance of Yahweh's רוּחַ (cf. רוּחַ in Gen. 4:1);¹⁴¹ finally, excising it as a theological interpretation from a later date is a convenient way of dealing with an otherwise potentially problematic piece of evidence; it assumes what is being debated and forecloses debate. Carley comments that 'there are no generally accepted grounds for such an emendation.'¹⁴² In view of this, he says that 'to retain the phrase is to treat the text more fairly.'¹⁴³ Mowinckel's question regarding the sense of the passage and its relation to 2:11 is best answered by looking at how the phrase functions within the verse, and at the significance of the verse.

¹³⁴ William McKane, *The Book of Micah: Introduction and Commentary*, ICC, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1998), p109.

¹³⁵ 'Die Worte sind sicherlich Nachtrag, aus der Zeit, in der man gewohnt war, Ruh [sic] und Prophetie zusammenzudenken.' Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p65.

¹³⁶ Delbert R. Hillers, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah*, Hermeneia, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1984), pp44-45.

¹³⁷ Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, p314; Lindblom, *Prophecy*, p175 n109; John Breck, *Spirit of Truth: Volume 1 - The Origins of Johannine Pneumatology*, (Crestwood, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), pp37-38; Charles S. Shaw, *The Speeches of Micah: A Rhetorical-Historical Analysis*, JSOTSup 145, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993), pp103-104.

¹³⁸ So too Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, p314 n40; Lindblom, *Prophecy*, p175 n109; Shaw, *Speeches of Micah*, p103.

¹³⁹ It should be noted that רוּחַ is not used in a positive sense in Mic. 2:11, but it is further defined by שֶׁקֶר. Hillers suggests that the phrase רוּחַ וְשֶׁקֶר is a hendiadys (cf. Isa. 41:29); alternatively, he suggests emending to רוּחַ שֶׁקֶר, noting the parallel in 1 Kgs. 22:22. See Hillers, *Micah*, p36. Mowinckel ("The Spirit" and the "Word", p206), Mays (*Micah*, p73), followed by Shaw (*Speeches of Micah*, p71), and Couturier ('L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', pp136-41), however, see it as a description of רוּחַ as the windy inspirer of the false prophets' lying oracles, though Mays does admit of the possibility of hendiadys here.

¹⁴⁰ See further p228 below.

¹⁴¹ Carl F. Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 1, tr. Rev. J. Martin, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1949), p453; van Imschoot, 'L'action de l'esprit de Jahvé', p568; Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, p314; Shaw, *Speeches of Micah*, p104. Jacob suggests that 'instead of suppressing ruach we could just as well take koach as a gloss uselessly repeating geburah' (*Theology of the Old Testament*, p125 n3); so too Lys, *Rûach*, p91.

¹⁴² Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p27.

¹⁴³ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p88 n61.

With regard to the function of this verse, nowhere else in the book of Micah is there a call report, which functions to authenticate the prophet and his unpopular message;¹⁴⁴ here, v.8 serves to communicate Micah's credentials.¹⁴⁵ Were Mowinckel correct in his analysis of the pre-exilic reforming prophets, we would expect here a reference to the word of Yahweh as well as the supposed repudiation of רִנָּה that he says is found in 2:11. However, it is likely here that Micah is purposefully using irony, when set alongside 2:11. Men 'walking after the wind'¹⁴⁶ (הֹלֵךְ רִנָּה) and uttering falsehoods do not do so with the divine רִנָּה but with emptiness (רִנָּה) and lies (שֶׁקֶר), in contrast to Micah, who has the divine רִנָּה.¹⁴⁷ In other words, Micah here is conducting an assault on the very heart of their inspiration by appealing to his own.¹⁴⁸ It is too simplistic an analysis to speak of 'true prophets appeal to the word of Yahweh,' while 'false prophets appeal to the רִנָּה,' since in 1 Kgs. 22, we see a true prophet appeal to the divine רִנָּה, and in Ezekiel we see the false prophets appeal to the 'word of Yahweh.'¹⁴⁹ As we have seen, false prophecy was such a problem *precisely because* there was no foolproof method of distinguishing between true and false.

In summary, this verse cannot be discounted as evidence in the case that the classical prophets spoke of רִנָּה for their own inspiration. The phrase makes sense in its context, and other arguments against its authenticity are inconclusive. The picture that this verse gives, then, is of Yahweh's רִנָּה being intimately involved with prophecy, and, in particular, with the rhetorical event. Micah is 'full of the spirit of Yahweh...to declare...'.¹⁵⁰ This inspiration, while explicitly stated here, cannot, however, be said necessarily to be 'word-communicating.' Micah's credentials, which include 'power,' 'justice,' and 'might,' given by the divine רִנָּה, all imply the empowering of him as a prophet, rather than his words.

c) Jeremiah 5:13

'The prophets are nothing but wind (וְהַנְּבִיאִים יְהִיוּ לְרִנָּה),
for the word is not in them (וְהַדְּבָר אֵין בָּהֶם).¹⁵¹
Thus shall it be done to them!'

¹⁴⁴ E.g. Amos 7:14ff.; Isa. 6; Jer. 1:4-10; Ezek. 1-3.

¹⁴⁵ Mays, *Micah*, pp84-86; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBC 32, (Waco, Word, 1984), pp33-34.

¹⁴⁶ Keil, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 1, p446.

¹⁴⁷ Hehn observes that 'in a neo-Babylonian letter, it says, "I know that all you say about me is a lie and wind"' ('In einem neubabylonischen Briefe heißt es: "Ich weiß, daß alles, was du über mich sagst, Lüge und Wind ist"'). Hehn, 'Zum Problem des Geistes', pp222-23.

¹⁴⁸ Pace Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', pp136-41.

¹⁴⁹ Ezek. 13:6, 7; 22:28.

¹⁵⁰ I do not see how the 'dependent clause' ('in order to proclaim...') 'only distantly refers to prophecy' as Albertz and Westermann claim ('רִנָּה', *TLOT* 3, p1216).

¹⁵¹ I translate with most commentators, who follow the LXX here (καὶ λόγος κυρίου) and emend to הַדְּבָר. Holladay prefers the MT as the *lectio difficilior*, with the 'postbiblical Hebrew' meaning 'revelation'. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, Hermeneia, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1986), pp183, 187. However, if דְּבָר is 'postbiblical', this explains the MT, but suggests an original הַדְּבָר.

I have already noted how theological uses of רִיחַ are remarkably absent from the book of Jeremiah.¹⁵² There is only one place where there is a possibility of a theological nuance to רִיחַ in the book, and it occurs within ‘a collection of poetic fragments’¹⁵³ which are somewhat awkward because of the change in speaker and addressee. The literary context is of an impending invasion from the north, declared by Jeremiah (4:5-6:30), and of the complete absence of any righteous person in Jerusalem, whose presence would avert Yahweh’s judgement (5:1-9). The next two verses, 5:10-11, seem to be addressed to the impending invaders, urging them to begin their destructive work, though not to make a ‘full end’.¹⁵⁴ In 5:12, there is a shift in speaker. Jeremiah gives his verdict on those who have spoken falsely of Yahweh.¹⁵⁵ In the verses following v.13, 5:14-17, Yahweh declares judgement on those who have spoken falsely; such false speaking is revealed as a prime cause of the consumption of the people by the invading nation.¹⁵⁶ There are two critical questions concerning v.13: first, ‘Of whom are these words predicated?’ and, secondly, ‘What is the force of רִיחַ here?’

Those who see this verse as revealing Jeremiah’s view of רִיחַ, and רִיחַ-inspiration, as totally negative see v.13 as being a quotation of Jeremiah himself, expressing Yahweh’s verdict on the false salvation prophets who appeal to רִיחַ.¹⁵⁷ רִיחַ is what inspires (probably by their own admission) the false prophets of hope, who say that Yahweh will do nothing, and that no harm will come (v.12). Jeremiah here, with a pungent word-play on רִיחַ, says the prophets are ‘nothing but spirit / wind,’ because, in contrast to Jeremiah, they do not have the ‘word’ in them (cf. Jer. 18:18). Couturier comments, ‘One cannot avoid, therefore, seeing here not only a strong opposition between two types of prophets, but again between the “Spirit” (wind) and the “word”.’¹⁵⁸ However, such a conclusion is by no means unavoidable.

One way in which such a conclusion has been avoided is to answer the first question, ‘Of whom are these words predicated?’ with ‘Jeremiah and other prophets of doom’. This is the approach of many modern English versions, which treat v.13, until בְּהִיבֵם, as a continuation of the culpably false words of those cited by Jeremiah in v.12.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² See n13 on p3.

¹⁵³ Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, WBC 26, (Dallas, Word, 1991), p90; so too Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, OTL, (London, SCM, 1986), p182; John Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB 21, (Garden City, Doubleday, 1965), p42. McKane tentatively regards Jeremiah as the speaker throughout vv.12-14 (William McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 1, ICC, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1986), pp120-22).

¹⁵⁴ 5:10; cf. 4:27, 5:18.

¹⁵⁵ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p186; McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 1, p121.

¹⁵⁶ Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, pp149-50.

¹⁵⁷ Mowinckel, “The Spirit” and the “Word”, p206; Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p43; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, pp146-50; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p60.

¹⁵⁸ ‘On ne peut donc pas éviter de voir ici une forte opposition non seulement entre deux types de prophètes, mais encore entre l’«esprit» (vent) et la «parole».’ Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, p149.

¹⁵⁹ So NRSV, NIV, ESV, NASB; also Vg., and, according to McKane (*Jeremiah*, vol. 1, p121), the commentaries of Duhm, Rudolph and Weiser.

With this approach, Jeremiah and the other prophets declaring doom are denounced by the false prophets, in v.13, as uttering empty words.¹⁶⁰ Given that Jeremiah himself can speak of 'the prophets' in either positive or negative terms,¹⁶¹ it is possible that his opponents can do the same. The false prophets, then, declare that הַנְּבִיאִים (i.e. Jeremiah and other doom prophets), are nothing but wind, and the word is not in them (v.13). This interpretation has rightly been criticised, though not always effectively.

Holladay argues that הַנְּבִיאִים preceding the verb signals a 'contrast' with what has come before. However, this is not an adequate refutation.¹⁶² The fronting of הַנְּבִיאִים does not necessarily serve to mark a change in speaker; it could simply mark a change in the topic of the false prophets' speech, from their denial of the gloomy words, to the fate of the gloomy prophets. A stronger reason for linking v.13 with the words of Jeremiah is that the indictment of הַנְּבִיאִים here sounds rather similar to his indictment of them elsewhere. The mention of רוּחַ in 5:13 and of the prophets prophesying בְּשִׁקָּר in 5:31 (cf. 14:14; 23:14) is strongly reminiscent of Mic. 2:11; further, the assertion that Yahweh's word is 'not in them' is similar to Jeremiah's accusations elsewhere (e.g. 14:14; 23:18-22). On this reading, given the lexicalisation of 'prophets' in v.13, the subject of כְּחֶשֶׁב and וַיִּזְאָמְרוּ in v.12 needs to be a different group, presumably the people of Judah who regurgitate the words of the false prophets.

If it is granted, as I think more probable, that these words *are* the words of Jeremiah against the false prophets, there is still the question of the force of רוּחַ here. The relevant phrase is וְהַנְּבִיאִים יִהְיוּ לְרוּחַ. The preposition לְ indicates what the prophets will become, i.e. 'nothing' (cf. Jer. 2:14),¹⁶³ or perhaps what they belong to,¹⁶⁴ rather than what they possess (given the lack of לְ with הַנְּבִיאִים). Certainly, the primary sense of רוּחַ is of 'wind' or 'nothingness'. However, as I noted above, many see here a word-play on רוּחַ, linking this primary sense with רוּחַ as the source of the (false) prophets' inspiration. What is important to note, though, is that *even* if this were true, and it seems plausible, this does not necessarily mean that Jeremiah is hostile to רוּחַ-inspiration. Jeremiah could just as easily be denying the legitimacy of their claim to the divine רוּחַ here, and confronting them directly in their claim to the spirit's inspiration (cf. Ezek. 13:3). Just as he inveighs against prophets, while he himself is one (1:5),¹⁶⁵ so too he can inveigh against claims to the divine רוּחַ while regarding himself as having that same divine רוּחַ (cf. Micaiah). His silence on the question of his own

¹⁶⁰ That false prophets (or the people citing the words of the false prophets) are in view in v.12 is apparent from the similarity between their words here and those of the false prophets elsewhere (e.g. Jer. 14:13; 23:17).

¹⁶¹ That Jeremiah can speak positively of the plural נְבִיאִים is apparent from 2:30, where Judah's guilt is apparent from its treatment of its prophets (cf. McKane, *Jeremiah*, vol. 1, p51); that he can also speak of them negatively is apparent from 5:31, where they are said to prophesy falsely (cf. 14:13ff.; 23:14ff.).

¹⁶² Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p187.

¹⁶³ The prophets 'will be shown to be the windbags that they are.' Bright, *Jeremiah*, p40.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Couturier, 'L'Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique', p148.

¹⁶⁵ 'נְבִיא', *TLOT 2*, p702.

‘inspiration’ and the divine רִיחַ should not necessarily be interpreted as antipathy towards רִיחַ.¹⁶⁶

Such a conclusion is further supported by the fact that Jeremiah does not confront the other prophets on the grounds of the style of their prophecy, repudiating the more ecstatic manifestations, but on the grounds of whether Yahweh is the source of their message. Indeed, he himself has visions (1:9ff.); he experiences the powerful ‘hand of Yahweh’ on him which overwhelms him, probably with external manifestations (15:17; cf. 1:9);¹⁶⁷ he was ‘enticed’ and ‘overpowered’ by Yahweh (20:7); he experienced crushing emotions (4:17); he performed elaborate sign-acts (27:1ff.) and, finally, both true and false prophecy in the book of Jeremiah are marked by the nifal of נבא (e.g. true: 19:14; 25:13; 26:11,12; false: 2:8; 5:31; 11:21) and by the hitpael (true: 26:20; false: 14:14; 23:13).¹⁶⁸ It is therefore no surprise that Jeremiah, like Hosea, was regarded as ‘mad’ (מְשֻׁגָּע (Jer. 29:26-27));¹⁶⁹ there was some evidence pointing in that direction within his ministry.

This picture makes it unlikely that Jeremiah actually repudiated רִיחַ in his own inspiration. It is, however, impossible to argue that he explicitly endorsed it. If a word-play is intended in 5:13, what is clear is that certain prophets in Jeremiah’s day *did* lay claim to the divine רִיחַ (even if Jeremiah didn’t explicitly).¹⁷⁰ As Koch comments, ‘So an indirect witness for the *rûach Yahweh* as source of prophetic inspiration may lie in this word of mockery.’¹⁷¹ Precisely what kind of ‘prophetic inspiration’ is in view cannot be determined. It is not possible to decide whether such a view of inspiration, as evinced in the late pre-exilic period, was ‘potentiating’ or ‘word-communicating.’

2. ‘Word-communicating’ inspiration and the classical prophets

a) Isaiah 30:1-2

‘Oh, rebellious children, says Yahweh,
who carry out a plan, but not mine (וְלֹא מִנִּי);

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Chevallier, *Souffle de Dieu*, p29; Craigie, Kelley, Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25*, p92; Kapelrud, ‘The Spirit and the Word’, p43; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, pp59-60.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Roberts, ‘Hand of Yahweh’.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. van Imschoot, ‘L’action de l’esprit de Jahvé’, pp572-73; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p60.

¹⁶⁹ In these verses, Jeremiah has a word of rebuke for Shemaiah. Shemaiah had written a letter which told Jehoiada that Yahweh had made him priest ‘so that there may be officers in the house of Yahweh to control any madman (מְשֻׁגָּע) who plays the prophet (וְהַמְנַבֵּא)...So now why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who plays the prophet for you (הַמְנַבֵּא)?’ (vv.26-27). The word for madman (מְשֻׁגָּע) occurs in four other places in the Old Testament. In 2 Kgs. 9:11, the officers ask Jehu about that ‘madman’, the young prophet sent by Elisha; Jehu’s reply is instructive – ‘You know the man and his babble.’ Twice, David acts as a madman to avoid problems with King Achish of Gath, making marks on the door, and letting spittle run down his beard (1 Sam. 21:15-16 [ET 14-15]). In Deut. 28:34, as part of the cursings, the people shall be ‘driven mad’ by the sight their eyes shall see.

¹⁷⁰ So Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, p187; Douglas R. Jones, *Jeremiah*, NCBC, (London, Marshall Pickering, 1992), pp123-24.

¹⁷¹ ‘So dürfte in diesem Spottwort ein indirektes Zeugnis für die *rûach Jahweh* als Quelle der prophetischen Inspiration vorliegen.’ Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p60.

who make an alliance,¹⁷² but against my will (וְלֹא רוּחִי),
 adding sin to sin;
 who set out to go down to Egypt
 without asking for my counsel (וְכִי לֹא שָׁאַלְנִי)...'

The only possible linking of רוּחַ to 'word-communicating' inspiration in texts generally accepted as pre-exilic within the classical prophets occurs in Isaiah 30:1-2.¹⁷³ These verses come within the larger unit of vv.1-11, which form an 'oracular report concerning YHWH's dissatisfaction with the people's embassy to Egypt.'¹⁷⁴ Within this, there are three sub-units. The first, vv.1-5, is 'the oracular report of YHWH's woe oracle.'¹⁷⁵ Verse 1a reports the woe statement, and vv.1b-2 spell out the offence. Isaiah's addressees carry out a plan (עֲצָה) that does not come from Yahweh, in sending to Egypt for protection. Essential to any conclusion on spirit, prophecy, and inspiration is an analysis of how, in v.1, רוּחִי relates to מְנִי, to which it clearly corresponds. רוּחִי has been understood in four main ways.

First, it has been understood as 'the inner nature of God.'¹⁷⁶ Such a view is based upon the parallel between 'from me' and '[by] my spirit.' However, as Albertz and Westermann point out, this 'involves an abstract concept foreign to the OT.'¹⁷⁷

Secondly, it has been understood as the power of Yahweh, or as the 'effect of Yahweh's might.'¹⁷⁸ However, although the notion of Yahweh's power is elsewhere contrasted with Egypt's weakness, it is not found in the immediate context here.¹⁷⁹

Thirdly, it has been understood as the 'mind of Yahweh.' Isaiah's point is not so much that their plan to send an embassy to Egypt is not empowered by Yahweh, but that this plan is not Yahweh's will.¹⁸⁰ This view has the strength of taking seriously the parallel between 'by me' and 'by my spirit.' Neve concedes, though, that this meaning, 'the center of volition in Yahweh himself'¹⁸¹ is only found at one other point in the Old Testament,¹⁸² and never elsewhere in First Isaiah.

¹⁷² The phrase is וְלִנְסֹךְ מִסִּכָּה, which can be rendered literally 'pour out a libation' or 'cast an idol' (cf. 30:22).

¹⁷³ With regard to dating, Ma notes that 'the authenticity of the passage has not been seriously questioned' (*Until the Spirit Comes*, p46). Most commentators favour the Assyrian crisis at the end of the 8th century. For a discussion of possible dates, see Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, tr. R.A. Wilson, OTL, (London, SCM, 1974), pp282-84.

¹⁷⁴ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, p389.

¹⁷⁵ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, p389.

¹⁷⁶ 'Spirit in the Old Testament', *TDNT* 6, p364.

¹⁷⁷ 'רוּחַ', *TLOT* 3, p1216; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p58. In Isa. 31:3, ontology is not in view; rather, there is a contrast between Yahweh's power and animal / human frailty.

¹⁷⁸ 'רוּחַ', *TLOT* 3, p1216.

¹⁷⁹ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p54.

¹⁸⁰ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p54. So also Mowinckel, "'The Spirit" and the "Word"', p201; 'רוּחַ', *ThWAT* 7, pp397-98; cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, p285: 'In a few intense words Isaiah states that the plan has not come from Yahweh, and the treaty is neither in accordance with his will nor derives from him.'

¹⁸¹ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p54.

¹⁸² Isa. 40:13; see Neve, *Spirit of God*, p98.

The fourth way of understanding רִיחַ is to see it as the ‘prophetic spirit.’¹⁸³ This view interprets v.2a as expanding further on v.1b. Thus not asking for Yahweh’s counsel, ‘an ancient technical term for seeking an oracle from Yahweh’ now in the form of ‘an utterance by a prophet,’¹⁸⁴ explains ‘not by my spirit.’ Implicit is the assumption that the spirit inspires the prophet’s message. Not to ask for Yahweh’s counsel from his prophet is not to go with what the spirit says (v.1b). While this would be a unique usage in First Isaiah, its chief virtue, as Ma points out, is that it makes good sense in the context, for the passage speaks of the ‘conflict between the prophet and the court politicians.’¹⁸⁵ The wider context of 30:9-10 and 31:1 also supports this conclusion, where the issue is acting without reference to a prophet or consulting Yahweh. The criticism of Volz that it is unlike Isaiah to put himself in the middle as a kind of mediator, because elsewhere all the people need to do is look to the Holy One of Israel (e.g. 31:1; 5:12) is invalid.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the ‘consulting’ (שָׁרַח) of Yahweh that is found in 31:1 is elsewhere seen to be through the agency of a prophet (e.g. 1 Kgs. 22; 2 Kgs. 1:3; Ezek. 14:10). If Isaiah is referring to the ‘prophetic spirit’ here, then what is pictured is a ‘word-communicating’ inspiration. The spirit is not merely the one who equips Isaiah to speak, but is responsible for the message that Isaiah gives.

From the discussion above, it can be seen that both the third and the fourth views have much to commend them. It is difficult to be certain, but it would be unwise to dismiss the possibility that Isaiah is here speaking about the ‘prophetic spirit,’ either on dogmatic grounds (not least because both usages are unique), or because it is ‘impossible exegesis,’¹⁸⁷ which it is not.

3. Summary and Conclusions

In view of our analysis above, a number of comments can be made. First, though Jer. 18:18 makes it clear that the people expected a prophet to bring a ‘word’ from Yahweh, it is also clear that people in general linked prophecy to the divine רִיחַ (Hos. 9:7). This common perception was not restricted to a particular group. Such a linkage involved a belief that the prophets behaved in strange ways, which bore at least some resemblance to madness (מְשֻׁבָּעַת (Hos. 9:7; Jer. 29:26-27)). Although this was a popular opinion, and in its context both references are derogatory words in the mouth of opponents, there is evidence that the classical prophets were not as ‘rational’ as Mowinckel maintains. Neither Jeremiah nor Hosea distanced themselves from such comments.¹⁸⁸ Indeed, I

¹⁸³ van Imschoot, ‘L’action de l’esprit de Jahvé’, p568, 571-72; Jacob, *Theology*, p126; Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p49; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986), p545.

¹⁸⁴ Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, p285.

¹⁸⁵ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p49.

¹⁸⁶ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p66.

¹⁸⁷ Mowinckel, “The Spirit” and the “Word”, p201.

¹⁸⁸ It is not likely that they were called ‘mad’ simply because of their advice, since that overplays the distinction between mental states and external behaviour. ‘Madness’ was clearly visible in 1 Sam.

have shown above how such abuse cannot be dismissed as pure hyperbole, since Hosea willingly, if implicitly, identified himself as a prophet, and ascribed a significant function to such prophets (9:8). Further evidence of the ‘unusual’ behaviour of the classical prophets comes from the involvement of the ‘hand of Yahweh’ in their experience (e.g. Isa. 8:11; Jer. 15:17 (cf. 20:7)).¹⁸⁹ These instances of the prophets being caricatured as ‘mad’ and of the influence of the ‘hand of Yahweh’ put the classical prophets nearer to the pre-classical ones than is often recognised.

Secondly, Volz, Mowinckel and Couturier are not correct to say that the pre-exilic writing prophets repudiated the inspiration of רִיחָ.¹⁹⁰ There is not a single text supporting such a view. While they were antithetical to false prophets, they were not antithetical to the רִיחָ that the false prophets claimed for themselves. Hosea (Hos. 9:7), implicitly, and both Micah (Mic. 3:8) and Isaiah (Isa. 30:1), explicitly, make clear that they regard the divine רִיחָ as having a place within their inspiration as prophets. This ought not be surprising, in view of some of the similarities we have observed between the classical prophets and prophets in general. This also means that the *historical* view on the absence of רִיחָ in prophecy is, like the *antithetical* view, mistaken. It was not the case that ‘the spirit...ceased to operate.’¹⁹¹

Thirdly, it is true to say that רִיחָ is relatively absent from the pre-exilic writing prophets. In view of what we have just said, the relative absence of the prophets attributing their ministry to the divine רִיחָ cannot be explained by recourse to a radical disjunction between the ‘rational’ classical prophets and the ‘ecstatic *nebhi'im*.’ Further, it is not likely that such reticence was due to the influence of רִיחָ within ‘false prophecy,’ if what is meant by this is that the ‘true prophets’ did not want to be associated with the רִיחָ found in false prophets. Micah assaults directly the prophetic inspiration claimed by those with whom he does not agree, but in so doing he does not renounce the divine רִיחָ for himself. Two points come to the fore. First, mention of רִיחָ may well have entailed connotations more usually associated with false prophets, connotations that the classical prophets tried to avoid. Secondly, appeals to the influence of רִיחָ did not foreclose any dispute about the truth of the prophecy, nor did they *a priori* authenticate a prophet’s ministry. While earlier it may have been true that physical manifestations were regarded as proof of divine endorsement, clearly such a perspective did not last, not least because it was not a reliable indicator of the truth (cf. 1 Kgs. 22). Asserting the fact of inspiration by means of particular external behaviours gave way to speaking the inspired message. Since such appeals would not have

21:15-16 and 2 Kgs. 9:11. However, it should be noted that manifestations of either ‘trance’ or ‘possession’ could vary (Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, p160). For the distinction between ‘trance’ (‘ecstasy’) and ‘possession,’ see Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p34.

¹⁸⁹ A. S. van der Woude, ‘רִיחָ, *yād* hand’, *TLOT* 2, p502.

¹⁹⁰ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, pp62-69; Mowinckel, “‘The Spirit’ and the ‘Word’”, pp199-227; Couturier, ‘L’Esprit de Yahweh et la Fonction Prophétique’, pp129-65.

¹⁹¹ As von Rad maintains (*Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p57). See p89 above.

furthered any claims to authenticity, the relative silence with regard to רִיחַ in the prophet's ministry is due to the prophet's desire to emphasise another side of his task, 'that it was the decision of Yahweh he was preaching. So the word had to come into the foreground.'¹⁹² In other words, the relative silence is a *rhetorical* strategy.

Fourthly, the view of inspiration that obtains in the prophets cannot be characterised by evolutionary development. There is some evidence that early within classical prophecy, רִיחַ is linked to the communication of the words of the prophet (Isa. 30:1) and therefore, to what we have termed 'word-communicating' inspiration. There is also, as we have seen, pre-exilic evidence of 'potentiating inspiration,' whereby the spirit is seen as the one which 'rouses the prophet to act, to speak, and endows him with the ability to harangue and poetize...' and 'prepares' the prophet 'to receive the divine word – to see visions, to hear the divine voice in dreams or ecstatic slumber'¹⁹³ (Hos. 9:7; Mic. 3:8). It is erroneous to say that 'only the post-exilic period understood prophecy as the obvious work of the divine spirit.'¹⁹⁴

Fifthly, the influence of רִיחַ on the classical prophets is not restricted to either the 'prophetic' or the 'rhetorical' event. The reference in Hos. 9:7 does not make it clear precisely at which point the inspiration of רִיחַ is to be seen. Mic. 3:8 links the operation of רִיחַ more closely to the proclamation of his message than to its reception. Isa. 30:1, on the other hand, traces the source of Isaiah's message to Yahweh's רִיחַ. There is not a particular point in the life of Yahweh's word where Yahweh's רִיחַ is more evident.

C. INSPIRATION AFTER THE EXILE

The final place we shall look for the Old Testament's understanding of prophetic inspiration and the role of רִיחַ within that is the post-exilic literature. This will be illustrative rather than exhaustive, since my aim is to assess the book of Ezekiel's place within the general trend, rather than to give an account of every instance.¹⁹⁵ Here, too, in the post-exilic literature, both 'potentiating' and 'word-communicating' inspiration are evident.

1. 'Potentiating' inspiration after the exile

a) Chronicles

In this post-exilic, post-Ezekielian work, there are a number of instances of the spirit being linked to the utterance of people which recall earlier terms. Thus, in 1 Chr. 12:19 [ET 18], the spirit 'put on' (לְבָשָׁה) the soldier Amasai before he uttered a

¹⁹² Kapelrud, 'The Spirit and the Word', p46.

¹⁹³ Kaufmann, *Religion of Israel*, p99.

¹⁹⁴ 'רִיחַ', *TLOT* 3, p1215.

¹⁹⁵ Other instances of רִיחַ (possibly) linked with prophecy which most scholars associate with the exilic and post-exilic period, and which I shall not be discussing, are Num. 11:26-29; Isa. 42:1-4; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1-3 (see Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*); Joel 3 [ET 2:28ff.]; Zech. 13:2-6.

pronouncement of loyalty to David.¹⁹⁶ The same verb is used in 2 Chr. 24:20, alerting readers to the significance of the priest Zechariah's words as he upbraids the people for their disobedience and explains Yahweh's absence on these grounds.¹⁹⁷ In 2 Chr. 15:1 and 20:14, the spirit 'came upon' (הִיָּחָה עָלָיו) Azariah and the Levite Jahaziel, who then go on to speak.¹⁹⁸ In these latter two references, such speaking is explicitly linked to prophecy. In 15:8, the words of Azariah, addressed to Asa, all Judah and Benjamin are described as 'prophecy' (הַנְּבוּאָה). In these words, Azariah reminds them of how Yahweh is with those who are with him, and abandons those who abandon him. This, in turn gives rise to a call for them, fresh from victory over the Ethiopians, to take courage (v.7). In chapter, 20, Jahaziel addresses Jehoshaphat, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and urges them not to be afraid of the Ammonites and Moabites, for the battle is Yahweh's, not theirs (v.15). Jehoshaphat responds the next day by urging the people on, telling them to believe in Yahweh their God and to 'believe his prophets' (הַנְּבוּאָיו) (v.20). Four points in particular are important.¹⁹⁹

First, the theological use of רִיחַ in Chronicles is limited to revelation (1 Chr. 28:12,²⁰⁰ where King David learns of the dimensions of the new temple by means of רִיחַ²⁰¹) or authorisation of someone's words.²⁰² At the same time, רִיחַ plays a part not found in Samuel or Kings.²⁰³ The incident reported in 1 Chr. 12:19 in which רִיחַ clothes Amasai, chief of the thirty, before he utters words declaring his allegiance to David is not present in 1 Sam. 30. The same picture is found with the incidents in 2 Chr. 15:1, 2 Chr. 20:14, and 2 Chr. 24:20, absent from 1 Kgs. 15, 1 Kgs. 22, and 2 Kgs. 12 respectively.

Secondly, רִיחַ-inspiration is not linked with those spoken of by the Chronicler as prophets, using one of the prophetic role labels.²⁰⁴ This is reinforced by the fact that the

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Jdg. 6:34, and Gideon.

¹⁹⁷ So Hugh G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, NCBC, (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), p108, commenting on 1 Chr. 12:18.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Num. 24:2; Jdg. 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23.

¹⁹⁹ For further discussion, see especially Schniedewind, *Word of God in Transition*; *idem*, 'Prophets and Prophecy in the Books of Chronicles', in *The Chronicler as Historian*, eds. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund & Steven L. McKenzie, JSOTSup 238, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp204-24.

²⁰⁰ 1 Chr. 28:12: וְחִבְּנִיתָ כָּל אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בְּרוּחַ עִמּוֹ.

²⁰¹ See Schniedewind, *Word of God in Transition*, pp202-203 for רִיחַ as 'spirit' rather than 'mind'.

²⁰² 1 Chr. 12:19 [ET 18]; 2 Chr. 15:1; 20:14; 24:20. The four references in 2 Chr. 18:20-23 are taken over from 1 Kgs. 22; they also speak of revelation.

²⁰³ See Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us", p16.

²⁰⁴ Schniedewind, *Word of God in Transition*, p70. Schniedewind, 'Prophets and Prophecy', pp217-18 sees in these 'possession formulas' (i.e. those that speak of the action of רִיחַ) a conscious and clear distinction being maintained between the classical prophets, for whom רִיחַ plays no part, and 'inspired messengers'. The inspired messengers utter 'a different type of prophecy' directed not to the king, but to the people as a whole; the function too is different: 'they do not explain how God acts [this is what the prophets do] but exhort the people, telling them how they should act' (p221). In other words, there is for him 'both a *distinction* between prophecy in pre-exilic and post-exilic periods and a *continuity* in the prophetic voice.' (pp207-208). The apparent exception to this, where the Levite Jahaziel seems to be spoken of by Jehoshaphat as one of the 'prophets' (2 Chr. 20:20), Schniedewind explains differently. He argues persuasively that Jehoshaphat's appeal in v.20 to 'believe in his prophets' (בְּנְבוּאָיו) is in fact an appeal to believe in what God had said *in the past* through the prophets. There are two main pieces of

verbs used to describe the action of רִנָּה are found in the equipping not of the pre-exilic prophets, but of the judges.²⁰⁵ The prophetic voice continues to be heard through different channels as a word of encouragement or exhortation chiefly to the people.²⁰⁶

Thirdly, רִנָּה can relate both to the prophetic event (1 Chr. 28:12) and to the rhetorical event (e.g. 1 Chr. 12:19).

Fourthly, references to the work of רִנָּה in inspiration serve to draw attention to what follows, and appear to give divine accreditation to what follows, but at no point in the linking of רִנָּה with the rhetorical event is it said explicitly that the רִנָּה has inspired the words, as opposed to the person who has uttered the words. The picture that is gained from these references to רִנָּה cannot conclusively be said to be ‘word-communicating’ inspiration.²⁰⁷ Certainly, though, ‘potentiating’ inspiration is in view. The closest to ‘word-communicating’ inspiration that Chronicles gets is in 1 Chr. 28:12, where רִנָּה does seem to be the medium by which David has received the temple plans. It is to clear instances of ‘word-communicating’ inspiration we now turn.

2. ‘Word-communicating’ inspiration after the exile

a) Nehemiah 9:30

‘Many years you were patient with them, and warned them by your spirit through your prophets (בְּרוּחְךָ בְּיַד־נְבִיאֶיךָ)...’

As Ezra looks back at entry into the land, and life in the land (vv.22-31), he catalogues again Yahweh’s mercy and patience. One manifestation of Yahweh’s patience was his sending prophets to warn them. Many commentators do not mention the spirit’s work in inspiration here, so evident is it.²⁰⁸ Nonetheless, the precise nature of this inspiration needs to be examined.

It is possible that בְּרוּחְךָ does not refer to the origin of the warning, but refers to the ‘potentiating’ inspiration of the prophet.²⁰⁹ It was ‘through’ in the sense of ‘with the help of’ Yahweh’s רִנָּה that the prophets warned their ancestors. The alternative is that

evidence. First, Jahaziel’s exhortation is closely dependent on older (prophetic) texts (e.g. Exod. 14:13-14; Isa. 7:9b). Secondly, Jehoshaphat urges for trust ‘in his prophets’ in the plural when only Jahaziel has spoken. See Schniedewind, *Word of God in Transition*, pp115-18, 182-84.

²⁰⁵ Schniedewind (*Word of God in Transition*, pp72-73, 116) follows Mowinckel closely in his discussion of רִנָּה-inspiration. We have seen, however, that silence does not mean they thought ‘possession by the spirit as something undesirable’ (Mowinckel, “The Spirit” and the “Word”, p200; cited in Schniedewind, *Word of God in Transition*, p116). Schniedewind does not address the question of why Nehemiah (9:30) and Zechariah (7:12) link רִנָּה to pre-exilic prophecy.

²⁰⁶ Lys, *Rûach*, p185; Schniedewind, ‘Prophets and Prophecy’, p221. For Schniedewind, the book of Chronicles as a whole functions rather like the words of spirit-inspired messengers. It is a word of ‘exhortation’ rather than ‘interpretation’. See Schniedewind, ‘Prophets and Prophecy’, p224 (my emphasis); *idem*, *Word of God in Transition*, pp231-52.

²⁰⁷ Pace Schoemaker, ‘Use of רִנָּה’, p33; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p220.

²⁰⁸ F. Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982), pp223-34; Carl F. Keil, *The Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther*, tr. S. Taylor, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1873), pp245-47; Jacob M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, AB 14, (New York, Doubleday, 1965), pp158-70; Mark A. Throntveit, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, Interpretation, (Louisville, John Knox, 1989), pp92-111; Hugh G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, Word 16, (Waco, Word, 1985), pp300-19.

²⁰⁹ For different uses of ב, see *IBHS*, 11.2.5.

the warning that came to the people was brought by double agency: it was both the spirit and the prophets who spoke.²¹⁰ The latter seems preferable in view of the close parallel with Zech. 7:12, where the spirit's links with the words of Yahweh are made clear.²¹¹ Further, the fact that the prophets, who are clearly an agent, are separated from the verb עֹרֵד (hif.) by 'by your spirit,' suggests another agent is in view (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:13); accordingly, the second prepositional phrase functions epexegetically: 'He warned them through his Spirit; the prophets have conveyed the words of the רוּחַ.'²¹² Here, explicitly, is the 'word-communicating' view of inspiration whereby it is the divine רוּחַ who is seen as 'speaking.'²¹³

b) Zechariah 7:12

'They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law (הַתּוֹרָה) and the words that Yahweh of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets (בְּרוּחוֹ בְּיַד הַנְּבִיאִים). Therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts.'

In its literary context, this verse forms part of Zechariah's answer to the question from the people of Bethel, brought by Sharezer and Regem-melech (7:2), though the answer is to 'all the people of the land' (7:5). The material included here about their fathers' unwillingness to listen to what Yahweh has said (v.12), and Yahweh's subsequent punishment (v.14), serves to justify Yahweh's anger which has lasted for seventy years (1:12; 7:5).²¹⁴ In v.7, Zechariah refers to words proclaimed 'by the hand of the former prophets' (בְּיַד הַנְּבִיאִים הָרְאשֹׁנִים). In v.12, the picture is expanded to include the law (הַתּוֹרָה) as part of what they had rejected,²¹⁵ and to include רוּחַ within the process of Yahweh's sending the words. The picture of inspiration here is very close to that of Neh. 9:30. Here, most probably, is 'word-communicating' inspiration. The prophets were 'agents inspired by Yahweh's words to the people,'²¹⁶ or, as Carol and Eric

²¹⁰ So Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p219; Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', p46.

²¹¹ The parallel with Zech. 7:12 is closer than that with Neh. 9:20. In Neh. 9:20, רוּחַ is linked with the teaching of the law and the giving of the commandments. This is clear from the close parallels between vv.12-15 and vv.19-25. Within the section from v.12 to v.21, there are the themes of God's gracious provision (vv.12-15), the people's ungrateful rebellion (vv.16-18) and God's continuing mercy (vv.19-21). Within this schema, v.20a is parallel to vv.13-14, just as v.19 parallels v.12, and v.20b-21 parallels v.15; vv.22-25 parallel v.15b (note the repetition of יָרַשׁ). Thus 'you gave your good spirit to instruct them' parallels Yahweh speaking to Moses and giving them 'right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments.' See Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, pp313-14.

²¹² 'Er warnte sie durch seinen Geist; die Propheten haben die Worte der רוּחַ übermittelt.' Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p219. So too Lys, *Rûach*, p197. Lys wonders whether 'by the hand of the prophets' is in fact a gloss, serving to illuminate further the mode of the action of רוּחַ. Consonant with his emphasis on the interior operation of רוּחַ, he observes how the parallel to רוּחַ is not now Yahweh's hand, but the *prophets'* hand.

²¹³ Cf. van Imschoot's comment that 'the spirit appears as a permanent medium who by way of the prophets conveys Yahweh's orders to His people' (van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p175).

²¹⁴ Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah*, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp139-40.

²¹⁵ For the unique pairing of 'Torah' and 'words', see Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, AB 25B, (New York, Doubleday, 1987), p402.

²¹⁶ David L. Petersen, *Haggai & Zechariah 1-8*, OTL, (London, SCM, 1984), p293.

Meyers put it, ‘the prophetic word is said to have been sent by Yahweh’s spirit.’²¹⁷ This perspective, though post-exilic in date, is on the experience of Israel *in the past*, not in the present. The inspiration of the prophets by the divine רִיחַ is not conceived of as something present in this verse. Zechariah, though identified as a prophet in the book (1:1, 7), nowhere has his ministry linked to Yahweh’s spirit.

D. PRELIMINARY SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At the start of Part II, I raised three questions that I suggested needed answering. The first was whether רִיחַ is or can be understood as Yahweh’s breath on which his word is carried. The second was whether Ezekiel recovers רִיחַ as foundational in prophetic inspiration. Within this was the question of whether the classical prophets did indeed repudiate רִיחַ in their own inspiration. The third was whether the emphasis on רִיחַ within the prophet Ezekiel’s ministry is best explained in terms of his attempts at self-authentication.

So far in Part II, I have endeavoured to address the first two of these questions. To do this, I proposed a way of defining more sharply how the rather general term ‘inspiration’ can be understood. This involved distinguishing between the general equipping of the prophet (‘potentiating’ inspiration) and רִיחַ being the author of the words (‘word-communicating’ inspiration). It also involved distinguishing between the role of רִיחַ in the prophetic and in the rhetorical event. In the rest of chapter 3, I then examined the relationship between prophet, prophetic word and רִיחַ in Ezekiel. In this chapter, I continued the examination of this relationship, though now doing so diachronically with examples from the rest of the Old Testament. The discussion can be summarised with the aid of four tables, each of which positions, within the framework of the grid found in Table 1 on page 94 and repeated here, the different instances of inspiration we have studied from the four historical situations.

²¹⁷ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8*, p403; so too Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p64; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p219.

Copy of Table 3. The inspiration of a prophet.

	‘Potentiating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires prophet		‘Word-communicating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires words	
Prophetic Event	General equipping of the prophet to receive Yahweh’s word	General equipping of the prophet without any direct reference to Yahweh’s word	The linking of יְהוָה with the ‘telescoped’ reception and delivery of Yahweh’s word	יְהוָה breathes / speaks / utters the words to the prophet
Rhetorical Event	General equipping to deliver Yahweh’s word			Explicit ‘double agency discourse’ – יְהוָה speaks the words the prophet speaks

Table 4. The inspiration of pre-classical prophets.

	‘Potentiating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires prophet		‘Word-communicating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires words	
Prophetic Event		Elijah and Elisha; Num. 24:2		1 Kgs. 22
Rhetorical Event		1 Sam. 10:6, 10f.		2 Sam. 23:2

Table 5. The inspiration of pre-exilic classical prophets (not Ezekiel).

	‘Potentiating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires prophet		‘Word-communicating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires words	
Prophetic Event		Hos. 9:7;		Isa. 30:1
Rhetorical Event	Mic. 3:8	(Jer. 5:13)		

Table 6. The inspiration of Ezekiel.

	‘Potentiating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires prophet		‘Word-communicating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires words	
Prophetic Event	Ezek. 2:2; 3:24; 11:5	יְהוָה and Ezekiel’s translocation		Ezek. 11:24 (visions); (13:3)
Rhetorical Event		(Ezek. 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5)		Ezekiel himself

Table 7. Inspiration after the exile.

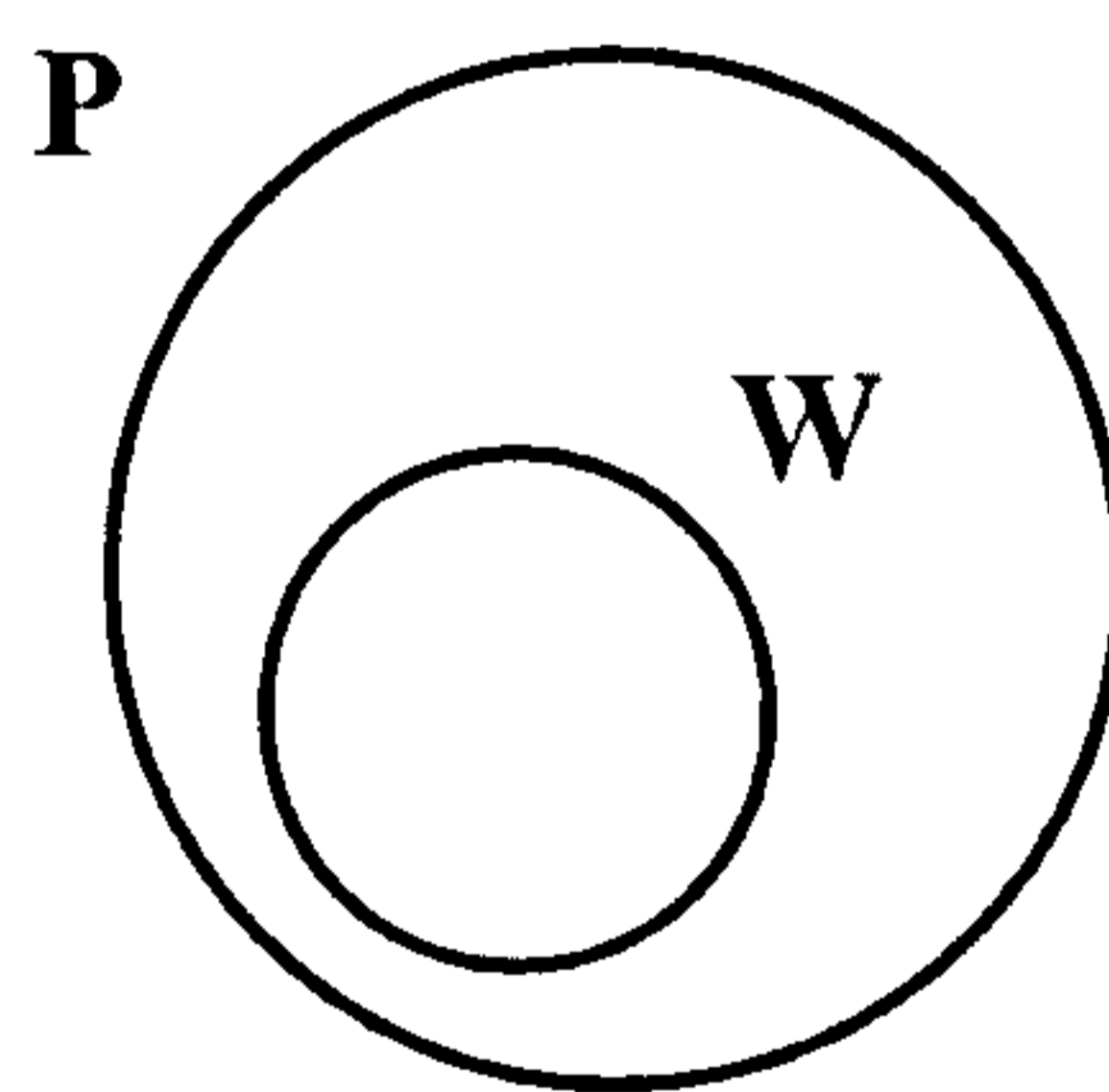
	‘Potentiating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires prophet		‘Word-communicating’ inspiration יְהוָה inspires words	
Prophetic Event			1 Chr. 28:12	
Rhetorical Event			1 Chr. 12:18; 2 Chr. 15:1; 20:12; 24:20	Zech. 7:12; Neh. 9:30

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn.

First, while there is a conceptual link between Yahweh’s רִיחַ as ‘breath’ and Yahweh’s word, that link is neither made nor exploited theologically in the book of Ezekiel. רִיחַ as the ‘breath’ of Yahweh’s mouth is not linked with Yahweh’s word. This, however, does not mean that there are not close links between Yahweh’s word and Yahweh’s רִיחַ, when speaking of the inspiration of Ezekiel (or other prophets). Such links relate to the prophetic event, in so far as Yahweh’s רִיחַ transports the prophet to the place where Yahweh speaks to him (‘potentiating’ inspiration), and gives him the

vision that can be understood as Yahweh's 'speech event' (11:24) ('word-communicating' inspiration). These links are not simply related to the prophetic event, but are also linked to the rhetorical event, in so far as the רַחֵם -constrained Ezekiel embodies the word that Yahweh has given him (cf. also Mic. 3:8). Further, such links, while more usually conceived in terms close to that of Kaufmann's analysis of inspiration, also extends to a more direct form of inspiration, which we have termed 'word-communicating' inspiration.

Secondly, although both 'word-communicating' inspiration and 'potentiating' inspiration as distinguishable categories are clearly evident in the Old Testament, there is not clear evidence of an interest in distinguishing between the two. Thus there are some indisputable instances of רַחֵם speaking Yahweh's words (most notably 2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Kgs. 22; Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12), both *through* and *to* the prophet. There are other instances where Yahweh's רַחֵם inspires the prophet, while the narrative makes it clear that such an inspiration is preparatory to, but does not entail the receiving of, Yahweh's word (e.g. Ezek. 2:2; 3:24; 11:5). This does not mean that Yahweh's רַחֵם cannot be conceived as responsible for 'speaking' or 'breathing' that word, but it does mean that at these points the authors did not articulate or demonstrate that conception. Further, there are a number of points at which the inspiration of Yahweh's רַחֵם serves as a shorthand way of describing the entire process from the prophetic to the rhetorical event, and embraces both 'potentiating' inspiration and 'word-communicating' inspiration (e.g. Num. 24:2). Here, too, while 'word-communicating' inspiration is not explicitly articulated, it is also not expressly precluded. On the basis of the evidence of the Old Testament, of which the book of Ezekiel is a microcosm, the picture that can be affirmed with certainty is that seen in figure 2 on page 94, and reproduced here.



Copy of Figure 2. 'Word-communicating' inspiration (W) a subset of 'potentiating' inspiration (P).

Thirdly, it is clear from our discussion in this chapter, as summarised in the tables above, that the book of Ezekiel gives a greater prominence to the role of the divine רַחֵם within the inspiration of the prophet than any of the other Old Testament books, both before and after the exile. However, it is an exaggeration to say, as Montague does, that

with Ezekiel, there is ‘an entirely new “wind”...blowing.’²¹⁸ The perspective that the book gives on inspiration, while having a different degree of *emphasis* on the work of רִיחַ within prophecy, does not, however, provide anything different in *kind* from what precedes the book of Ezekiel. While there is evidence of ‘word-communicating’ inspiration – that of the spirit inspiring the prophet’s words (11:24 (Ezekiel’s visions), 13:3, and Ezekiel’s sign-acts), such a perspective was present before the exile (2 Sam. 23:2; 1 Kgs. 22; Isa. 30:1). In the same way, while ‘potentiating’ inspiration by רִיחַ is clearly apparent in Ezekiel (רִיחַ falling on him (11:5a), entering him (2:2; 3:24), and transporting him (3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5)), such inspiration can be seen not just in the pre-classical prophets, but also, though in a muted fashion, within the classical prophets (Hos. 9:7; Mic. 3:8; possibly in Jer. 5:13). The view that Ezekiel revives רִיחַ-inspiration fails to recognise the relative infrequency of references to the divine רִיחַ in inspiration throughout the Old Testament, including the pre-classical times. Even in pre-classical times, prophetic activity could take place with no mention of the divine רִיחַ. It also fails to account for the presence of some (albeit a few) references within classical prophecy to the inspiration of the prophet by רִיחַ. Finally, it does not acknowledge that Ezekiel himself says nothing new or different with regard to inspiration.

Fourthly, the relative silence of the classical prophets concerning their own inspiration by רִיחַ should be understood *rhetorically*.²¹⁹ We have seen that there is no text where they repudiated רִיחַ, so the *antithetical* view is clearly wrong. We have also seen that there are some instances where they do claim רִיחַ-inspiration, so the *historical* view, where רִיחַ stopped operating, is also wrong. Finally, we have also seen that a *theological* interpretation that appeals to the prophets’ theocentricity for the silence fails to account for the prominence of רִיחַ in the radically theocentric Ezekiel. This *rhetorically*-motivated silence came from the claims to רִיחַ among false prophets. Appeals to רִיחַ would not have foreclosed questions of authenticity and would have potentially risked association with the false prophets and their claims.

This then brings to the fore the third question that I raised at the start of Part II, concerning the prominence of רִיחַ and the view that it is best explained in terms of the authentication of Ezekiel. It is to this that we now turn.

E. THE AUTHENTICATION OF EZEKIEL?

We have seen that the book of Ezekiel does not portray something fundamentally new or different about inspiration, so it is not possible to explain the book’s emphasis by saying that the book’s author was doing something new in this area. The theological perspective before the book of Ezekiel does not give in essence a very different picture,

²¹⁸ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p45.

²¹⁹ See pp89ff. for the four different possible kinds of interpretation of the absence of רִיחַ.

nor, indeed, does what follows. In the post-exilic writings there can still be found both 'word-communicating' and 'potentiating' inspiration. Such a view is not merely retrospective. If Zechariah and Nehemiah seem to look on spirit-inspiration as something that is past, Chronicles looks on it as something that is present, by prefacing exhortations to the people with ancient רוּחַ -possession formulae, reapplied to the (non-prophetic) speakers of these exhortations.

The explanation most commonly suggested for the prominence of רוּחַ -language concerning Ezekiel's inspiration is that it serves to authenticate the prophet, aligning him with the pre-classical prophets. We need to distinguish between two versions of this explanation. The first version is not simply that the *book* authenticates the prophet by means of רוּחַ -language, but that the *prophet* himself did so.²²⁰

There are a number of arguments that can be, or have been, put forward in its favour.

First, there are many links with pre-classical prophecy within the book of Ezekiel, such as Ezekiel setting his face towards the subject of his prophecy,²²¹ translocation by רוּחַ ,²²² the action of the hand of Yahweh,²²³ and a prophet being consulted by the elders.²²⁴ These are 'all found in the autobiographical narrative.'²²⁵

Secondly, the fact that there is some adaptation in Ezekiel's usage points against their merely being 'literary conventions or devices'. An example of adaptation is that in the book of Kings, the hand of Yahweh transports Elijah (1 Kgs. 18:46); in Ezekiel, it is רוּחַ that transports him. The hand of Yahweh is associated particularly with the reception of Ezekiel's visions.²²⁶

Thirdly, it is sociologically plausible. Porter proposes that one way a society recognises a 'divinely possessed person' is to look at the characteristics of a person recognised as such in the past, and to compare those with the person in the present. It would be expected that a person claiming to be in a particular tradition will adopt something of the stereotypical behaviour expected.²²⁷

Fourthly, the fact that, as I have argued, the classical prophets were not *antithetical* towards רוּחַ -inspiration makes it more plausible.

²²⁰ See especially Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp69-73; also Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us", p14.

²²¹ Cf. Balaam in Num. 22-24 and Elisha (2 Kgs. 8:11).

²²² Cf. 2 Kgs. 2:16.

²²³ Cf. 1 Kgs. 18:46; 2 Kgs. 3:15.

²²⁴ Cf. 2 Kgs. 6:32, paralleled by the scenes in Ezek. 8:1ff.; 14:1ff. and 20:1ff. Other examples include the word-event formula (see p29 above) and the prophetic proof-saying, 'you shall know that I am Yahweh' (cf. 1 Kgs. 20:13, 28) (see Walther Zimmerli, *I am Yahweh*, tr. D.W. Stott, ed. W. Brueggemann (Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1982), esp. pp99-110).

²²⁵ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p70.

²²⁶ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p70.

²²⁷ See J.R. Porter, 'The Origins of Prophecy in Israel', in *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd*, eds. Richard Coggins, Anthony Phillips and Michael Knibb, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp12-31, especially p24.

Finally, the action of רִיחַ can serve to authenticate people (cf. 1 Sam. 10; Num. 11). It is also true, more significantly, that רִיחַ within the authentication of prophetic ministry is found in Isa. 42:1-4 and 61:1-3.²²⁸

However, although in a sense I have made it harder to argue against such a view by supporting a continuum in רִיחַ-inspiration from the pre-classical prophets through to Ezekiel, there is a critical difficulty with such an explanation. In view of the relative silence on prophetic inspiration and its links with רִיחַ in the classical prophets, it is hard to see why appeals to the divine רִיחַ, in particular, should be seen to authenticate Ezekiel's ministry, when such appeals had not been used for at least one hundred years before Ezekiel prophesied by the prophets to whom Ezekiel was in other respects closest, precisely for rhetorical reasons: because they did *not* serve to distinguish the true prophet from the false one, and did *not* authenticate a prophet. This is not to say that Ezekiel did not speak of רִיחַ in his own ministry, but it is to question whether he did so merely or chiefly to authenticate his own ministry.

The second version of the 'authentication' explanation of Ezekiel's רִיחַ-inspiration relates it more explicitly to the *book* of Ezekiel. Collins remarks that 'the image of Ezekiel...has a certain contrived artificiality about it...Ezekiel is robed in the mantle of Elijah and Elisha, and this seems to be done expressly in order to make the point that "a prophet has been among them" (Ezek. 33.33).'²²⁹

This version is supported by many of the arguments noted above, and, in addition, is further supported by the fact that, once Jerusalem had in fact fallen, there was *prima facie* evidence that Ezekiel was indeed, after all, a prophet.²³⁰ Appeals to רִיחַ for authentication found elsewhere (e.g. Isa. 42:1-5; 61:1-3) make sense only because Ezekiel has served to reinstate talk of רִיחַ within inspiration *having already been* demonstrated to be a true prophet by the fall of Jerusalem. In that sense, it is surely right to see, in the רִיחַ-inspiration of Ezekiel in the book, a dimension of authentication of the prophet.

This, however, should not be thought to be an exhaustive explanation. First, the book argues that the people will recognise Ezekiel as a prophet not so much through external credentials, but through the chief criterion of discerning a true prophet (Deut. 18:21-22): the unfolding of history according to Ezekiel's words (2:5; 12:21-28). While there is some sarcasm or 'pretended religion' on the part of the exiles in urging one

²²⁸ For a detailed discussion of these passages and the place of רִיחַ, see Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, pp88-96 and 120-25. He notes the prophetic dimension to the figure at the centre of both passages, while also rightly acknowledging that the figure does not *only* fit there.

²²⁹ Collins, *Mantle of Elijah*, pp100-101; in similar vein, Wilson suggests that Ezekiel was a peripheral figure in the exilic community, and that, in addition to a number of other ways of trying to establish his authority, 'the role of the spirit in the book may also reflect attempts to enhance Ezekiel's authority.' Wilson, *Prophecy and Society*, p285.

²³⁰ Cf. Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, 'The Book of Ezekiel: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections', in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 6, eds. Leander E. Keck et al., (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2001), pp1087-88.

another to ‘come and hear what the word is that comes from Yahweh’ (33:30), it is hard to avoid the picture that the evidence already lay before them that Ezekiel was, in fact, a prophet. After news of the fall of Jerusalem had come, what the exiles (and the addressees of the book) needed was not further authentication (though that, in turn, would happen ‘when it comes’ ((וּבְבֹאֶהָ) 33:33),²³¹ but rather for *themselves* to *act* upon what Yahweh was saying through his servant, and treat a prophet as a prophet, rather than as an entertainer (cf. 33:30-33). The book of Ezekiel presents to its addressees the exiles’ failure to do that.

Secondly, *any* claim to Yahweh’s involvement within a prophet’s call, or within the prophetic or rhetorical events can be seen at one level as a means of giving authority to the prophet when there is no objective proof that they are indeed Yahweh’s agent. However these claims of involvement are hardly *merely* means of authentication within a prophetic book. For example, the word-event formula could simply be a claim to authenticity: ‘Yahweh has spoken to me.’ However, within the book it also functions to structure the book, to portray the prophet not simply as a speaker but as a hearer of Yahweh’s words, and to confront the readers / hearers of the book with the same words that confronted the prophet’s addressees.

Thirdly, the use of רִיחַ within the prophet’s own ministry should not be isolated from other occurrences of רִיחַ. Some of the occurrences, such as those in 2:2 and 3:24 where רִיחַ enters the prophet, have no parallel with the pre-classical prophets, but function within the book as whole. Even occurrences speaking of the transportation of the prophet acquire a significance when placed in the book of Ezekiel.

In other words, although the language of רִיחַ-inspiration of Ezekiel does have an authenticating function within the book of Ezekiel, there is more to it than that. As these three points intimate, and as Part III shall seek to demonstrate, the book of Ezekiel is less concerned with authenticating the prophet than with the transformation of its readers. It is with this in mind that we must turn now to an examination of a second area in which Yahweh’s רִיחַ is related to Yahweh’s word – transformation.

²³¹ For the prophet, such words were reassuring. For his addressees, and for the addressees of the book, there is an implicit threat, allied to a promise if they treat his words as they ought to be treated. Cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p154; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p692; Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p267.

PART III: WORD, SPIRIT AND TRANSFORMATION

‘the prophets...were totally dedicated to the words of the covenant because they were “men of the spirit”.’¹

CHAPTER 5: RESPONDING TO YAHWEH’S WORD – DISOBEDIENCE AND OBEDIENCE

The book of Ezekiel is one that has been carefully crafted and structured. A preliminary study reveals a macrostructure consisting of oracles of judgement in chs. 1-32 (oracles against Judah in chs. 1-24, oracles against the nations in chs. 25-32), and promises of a new future in chs. 34-48, with the news of Jerusalem’s fall in ch. 33 as ‘the turning-point.’² Within this schema, the notion of ‘reversal’ – that the judgements announced or experienced in the first part of the book are reversed in the third part – has been observed by scholars.³ Three examples illustrate this. First, in connection with leadership, Duguid has argued cogently that ‘there is a coherent and connected attitude taken toward...leadership groups throughout the book: those singled out for the most reproach in Ezekiel’s critique of the past are marginalized in his plan for the future, while those who escape blame are assigned positions of honour.’⁴ Secondly, moving from theme to motif, there is the motif of Yahweh’s glory. In judgement, Yahweh’s glory leaves the temple, the journey of its departure portrayed in Ezekiel’s vision of the abominations in the temple (9:3; 10:4, 18, 19; 11:22-23; cf. chs. 1-3). In the vision of restoration, Yahweh’s glory returns to the new temple via the east gate by which it had left (43:2-4). Thirdly, moving from motif to word, there is Yahweh’s attitude to being consulted. When elders come to Ezekiel in exile, before news of the fall has come, Yahweh instructs the prophet to declare that he will not be consulted (דרש) by them (20:3, 31; cf. 14:3). However, in the future, Yahweh will ‘let the house of Israel ask’ (דרש) him ‘to do this for them: to increase their population like a flock’ (36:37). Hals

¹ Montague, *Holy Spirit*, p60.

² Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p102; so too Rolf Rendtorff, ‘Ezekiel 20 and 36:16ff. in the Framework of the Composition of the Book’, in *idem*, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology*, tr. & ed. M. Kohl, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1993), p191; Collins, *Mantle of Elijah*, p89; cf. Ernst R. Wendland, “‘Can These Bones Live Again?’: A Rhetoric of the Gospel in Ezekiel 33-37, Part I’, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39 (2001), p91.

³ E.g. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp14-15; *idem*, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p271; Lawrence Boadt, ‘The Function of the Salvation Oracles in Ezekiel 33 to 37’, *HAR* 12 (1990), p13; Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p119; Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp115, 162-63 n40; Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p220; Ernst R. Wendland, “‘Can These Bones Live Again?’: A Rhetoric of the Gospel in Ezekiel 33-37, Part II’, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39 (2001), p263. For ‘reversal’ in another prophetic book, Isaiah, see K.T. Aitken, ‘Hearing and Seeing: Metamorphoses of a Motif in Isaiah 1-39’, in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, eds. P.R. Davies and D.J.A. Clines, JSOTSup 144, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993), pp12-41.

⁴ Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p1.

puts it succinctly when he says that ‘the major technique employed to formulate messages of hope in Ezekiel is to express them as the undoing of past evil situations.’⁵

The notion of ‘reversal’ is not restricted, however, to the *nature* of Yahweh’s judgement and restoration. It is also evident in the house of Israel’s *response* to Yahweh’s word: disobedience and rejection will give way to obedience and trust. The house of Israel will be transformed. Part III shall consider this transformation, and the role of רִנָּה within it. As with the previous two Parts, there are two chapters.

This chapter will explore the disobedience to Yahweh’s word exhibited by the house of Israel in situations ‘2’ and ‘3’ in Table 8 below,⁶ and how the book portrays the move from disobedience to obedience in both these situations. I shall argue that these two encounters with Yahweh’s word are re-presented to the addressees of the book of Ezekiel to illustrate the move that they need to make / be part of, if they are to participate in the envisaged restoration.⁷ In particular, I shall argue that the book of Ezekiel presents the prophet as a paradigm, or model, of the obedience they should exhibit.

Table 8. The word of Yahweh in the book of Ezekiel

1	Yahweh	→	Ezekiel	Prophetic Event
2	Ezekiel	→	His intended audience (the house of Israel in exile)	Rhetorical Event
3	Yahweh	→	The house of Israel	Yahweh’s ordinances and statutes
4	The book of Ezekiel	→	Exilic addressees	2 and 3 re-presented, within the literary framework of 1.

In chapter 6, I shall explore the role of רִנָּה in the obedience of Ezekiel and of the exiles. I shall argue that, within Ezekiel’s paradigmatic role, Yahweh’s רִנָּה is essential for his and for the exiles’ obedience. Yahweh’s רִנָּה is intimately related, then, to his word, in so far as that רִנָּה is essential for the right response to Yahweh’s word. Yahweh’s רִנָּה is intimately linked with transformation.

A. THE EXILES’ DISOBEDIENCE

1. The exiles’ disobedience to Yahweh’s word through Ezekiel

As we look first at the disobedience of Ezekiel’s intended audience to Yahweh’s word uttered through him, it is at once apparent that analysis is made more complex by the variety of rhetorical situations in the book. There are three different ‘levels,’ which can be illustrated best by reordering Table 8, so that we move ‘into’ the book from the book as a whole.

⁵ Hals, *Ezekiel*, p288.

⁶ The table summarises the discussion in chapter 2, which identified and examined four kinds of ‘word’ of Yahweh that can be found in the book.

⁷ Note that I am *not* saying here that they initiate, or are responsible for, such a move. Questions of initiative and responsibility shall be explored below.

Table 9. The word of Yahweh in the book of Ezekiel, moving 'in' from the book.

1	The book of Ezekiel	→	Exilic addressees	2 and 4 re-presented, within the literary framework of 3.
2	Ezekiel	→	His intended audience (the house of Israel in exile)	Rhetorical Event
3	Yahweh	→	Ezekiel	Prophetic Event
4	Yahweh	→	The house of Israel	Yahweh's ordinances and statutes

At the 'top' level, level 1 in Table 9, there is the author of the book and his own addressees. At no point in the book does the author step outside recounting his narrative to confront his own addressees directly. His addressees need to infer what they are to do from within the narrative itself.

At the second level is the prophet and his intended audience. Almost never in the book of Ezekiel is the prophet recorded as confronting directly the exilic addressees, his intended audience (the only instance is 24:20ff.).

At the third level is Yahweh instructing and commanding the prophet. In analysing the response that Yahweh called for, the response that the beginning of the book anticipates, and the response that the rest of the book portrays, it is almost exclusively the word of Yahweh addressed to the prophet (i.e. this 'third' level of interaction) that must be examined, since everything is subsumed within this prophetic event. In other words, the book comprises many indirect speech acts, whose illocutionary force needs to be discerned.⁸

a) Discerning the response called for

If the disobedience of the exiles is to be demonstrated, what must be identified first is the book's portrayal of the response that the prophet demanded. There are three different ways in which the book illustrates this. Central here to my interpretation is the distinction between the *locutionary* act (what the prophet or author said) and the *illocutionary* act (what the prophet or author was *doing* in saying that). To put it more succinctly, the *form* of words is not necessarily a guide to the *force* of those words.⁹

(i) *Oblique calls*

First, there are what can be termed *oblique calls*. These require the exiles to see how Yahweh has acted (or will act) towards a third party, to understand the reasons why Yahweh has acted (or will act) this way, and to see themselves as potentially (or really) in the same situation.

For example, in chapter 16, the prophet is instructed to make known to the city of Jerusalem her abominations (v.2). The prophet is then to recount the history of

⁸ See especially pp65ff. above.

⁹ For recent treatments that focus on different dimensions of repentance, see Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp67-77, and Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, pp202-13. Lapsley examines the subject with a view to discerning the underlying anthropological assumptions implicit in such language. For her, such language 'indicates that the predominant view of the virtuous moral self informs this prophet's view of human nature as well' (p68). Mein discusses the *function* of calls to repentance and the *value* of repentance in the light of apparently unconditional promises of salvation. See further below.

Jerusalem, with the depths to which she had plunged apparent in v.48, where her behaviour is portrayed as worse even than Sodom. Though the addressee (formally) is Jerusalem, these oracles have the exiles as their intended audience. Nonetheless, the exiles are not in view on the surface of the oracle. They need to see themselves in the history of Jerusalem (indeed, they were, of course, part of that history; they too were ‘the house of Israel’, a phrase that ‘intentionally expresses the nation’s family solidarity’¹⁰), and distance themselves from what Jerusalem had done. The oracle was not only ‘a vehement ploy to communicate the necessity of the fall of Jerusalem, dragging Judah down with it’¹¹; it also served to illustrate the kind of behaviour that Yahweh found unacceptable. By implication, continued acceptance of such behaviour admitted the meriting of the same judgement that Jerusalem was facing.

The oracle against Tyre in chapter 27 is another example of this. Tyre ‘symbolized supreme self-confidence and permanence,’¹² saying ‘I am perfect in beauty’ (27:4); she was in the heart of the seas, laden with wares (27:4; 25). But in her pride, Tyre would end up in the ‘heart (depths) of the seas’ (27:26, 27). As Miller comments, ‘the means of her pride becomes the means of her destruction.’¹³ The destruction of Tyre mirrored that of another city, Jerusalem, whom Yahweh had set in the ‘centre of the nations’ (5:5) and who saw herself as ‘perfect in beauty’ (Lam. 2:15). The oracle against Tyre shows that Yahweh is against self-sufficiency, expressed in self-righteousness, wherever it may be found. The exiles had no grounds for pride, but they too needed to take heed of this call (cf. 18:2). A continued attitude of pride risked the same judgement that struck both Tyre and Jerusalem.

That such declarations by Yahweh of his judgement against a third party can function didactically, as a call for a particular kind of behaviour, is clear from ch. 14. In vv.7-8a, Yahweh’s announcement of judgement towards a third party – those who are marked by idolatry and iniquity and yet come to inquire of a prophet – occurs alongside the declaration that this party will be a ‘sign and a byword’ (לְאֹת וְלִמְשָׁלִים). Further, it also occurs alongside an *explicit* call to repentance (v.6).

(ii) *Indirect calls*

Secondly, within oracles addressed to others, there are occasions when the desired response is spelled out specifically, but in the third person. The prophet is not told to confront the exiles directly with these; nonetheless, the response demanded by the prophet is clear. We might term these *indirect calls*. So in 6:8-10, in the context of an oracle that Ezekiel is to utter to the mountains of Israel, Yahweh instructs the prophet to tell the mountains that he will spare some, who will ‘remember me among the nations where they are carried captive...then they will be loathsome in their own sight for the

¹⁰ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p32.

¹¹ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p247.

¹² Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, Interpretation, (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1990), p121.

¹³ Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets*, SBLMS 27, (Chico, Scholars Press, 1982), p72.

evils that they have committed, for all their abominations.’ The oracle serves to make the exiles aware that the response they should have in exile is one of self-loathing.¹⁴

A call that is more explicit still, though not to be addressed by the prophet to the exiles, can be found in 43:9-10 (cf. also 44:6). As Ezekiel is being shown the new temple, he hears someone speaking to him from the temple (43:6). The voice is Yahweh’s, since it speaks of ‘my throne’ (v.7). The call is clear: though there is a promised future (vv.7-8), there is something for the exiles to do in the present, ‘Now let them put away their idolatry and the corpses of their kings far from me’ (v.9). In v.10, there is a second communication, where the prophet is told to describe the temple to the house of Israel. In the same breath as Ezekiel is to say to them, ‘let them measure the pattern’, he is also to utter, ‘let them be ashamed of their iniquities.’ Allen comments appropriately, ‘If such wrong practices had resulted in exile..., a prerequisite for return from exile was a change of heart that took seriously their shamefulness. Proclamation of Yahweh’s new work of salvation was to stimulate a realization of how far the people stood from God and from his will’.¹⁵

(iii) *Explicit calls*

The third way in which the call to the exiles can be seen is the presence of direct commands to the exiles which Ezekiel is instructed to utter. There are six such instances of what we might term *explicit calls*.

In chapter 14, in response to the elders coming to consult Ezekiel, he is to reply by addressing the exiles directly with a call to repentance: ‘Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations’ (v.6).

In chapter 18, Ezekiel receives a word from Yahweh explaining how the destruction that is falling on Jerusalem is their own fault. The question of individual responsibility is not in view here; rather, the question is ‘Why is this inevitably communal, national crisis happening?’¹⁶ At the end of the chapter, picking up promises made to the exiles in 11:14-21, there is an explicit call to repentance,

‘Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord Yahweh. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have

¹⁴ The phrase אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי in v.9 is awkward. Lapsley (*Can These Bones Live?*, p140; cf. p129 n48) emends to שִׁבְרֵתִי (presumably וְנִשְׁבַּרְתִּי, since she refers to BHS) and treats the phrase temporally: ‘they will remember me...when I have broken their whoring heart.’ So also, tentatively, Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p180; he notes LXX ‘does not presuppose אֲשֶׁר’. Textual evidence in favour of אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּרְתִּי includes Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Tg. and Vg.; this then makes the exiles’ self-loathing consequent on Yahweh’s action. However, Greenberg (*Ezekiel 1-20*, p134), Block (*Ezekiel 1-24*, p230 n62) and Allen (*Ezekiel 1-19*, pp82-83) prefer the MT, and translate similarly, with variations on ‘how stricken I was by...’. LXX (ὁμώμοκα) suggests a Vorlage with a word beginning with נ (נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי). The main objection against Lapsley’s reading, as Allen points out, is the notion of Yahweh breaking not just ‘their heart’ but also ‘their eyes’. I prefer to see here an expectation of what those carried off *ought* to do, without specifying whether it has required Yahweh’s prior action.

¹⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p257; cf. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, pp121-22.

¹⁶ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p46.

committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek. 18:30-31).¹⁷

The third instance can be found in ch. 20:30, 39. After recounting in revisionist fashion the history of Israel in such a way as to focus at great length on the exodus, a situation parallel to those in exile, Ezekiel is to confront them. In v.30, he is to ask them whether they will go the same way as their ancestors after 'detestable things', and then in v.39, he is to assail them with bitter irony, 'Go serve your idols...if you will not listen to me.'

The fourth instance occurs in 33:11. Ezekiel, as the watchman (33:1-9), is to respond to the exiles' despairing cry ('Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' (33:10)) with an assurance of Yahweh's desire that none should perish, and a call to those in exile, 'Turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?'

Fifthly, in 36:32, after spelling out Yahweh's plan to restore and cleanse them and the land for the sake of his name (vv.24-31a), Ezekiel is to call on them, 'Be ashamed and dismayed for your ways, O house of Israel.'¹⁸

The sixth and final instance of an explicit call within the book is in 45:9, where, in an 'abrupt change from statistical legislation to accusation and appeal',¹⁹ Yahweh confronts the princes of Israel, and says to them, 'Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people.' Although the call is directed towards princes (נְשִׂיִי יִשְׂרָאֵל) in the restored community, it has a contemporary edge, given past failures (cf. 22:6).

(iv) Summary

The picture generated from these three kinds of call is a clear one. The exilic community, according to the book's portrayal of Ezekiel's preaching, is to be marked by self-loathing for the past, and repentance in the present from all that was causing / had caused Yahweh's judgement to fall on Jerusalem. They were to see themselves as no different. Only then could there be a hope for the future. In short, they were to accept Ezekiel's verdict, and look to his words for any hope.

Our concern, then, is with the *book's* portrayal of Ezekiel's message, in particular as it is re-presented to its exilic addressees. Thus it differs from the approach taken by

¹⁷ Mein examines the calls to repentance in chs. 14 and 18 carefully, and argues persuasively that the narrowing of the focus of ethical demands to a more domestic and individual sphere reflects an exilic context. The strongest evidence comes from a comparison of the sin lists in ch. 18 and 22:6-13. See Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, pp198ff. His approach is different from mine in two respects. First, he focuses on Ezekiel's message through historical rather than literary lenses. Secondly, and related to this, he identifies calls to respond on the basis of form alone.

¹⁸ Lapsley (*Can These Bones Live?*, p143) regards this call as wholly future, after the restoration, because 'the pre-deliverance people are apparently unable to feel shame'. However the call for the exiles to do something that Yahweh will do for them is also found in 18:31 (cf. 36:26). Greenberg, like Lapsley, points out that 'restoration precedes contrition', but regards the call as a reflection of the fact that 'the prophet cannot stifle his vocation to censure.' Moshe Greenberg, 'Salvation of the Impenitent *ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*: Ezek 36:16-32', in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, eds. Jan Assmann and Guy G. Stroumsa, Studies in the History of Religions 83, (Leiden, Brill, 1999), p267.

¹⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p655.

Raitt, who focuses on Ezekiel's message itself. Concentrating on the judgement and salvation oracles from a form-critical perspective, Raitt discerns, as 'one of the most basic hypotheses' in his book, a development in the preaching of Ezekiel (and of Jeremiah) from the preaching of repentance to inevitable annihilation to unconditional salvation. He argues that, because the salvation oracles lack qualifications and preconditions, the exiles' salvation did not depend on people's repentance, nor did it assume their moral capacity had improved. For him, their salvation was 'unconditional'.²⁰ Though it is possible to critique Raitt's developmental hypothesis on its own terms,²¹ our concern with the book as a whole, rather than with the prophet's message, brings a different perspective. Renz rightly comments that 'the call to repentance is addressed to the exiles and never revoked in the book.'²² Certainly the *book* does not hint that the call to repentance is something in the past.

b) The response anticipated, as set out at the beginning of the book

If that was the response that Ezekiel called for, it is important to look at what response to the word of Yahweh the opening of the book anticipates, since this will set the trajectory of expectation for the book's addressees.

The commissioning scene makes it very clear that there was an expectation from the outset of the prophet's ministry that the people to whom he was going to preach would not listen. There are a number of ways in which this is emphasised.

First, there is the repetition of the phrase, 'whether they hear or refuse to hear' (2:5, 7; 3:11, 27). Although the stress here is on the task of Ezekiel delivering his message, whatever the response, there is a sense of foreboding that the latter, rather than the former, will be the case.

Secondly, there is the repeated emphasis on the prophet's addressees as a 'rebellious house' (2:5, 6, 7, 8; 3:9, 26, 27). Here again, the recurring phrase anticipates an unwillingness to listen to the prophet, an unwillingness that has marked Israel's history from the beginning, and still does so.²³

²⁰ Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment / Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1977), p108 (his emphasis); cf. also Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, pp691-92.

²¹ For example, oracles of judgement do not necessarily preclude the possibility of repentance. See Walter Houston, 'What Did the Prophets Think They Were Doing? Speech Acts and Prophetic Discourse in the Old Testament', *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993), pp167-88; Möller, 'Words of (In-)evitable Certitude?', pp352-86; *idem*, *A Prophet in Debate: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the Book of Amos*, JSOTSup 372, (London, Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), pp141ff. Scholarly debate on the intention of such oracles, particularly in the pre-exilic prophets, tends to polarise between those who regard them as chiefly concerned with bringing about repentance, and those who regard them as an attempt to persuade hearers to accept the inevitable acts of divine judgement. For a bibliography of exponents of both views, see Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, pp141-42.

²² Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp112-13; cf. Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p224: 'The call for decision in chap. 18 is not nullified by other assertions of divine enablement.'

²³ So Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp132-33.

Thirdly, there are other references to the addressees which illustrate the anticipated rejection of the prophet and his message. They are described as ‘nations of rebels’²⁴ (v.3), as those ‘who have rebelled against me’ (v.3), as those who are like their ancestors in ‘transgressing against me to this very day’ (v.3), as ‘impudent and stubborn’ (v.4), as ones who will oppose Ezekiel, possibly causing him to be afraid (2:6; cf. 3:25), as less willing to listen even than those of ‘obscure speech and difficult language’ (3:6). In 3:7, the anticipated unresponsiveness to the word of the prophet is articulated most explicitly: ‘But the house of Israel will not listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart.’ This pessimistic tone is not negated by the assertion in 2:5 that ‘they shall know there has been a prophet among them’ (cf. 33:33). This is not something positive for them, since the hardness of their hearts is complete. The tone is ominous, rather than encouraging in both contexts. Finally, the absence of the wicked repenting in the watchman paragraph in 3:16-21 points towards a negative response to Ezekiel’s preaching.

The overall picture, then, is clear. The book portrays Ezekiel’s exilic audience as unwilling to listen to him, even at the outset of his ministry.

c) The actual response, as worked out through the book

We have seen how the response that is anticipated in the context of Ezekiel’s commissioning is one of rebelliousness and hard-heartedness. That anticipated response proves to be the actual one throughout the book’s account of the prophet’s ministry.²⁵

Before news of the fall had reached the exiles, their rebelliousness is evident. In 12:2, Yahweh articulates to the prophet that he ‘is living in the midst of a rebellious house’ (cf. v.3); the exiles ‘have eyes to see but do not see’ and ‘have ears to hear, but do not hear.’ Ezekiel has spoken, he has uttered the words Yahweh has instructed him to, but they are rebellious (12:25). They are sceptical of whether the prophet’s words will be fulfilled (12:22); they are cynical over the delay between the prophet’s words and their fulfilment (12:27). In 17:12, they are still spoken of as a ‘rebellious house’; in 18:2 and 18:25, they are blaming Yahweh, claiming that his actions are unfair, despite the portrait of Jerusalem as being utterly worthy of judgement. In 21:5 [ET 20:49], the same scepticism is evident again, when Ezekiel, in a rare address to Yahweh, confides with Yahweh how the exiles are responding. Instead of taking him seriously, the exiles speak of him as ‘a maker of allegories’ (מְמַשֵּׁל מְשָׁלִים). As Allen comments, ‘his protest is born of painful experience (“alas”) of contemptuous dismissal of his oracles among

²⁴ MT. Without the co-ordinating ׀, the phrase clearly is in apposition to, and thus refers to, ‘the sons of Israel.’ For a discussion of the authenticity of אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל and whether גוֹיִם or גוֹי should be read, see Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p115; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p10.

²⁵ Applegate has recently highlighted the importance of the recording of audience response within prophetic narratives. See John Applegate, ‘Narrative Patterns for the Communication of Commissioned Speech in the Prophets: A Three-Scene Model’, in *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts*, eds. G.J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli, BETL 149, (Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2000), pp69-88.

his contemporaries.’²⁶ In 24:3, just before the fall of Jerusalem, they are still rebellious. With great irony, Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to do just the thing for which they have ridiculed him, and ‘utter an allegory’ (וּמַשְׁלָל...מִשְׁפָּל). It is Yahweh himself, and not simply Ezekiel, who is the ‘maker of allegories’. Their quarrel is thus not so much with Ezekiel, but with Yahweh. For the addressees of the book, the scorn of 21:5 [ET 20:49] is exposed for the folly that it is.

As the first half of the book draws to a close, for the only time in the book a statement that the exiles make is recorded as part of the narrative (24:19). This statement is unusual in another respect, too, for is not criticised.²⁷ Perhaps at last, with the fall of Jerusalem about to happen, the exiles will get the message, and respond appropriately to the word of Yahweh? After the tension-building oracles against the nations in chs. 25-32, there is a further hint that Ezekiel’s words were in fact getting through. In 33:10, the exiles have clearly come to the prophet with an awareness of their failings, ‘Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?’ Perhaps the groaning and pining for their sins (24:23) that was to mark their behaviour on hearing the news of the fall could already be discerned?

However, when news of the fall of Jerusalem reaches the prophet in 33:21-22, the reality is very different. The exiles’ response to this new phase in the prophet’s ministry is illustrated in 33:30-33. Since the prophet has not uttered an oracle subsequent to news of the fall, these verses are not put here because of chronological sequence, but serve to illustrate the *continued* response of the exilic addressees of the prophet after news of the fall arrived, and to orient the addressees of the book to that response. Since Block disagrees and regards this unit as functioning retrospectively, creating an ‘effective *inclusio* with his call and commission (2:1-3:15)’,²⁸ we need to look more closely at these verses.

Though it is true that the notion of Ezekiel as a singer of ‘lust songs’ (עֲנָבִים) (33:32) is reminiscent of ch. 23,²⁹ rather than any of the oracles that follow, there are three reasons why it is not likely that 33:30-33 speaks retrospectively of pre-fall oracles such as ch. 23, but prospectively, of chs. 34-48. First, though the book portrays the elders coming to consult Ezekiel before news of the fall of Jerusalem has come (8:1; 14:1; 20:1), the book also makes it clear that Ezekiel’s pre-fall oracles were *not* popular (3:9, 25; 21:5 [ET 20:49]); while earlier in the book, it was not the people as a whole who came, here the situation is ‘much more open’.³⁰ Secondly, the eagerness of the

²⁶ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p25.

²⁷ For more on criticism of the people’s speaking, see Friebe, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts*, p188.

²⁸ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p265.

²⁹ The noun is used in 23:11; the cognate verb in 23:5, 7, 9, 12, 16, 20. Neither occurs elsewhere in Ezekiel (other than 33:30-33).

³⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p201.

people to listen points to the ‘soothing’ as well as ‘demanding’ nature of the message.³¹ Thirdly, the literary position links this report with what follows, coming as it does *after* news of the fall has reached those in exile (vv.21-22), and after the oracle in vv.23-29 which presupposes the destruction of Jerusalem and indeed some regrouping in Judah after the ‘initial shock’.³² If this oracle were speaking of a situation pre-587, it is hard to say why it is here, or what has changed. It is more likely that people flocked to Ezekiel because of his vindicated reputation, now that Jerusalem had fallen, and because of their own preoccupation (כִּי־עֲנָבִים בְּפִיהֶם (33:31)).

Further, that these verses serve to illustrate the *continued* response of the prophet’s exilic addressees is apparent from the fact that this lack of obedience (33:31) can be observed in the rest of the book. Such disobedience can be seen both in the presence of the continued call to ‘be ashamed’ (36:32) and in the unresponsiveness to Yahweh’s word that remains a trait of Ezekiel’s exilic audience. Even to the end of the book itself, the addressees are still ‘the rebellious house’ (44:6).

Thus, in the programmatic 33:30-33, the exiles have all the appearance of being interested in hearing what the prophet has to say. Not only do they apparently recognise it as ‘the word that comes from Yahweh’ (v.30), so ostensibly discerning that there has been a prophet among them (cf. 2:5), but their call to ‘Come and hear’ echoes Ezekiel’s own (cf. 6:3; 13:2; 16:35 etc.). They have all the appearance of Yahweh’s covenant people (‘my people’ (v.31)).³³ Appearances, though, can be deceptive. Yahweh tells Ezekiel that his popularity is superficial; for all the exiles’ enthusiastic words and actions in coming to hear Ezekiel’s words, they do not obey them; ‘the organs of obedience, their mouths and hearts, are otherwise occupied.’³⁴ The prophet is an entertainer to them, not one whose words, being the words of Yahweh, should be obeyed (v.32).

The picture, then, of the exiles’ response to the word of Yahweh throughout the book matches exactly the expectation and the anticipated response that was seen in Ezekiel’s commissioning. They remain a rebellious house, rejecting the ministry of the prophet as prophet who needs to be obeyed, even after the news of the fall of Jerusalem has reached them and Ezekiel’s earlier oracles have been proved right. The exilic audience of Ezekiel are portrayed as rebellious from first to last.

³¹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p691. It should be noted that Greenberg sees that the element of demand envisaged in ch. 33 points to it being ‘the last gasp of Ezekiel’s pre-fall theology’ (p692). As we have seen, the book of Ezekiel retains that element of demand right to the end.

³² So Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p151; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, pp200-202.

³³ So Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p686, who regards it as ‘ironical: acting as though they were devoted to me.’ Block (*Ezekiel 25-48*, p264 n125) sees its omission from LXX and Syr. as due to the awkwardness of its position as the delayed subject. Allen (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p150) emends the MT, thinking it is a ‘marginal gloss on עַם “people” earlier’; so too Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p369.

³⁴ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p690.

d) The destiny of those not responding

The book of Ezekiel not only portrays the anticipated response of Ezekiel's addressees and their response in reality, it also portrays the destiny of those who reject his message. Judgement is not simply something inevitable (for Jerusalem), re-presented to the book's addressees as a past event; it is also a future event.

In 3:16-21, those who reject the watchman's message will die, for they are wicked (cf. 33:1-20). In 13:22, Yahweh gives the reason for his announcement of judgement on 'the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own imagination' (13:17). Their guilt lies in part in that fact that they 'have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their wicked way and save their lives.' In 18:23, the same fate is envisaged for those who do not 'turn from their ways and live'. In that context, the judgement according to their ways, as envisaged in 18:30 (and in 33:20), holds out little hope for those who have not obeyed the word of Yahweh. In 20:33-38, Yahweh's response to the exiles, insofar as they continue in rebellion and idolatry, is spelled out. Yahweh will bring the exiles out in a new exodus, and will 'enter into judgement' (vv.35, 37) with them. There will be a sifting process, whereby some will not enter the land (v.38), for they will have failed to meet the covenant obligations. 'This announcement of a partial judgment was meant as a powerful warning to the exiles not to exclude themselves from restoration to the land'.³⁵ In 34:17-22, Yahweh will 'judge between sheep and sheep' as part of his purpose to save his flock (v.22). The destiny of those in exile who fail to respond to Yahweh's message is little different from the death that is envisaged for Jerusalem (e.g. 5:2-4). The choice is between life and death for the exiles, depending on the response they make to the words of the prophet. To continue in disobedience and rejection is to experience the 'death' that is already their state (18:23; 37:1-10).³⁶

e) Summary

We have seen, then, how the book portrays Ezekiel's calls, whether oblique, indirect or explicit, as calls to repentance. Only then could there be a future.³⁷ We have also seen how the book portrays his audience's response as one of disobedience, a response anticipated at the outset of the book, and proved to be just that in the rest of the book. Finally, we have seen how the book declares 'death' to be both their present state, and the end for those who do not repent in the face of Ezekiel's calls. Such a grim portrayal is not restricted to the exiles' response to Yahweh's word spoken through the prophet. It is also apparent in their disobedient response to Yahweh's ordinances and statutes.

³⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p14.

³⁶ For metaphorical 'death', see Lloyd R. Bailey Sr., *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, OBT 5, (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1979), pp39ff.; for death in Ezek. 37 as metaphor, see p71. See also Walther Zimmerli, "'Leben" und "Tod" im Buche des Propheten Ezechiel', *ThZ* 13 (1957), pp494-508.

³⁷ See below for other interpretations of the calls to repentance, and for how such calls relate to apparently unconditional promises of salvation.

2. The exiles' disobedience to Yahweh's ordinances and statutes

The juxtaposition of three facts points clearly to the exiles' disobedience to Yahweh's word as expressed in Yahweh's ordinances and statutes, and their destiny of death if such disobedience persists. First, there is the portrayal of such disobedience to Yahweh's ordinances and statutes as the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem. Secondly, there is the solidarity, or common guilt, between those in Jerusalem and those in exile. Thirdly, the prophetic calls to repentance point explicitly to the exiles' own disobedience.

a) The disobedience that precipitated Yahweh's judgement

As Klein notes, there are many words occurring in Ezekiel that spell out the problems that precipitated Yahweh's judgement: 'abominations' (תועבות) (41x), 'detestable things' (שקוצים) (8x), 'idols' (גלולים) (36x), and 'harlotries' (תזנותים) (19x).³⁸ These words described cultic and moral sins, though such a distinction should not be pressed too far, nor should Ezekiel be thought apolitical. All of life was lived before Yahweh; the clearly political agenda of Ezekiel (e.g. chs. 16, 17, 19, 23) is framed in moral or cultic terms.³⁹

Cultic sins included altars, incense, and idolatry on the mountains (6:1-9), summarised in the poignant phrase in 6:9, where Yahweh says that he was 'shattered' (נשברתי)⁴⁰ because of their 'prostituting heart' (לבם הזונה). Further, ch. 8 catalogues four abominations: having an altar outside the temple itself, thus violating Deuteronomy's law of centralisation; holding a secret rite in a dark room (8:7-13), which may be linked with cult of the dead or Osiris; women weeping for the Sumero-Babylonian vegetation deity Tammuz or Dumuzi (8:14-15); and 25 men worshipping the sun at the temple door. Chs. 16 and 23 portray the history of Israel as one loose woman (two in ch. 23), consorting, even cavorting with other nations and their gods. Other cultic sins included despising Yahweh's holy things and profaning his sabbaths (22:8) and child sacrifice (23:37, 39). Priests aided and abetted in this (22:26). Although the leaders are conspicuously excluded from involvement in cultic abuses, apart from 43:7-9, where the kings' condemnation is 'parenthetical',⁴¹ Zedekiah is condemned for breaking his ברית with Nebuchadnezzar (17:12-21).⁴² Because 'this oath was sworn before Yahweh', he had not only broken his agreement with the Babylonians, 'he had broken Yahweh's oath and covenant.'⁴³

³⁸ Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation*, OBT, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1979), p77; cf. also John F. Kutsko, 'Ezekiel's Anthropology and Its Ethical Implications', in *BETAP*, pp120-25.

³⁹ For more on Ezekiel's political agenda, see Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, chs. 3-4.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the MT reading, see n14 on p157 above.

⁴¹ So Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p42.

⁴² Cf. also 21:30-32 [ET 25-27], where a curse oracle against Zedekiah spells out his fate, more than his sins, but there is a hint of his sins in the address 'vile, wicked prince of Israel' (הקלל רשע נשיא ישראל).

⁴³ Koch, *The Prophets*, vol. 2, p95.

Moral sins included failure to help the poor and needy in a way far worse even than Sodom (16:47-50; cf. 18:7-9; 22:7, 29),⁴⁴ sexual immorality (18:6), bloodshed (7:23; 9:9; 16:38; 18:10; 22:2-3), greed and extortion (22:12). Instead of speaking out against this, the prophets have ‘smeared whitewash’ (22:28). Not one group is innocent. The kings are guilty of devouring the people (19:6-7⁴⁵; cf. 34:1-9⁴⁶; 45:8-9) and of bloodshed (22:6, 25⁴⁷)⁴⁸. The עֲמֵם הָאֲרָץ are guilty, too, of extortion, robbery, oppression and bloodshed (22:12, 29), and none would ‘stand in the breach’ to oppose it (22:29-30). Ezekiel was not simply concerned with private morals, but with social justice.

In short, they had not ‘walked’ (הלך) in Yahweh’s ‘statutes’ (חֻקִּים / חֻקוֹת) and had not ‘done’ (עשה) or ‘kept’ (שמר) his ‘just ordinances’ (מִשְׁפָּטִים). Indeed, they had ‘rebelled’ (נאס) against them, and thus had broken the covenant.⁴⁹ By observing these, they would have lived (18:17, 19, 21; 20:11). The ultimate indictment against Jerusalem is expressed in chapter 5. In rebelling against Yahweh’s ‘statutes and ordinances,’ Jerusalem had become ‘more wicked than the nations and countries all around her’ (5:5-6). The outcome of such a rejection of Yahweh’s statutes and ordinances, indeed the direct result, was Yahweh’s judgement, as seen in the destruction of Jerusalem.⁵⁰

b) The solidarity of the exiles with those in Jerusalem

This judgement on those in Jerusalem could have led the exiles to a sense of moral superiority. However, throughout the book, there is no hint that the exiles are somehow a righteous remnant, preserved by Yahweh. Instead, their guilty solidarity with those in Jerusalem is portrayed starkly.

First, they too share in the guilt of their ancestors. We saw above how the phrase ‘the house of Israel’ expresses that solidarity. Such solidarity between those in exile and previous generations is particularly evident in ch. 20. The chapter charts the failures not of Israel as one woman (ch. 16) or two (ch. 23), but of Israel, generation by generation,

⁴⁴ Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, p79; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p509.

⁴⁵ Such language of ‘devouring’ is not just normal behaviour within metaphor (pace Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p395, who comments, ‘the destruction of cities and lands should not be interpreted historically and concretely of Jehoiachin’s actions, but simply serve to elaborate pictorially his awesome royal majesty’), given the parallel in Ezek 22:25; rather, the phrasing exploits ambiguity in the metaphor here. See Hals, *Ezekiel*, p129, Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, pp35-36.

⁴⁶ That this passage refers to kings, rather than to leaders in general, is likely both from the fact that other leaders are condemned in 34:17-21, and that the remedy for these wicked shepherds is one shepherd, Yahweh. See Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, pp39-40, 121-22.

⁴⁷ Reading אשר נשיאיה with LXX, rather than MT’s קשר נביאיה (‘the band of the prophets’), for the prophets are indicted in v.28. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p465.

⁴⁸ Though Ezekiel can use נשיאים of leaders in general (7:27; 32:29), it is likely that kings (Zedekiah and his predecessors) are in view here because of parallels with 19:1, 6-7. See Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p38.

⁴⁹ Cf. Lev. 26:3, where these same words occur (though מִצְוֹתַי, not מִשְׁפָּטַי) as the prelude to covenant blessings, and Lev. 26:14-15, where they occur as the prelude to covenant curses.

⁵⁰ The organic link between behaviour and judgement can be seen in 5:7-8, 11; 15:8; 16:43; 20:16, 24; 22:19; 23:30, 35; 34:21. This judgement is not simply mechanical, though, as Koch suggested. See Wong, *Idea of Retribution*.

from the earliest days in Egypt (20:7) right up to the present generation in exile in Babylon (20:30-31). Throughout, Israel's history has been one of constant failure in every generation. Those in the wilderness rejected Yahweh's 'ordinances and statutes' (20:13, 16). Their children were instructed to 'walk' in the 'statutes' and 'keep' and 'do' the ordinances (20:19), but they too rebelled against them (20:21). Such a failure has dogged them not merely to the events of 597BC, but beyond – the exiles, too, are guilty.⁵¹

Secondly, there is the clear denial of righteousness to those who escaped from the destruction of Jerusalem. Though they themselves were not the intended audience of Ezekiel's oracles delivered before that destruction, the book allows them no scope for maintaining their innocence. Their survival and arrival in exile would serve not as a contradiction of the prophet's assertions that all would be destroyed,⁵² but as a proof to those already in exile that Yahweh had been just in obliterating Jerusalem (14:22-23; cf. 11:16).⁵³

Thirdly, in oracles of restoration, the restored house of Israel are to be marked by shame and self-loathing, clear pointers to their own guilt (16:59-63; 20:42-43; 36:31).⁵⁴

In other words, everyone in exile, whether those who arrived in the deportation of 597BC, or after the fall of Jerusalem in 587BC, is as guilty as those who perished in Jerusalem.

c) **Explicit disobedience of the exiles**

We saw above (pp155ff.) how the exiles are portrayed as rebellious with regard to Yahweh's words spoken through Ezekiel. The very existence of calls to repentance by the prophet reveals clearly the book's portrayal of the disobedience of the exiles to Yahweh's statutes and ordinances. Such disobedience entailed injustice, self-sufficiency expressed in self-righteousness, transgressions and, in particular, idolatry. Thus in 14:6, the exiles are to turn away from their idols, and to turn their faces away from all their abominations, and in ch. 20, the idolatry mentioned is explicitly not that of their ancestors, but the exiles' own, for it is emphasised by the dramatic 'to this day' (עַד-הַיּוֹם) (v.31).⁵⁵

⁵¹ Compare 20:23-26 with 30-31 and 23:37; cf. 2:3-4. Note also the language of eating upon the mountains (18:6, 11, 15; 22:9); the solidarity is not to deny that there are some changes made in the scale of sin because of the move to exile, but 'there is still a great deal of common ground between the two.' See Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, pp191-94, 198 (quotation).

⁵² John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, NCBC, (London, Nelson, 1969), p114.

⁵³ Cf. Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp74-75; Ralph W. Klein, *Ezekiel: The Prophet and His Message*, (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p103.

⁵⁴ Cf. Margaret S. Odell, 'The Inversion of Shame and Forgiveness in Ezekiel 16:59-63', *JSOT* 56 (1992), pp101-12; Jacqueline Lapsley, 'Shame and Self-Knowledge: The Positive Role of Shame in Ezekiel's View of the Moral Self', in *BETAP*, pp143-73; *idem*, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp141-45.

⁵⁵ Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p646 and Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London, SCM, 1968), p42. Eichrodt (*Ezekiel*, pp274-75), however, is convinced that these verses are out of place here, regarding the charge of idolatry as 'strange and suspicious' (p275) and the mention of child sacrifice and idolatry as depriving Ezekiel's 'proofs of all force' (p274). Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p412), too, thinks the mention of idolatry is 'a piece of later exaggerated elaboration,' and that the mention of child sacrifices has been

3. Summary / conclusions

The book's portrait of the exiles' 'current' response to Yahweh's word is universally negative, whether it is Yahweh's word as expressed in Ezekiel's word to them, or Yahweh's word as found in his statutes and ordinances. It is also clear that these two responses tend to merge into one another, since to listen and respond to Ezekiel's word *is* to turn away from idolatry and disobedience to Yahweh's ordinances and statutes. In the same way, the destinies for disobedience merge. We have seen how the destiny for not obeying Ezekiel's calls to repentance is death. The same is also true of those who persistently indulge in idolatry, as is evident both from the fate of Jerusalem and from Ezek. 20:38, where Yahweh will purge out all the rebels as part of his initiative in restoration.

Such a negative perspective, however, is not the only response to Yahweh's word to be found in the book. The book envisages a time when the exilic community ('the house of Israel') will be marked by obedience, not by disobedience. Unsurprisingly, the response to both kinds of Yahweh's words merges into a unitary notion of obedience.

B. THE PORTRAYAL OF THE FUTURE OBEDIENCE OF THE EXILES

1. Renewed cultic obedience

We can see renewed cultic obedience illustrated in the following three examples. First, in 11:17-21, restoration to the land (v.17) will be accompanied by an internal renewal which will lead to obedience, including the removal of the land's *שְׁקוּצִים* and *תוֹעֵבוֹת* (vv.18-20).

Secondly, in 20:40-44, the prophet is to assert how all the house of Israel will serve Yahweh in the land, on his holy mountain. When Yahweh has gathered them into the land, 'there you shall remember your ways and all the deeds by which you have polluted yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed' (v.43). The self-loathing which was to have marked them will one day be a

added 'clumsily' by a 'still later hand.' Others see it as a reference to child sacrifice going on in Jerusalem (e.g. Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p118; George C. Heider, 'A Further Turn on Ezekiel's Baroque Twist in Ezek 20:25-26', *JBL* 107 (1988), p722 n7). Although there is no knowledge of child sacrifices amongst the exilic community beyond this reference, such practices cannot be ruled out. However, in view of the connections with 20:23-26, it may be a misunderstanding of prophetic metaphor and rhetoric to take such actions necessarily as a reflection of exilic practices. The prophet here is expressing the *guilt* of the generation in exile, that they are no better than their ancestors. Ezekiel announces that their practices, whether literally involving child sacrifice or not, are no different in Yahweh's eyes. Cf. Greenberg's comment on 14:1-11 that 'The "idols" in the people's thoughts and "before their faces" must be a rubric for an unregenerate state of mind' (*Ezekiel 1-20*, p253). For similar reflections about the 'pedagogical and hortatory function' of the lists of sins in chs. 18 and 22, as opposed to their providing 'specific evidence of the times', see Michael Fishbane, 'Sin and Judgment in the Prophecies of Ezekiel', *Int* 38 (1984), pp146-47. On the question of authenticity, Heider comments, 'Even if the clause is not original (as its absence from the Greek suggests may be the case), it is an accurate expansion, as v.26 has already determined the content of *mattēnôt* ("gifts") in this chapter as cultic child sacrifice.' Heider, 'A Further Turn', p722 n9.

mark of them.⁵⁶ They will renounce their idolatry (cf. 20:43) and be characterised instead by offerings that are acceptable to Yahweh (20:40).

Thirdly, this obedience is illustrated further in chs. 40-48. This vision, which functions as 'a proleptic corroboration' of the promises found in 37:24b-28,⁵⁷ emphasises the reversal of cultic failures of the past. Thus, for example, the priests who did not make the distinction between holy and common (22:26) will now teach of the differences (44:23); the idolatry of the temple seen in chs. 8-11 (see esp. 8:10) will be a thing of the past (43:9; 44:10, 12); the presence of uncircumcised aliens within the temple area will not happen again (44:6-8). Yahweh's presence is confirmed as permanent (43:7, 9; cf. 48:35), a permanence possible only through renewed obedience ensuring a renewed purity. Further, in view of the fact that the people were vomited out of the land because they had defiled the land through their disobedience (36:17; cf. Lev. 18:24-30), other references that do not explicitly mention the obedience of the people to the word of Yahweh, but do speak of the people back in the land (such as chs. 38-39), presuppose the obedience of the people.

2. Renewed moral obedience

Moral sins, too, will be reversed. At the level of leadership, the wicked shepherds of 34:1-9 will be replaced by a new shepherd, Yahweh's servant (34:23-24), who will not oppress the people (45:8, 9; 46:18), but will reflect Yahweh as shepherd (cf. 34:11-16). Instead of devouring the people (19:6; 22:25), he shall feed them (34:23); instead of letting them be scattered, becoming food for the animals (34:4-6), he shall be their shepherd.⁵⁸ The resident alien, instead of being treated with contempt (22:7, 29), shall have an inheritance (47:22-23). Instead of injustice for the people (8:17; 9:9), there shall be honest scales (45:10-12) and equitable land distribution (46:18; 48). Instead of the weak being 'butted' (34:21), they shall no longer be ravaged (34:22). The picture of security, contentment and justice is reflected in the portrayal of the restored community before the onslaught of Gog and his hordes. Where the people of Judah had once been complacent in their 'quietness' (שקט) (16:49), now they will be 'quiet' (שקט) with no need for 'walls,' 'bars' or 'gates' (38:11). Since all have sufficient, there is no jealousy, violence, theft or external threat.

⁵⁶ Cf. Lapsley, 'Shame and Self-Knowledge', pp143-73; *idem*, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp141-42.

⁵⁷ Moshe Greenberg, 'The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration', *Int* 38 (1984), p182.

⁵⁸ Levenson comments that 'in each case, the restoration of the relationship with Israel is presented as God's compensating for the defects of Israel's rulers, almost point-by-point. He does what they failed to do. The coming divine regime is a mirror image of the past human regime in which each standing failure is corrected.' Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, pp86-87. Duguid (*Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p49) comments, 'once again the promise of restoration represents a conscious repairing of the flaws of the past.'

3. Summary

Both cultic and moral obedience will be renewed in the future, an obedience that is encapsulated in the contrast between the summary statement of the house of Israel's failure, and the summary statement of their future obedience. Corresponding to Israel's rebellion, seen in their failure to 'walk' (הלך) in his 'statutes' (חֻקִּים / חֻקוֹת) and to 'keep' (שמר) and 'do' (עשה) his ordinances (מִשְׁפָּטִים), the restoration promised by Yahweh involves them doing *precisely* what Yahweh has called them to do: 'I will cause you to follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances' (36:27; cf. 11:20; 37:24). As Raitt puts it, 'the same law *by which* the people were judged becomes the law *to which* they are saved.'⁵⁹ Within the flow of the narrative, these instances occur with great prominence, overarching, interpreted by, and evident in all that follows. The reference in 11:20 occurs within the first oracle to speak of hope for the future within the book; the trajectory of hope for the future for the readers of the book is defined by this initial occurrence. The reference in 36:27 receives its prominence from its proximity to the distinctively Ezekielian theme of Yahweh's רִוּחַ.⁶⁰ The reference to renewed obedience in 37:24b serves as part of a 'climactic summary of future blessing.'⁶¹ Its climactic nature is apparent from the shift in perspective at the start of chapter 38 to a projected scene where the future restoration is now a reality. Together, they embody the future obedience that will one day mark the house of Israel.

C. THE PURPOSE OF THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN DISOBEDIENCE AND OBEDIENCE

The response to the word of Yahweh is, as we have seen, a mixed one in the book. The exilic addressees / intended audience of the prophet are clearly envisaged as being, and remaining, disobedient and hard-hearted. Such disobedience relates both to Yahweh's word through the prophet, and to Yahweh's word through his ordinances and statutes. However, there is an expectation that one day Yahweh will intervene to gather, restore, and renew the people, such that they will obey him and remain for ever in the renewed and restored land. Unlike their ancestors and unlike Ezekiel's exilic addressees, those who are part of Yahweh's future shall 'walk' in the 'statutes' and 'keep' and 'do' the ordinances (36:27). The function of this dichotomy, as portrayed in the book, and re-presented to the book's exilic addressees, is twofold.

First, it serves to demonstrate that neither Yahweh's word nor Yahweh's prophet were failures. It was not something unexpected or surprising that Ezekiel's exilic addressees did not respond. Even at the outset of his ministry, rebelliousness was anticipated. The subsequent portrayal of unresponsiveness, a portrayal that the

⁵⁹ Raitt, *Theology of Exile*, p182 (his emphasis).

⁶⁰ See further below.

⁶¹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p760.

addressees of the book would presumably have known was only too accurate, is merely the outworking of what was anticipated in the commissioning, and a confirmation of Yahweh's word, not a refutation of it.

Secondly, the re-presented oracles serve to provide a profound call to the exilic addressees of the book, both negatively and positively. Negatively, the disobedience of the exiles functions in exactly the same way as Ezekiel's oracles of judgement against Jerusalem. We noted above how Ezekiel's oracles of judgement against Jerusalem were to persuade his intended audience to sever their allegiance to Jerusalem.⁶² In just the same way, the re-presentation of the disobedience of Ezekiel's intended audience serves to persuade the book's addressees to sever *their* links with the disobedient behaviour that characterised Ezekiel's audience.⁶³ In that sense, the prophet Ezekiel's audience is anti-paradigmatic. On the other hand, the positive anticipated response, not restricted to a particular point in time, serves to move the audience to take seriously the prophet's ministry, and the calls that he made. The exilic addressees of the book should not give up on the prophet's message because their predecessors (or, conceivably, they, when they were much younger) had not responded positively to his words. Instead they need to respond appropriately to the word of Yahweh in the book, since they are in precisely the same position as the prophet's exilic addressees, confronted with the same words (hence the emphasis on the prophetic event). Discerning the response requires an act of imagination, of interpretation, because there are no calls to repentance directed explicitly at them by the author of the book, and there is not a straightforward one-to-one mapping between locutionary and illocutionary act. At its heart, the required response is this: the exiles too must respond to the call of the prophet, as set out in the book, if they are to avoid being sifted out (20:32ff.), if they are to live, and not die (18:31; 33:11).⁶⁴

The book, however, does not simply present a negative example, of disobedience to Yahweh's word, and a future obedience which may well have seemed unreal in view of the failures of the prophet's addressees to respond. It also presents, as I shall now seek to demonstrate, the prophet Ezekiel as a paradigm of the obedience to Yahweh's word that is required.⁶⁵ In the prophet, the future (obedience) has become a present reality. In

⁶² Odell ('Genre and Persona', p201) interprets the proscription against mourning in ch. 24 in similar fashion: 'the actions of Ezekiel and the exiles define their relationship to Jerusalem. They are to sever completely any remaining ties.'

⁶³ Renz (*Rhetorical Function*, p138) puts it succinctly, 'For the book to function properly, the audience of the book (the readership) needs to distance itself from the audience *in* the book (the original audience of the prophet)' (his emphasis).

⁶⁴ This helps explain the 'characteristic' of the book noted by Block (*Ezekiel 1-24*, p580 n123) that often the words of 'the prophet's interlocutors' are heard. He lists 8:12; 9:9; 11:15; 12:22, 27; 18:2, 25; 20:32; 33:10; 37:11. To these may be added some examples he has missed and the words of others who form dialogical partners: 12:9; 24:19; 26:2; 27:3; 28:2, 9; 29:9b; 33:17, 20, 24; 35:10; 36:2, 20; 38:11. See further Applegate, 'Narrative Patterns'.

⁶⁵ Cf. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, pp83-84; Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp140-41.

the prophet's experience lies the bridge for the exiles between the present and the future.

D. THE PROPHET AS A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE

If we are to establish the prophet Ezekiel as a model of obedience, we need to do two things. First, we need to demonstrate conclusively the prophet's obedience. Secondly, we need to establish that the book of Ezekiel clearly portrays the prophet as a model or paradigm, since it is quite possible that the dichotomy between the exiles' disobedience and the prophet's obedience is a felicitous by-product of any book which charts a prophet's lonely call to a rebellious people. It is to the first of these that we now turn.

1. The obedience of the prophet

In view of the fact that the prophet is seen much more as object than subject within the book, as evinced by the dominance of the word of Yahweh coming to Ezekiel, it might be expected that the obedience of the prophet be a minor theme. However, within the commissioning of the prophet in chs. 1-3, in particular, and elsewhere in the book, the theme of the prophet's obedience is a significant one.

The portrayal of Ezekiel's obedience in the opening chapters is complicated by the fact that, as Habel observed,⁶⁶ in the typical prophetic call narrative there is also an objection to the commissioning by the prophet. Glazov has recently produced a thorough analysis of the call narratives of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and has refined the analysis of these objections.⁶⁷ He defines 'a prophet as a divine messenger characterized by two "identifications": with Yhwh and with his people.'⁶⁸ These in turn give rise to two kinds of objection to the prophetic call. What he terms the 'first objection' arises from the 'senses of personal inadequacy, guilt and fear of one's own identity before the *mysterium tremendum*'.⁶⁹ In other words, it arises from the prophet's identification with Yahweh. It is evident, for example, in Isaiah's cry 'Woe is me' (Isa. 6:5). The second arises from the identification of the prophet with the people, and is particularly associated with the call to proclaim Yahweh's words of doom and judgement. The prophetic resistance to the message he is to utter is apparent in either 'intercessory objection' or 'lament'⁷⁰ on behalf of the people. It is evident, for example, in Isaiah's question, 'How long, O Lord?' (Isa 6:11).

Given the customary presence of an objection, it is striking that in the call of Ezekiel there is no objection of either kind vocalised by the prophet. Glazov suggests that the first kind of objection, based on prophetic inadequacy, might be found in

⁶⁶ Norman C. Habel, 'The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives', *ZAW* 77 (1965), p298.

⁶⁷ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*.

⁶⁸ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, p317.

⁶⁹ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp317-18.

⁷⁰ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, p318.

Ezekiel falling on his face before ‘the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh’ (Ezek. 1:28).⁷¹ For the second kind of objection, Glazov follows Zimmerli, Habel and others in finding it in the call to Ezekiel not to be rebellious but to open his mouth (2:8).⁷² Certainly Ezekiel’s struggle with the task he has been given is unmistakable in some of the occasions when his voice is heard addressing Yahweh (e.g. Ezek. 9:8; 11:13).⁷³ However, the lack of a voiced objection here does require an explanation. A plausible one is that, while there *may* be hints of reluctance, it is because Ezekiel’s obedience is highlighted in these chapters. Ezekiel is obedient while knowing fully the painful path that obedience would entail. His obedience confronts personal reluctance and prevails.⁷⁴

At the end of ch. 1, the author recounts how Ezekiel was confronted by a vision of the glory of Yahweh himself (1:27-28). In response, Ezekiel fell on his face. Then he heard the voice of Yahweh speaking to him, instructing him to stand up, so that Yahweh could speak with him. As Yahweh spoke with him, הִרְיָהוּ entered into Ezekiel and caused him to stand. He did as he was commanded.

In 2:8, Ezekiel is instructed not to be rebellious; he is to be different from the rebellious house he is to confront. Rebellion was a real possibility for the prophet, but Ezekiel was obedient.⁷⁵ Some commentators see in the narrative of the swallowing of the scroll a reluctance on the part of the prophet. Block questions why the prophet needs to be told three times to eat the scroll, and asks why it is that Yahweh needs to feed the scroll to Ezekiel.⁷⁶ Greenberg sees the third command, ‘whatever you find there, eat!’ as Yahweh insisting on ‘unqualified submission’ and implying ‘hesitation’ on the part of the prophet to carry out the command of 2:8b.⁷⁷ However, the narrative functions to increase the tension. As Greenberg notes, when the prophet is told in 2:8b to ‘eat what I give you’, there is expectation of food. Vv.9-10 do not serve to show the prophet’s

⁷¹ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp266, 320; in contrast, see p233, where he says, ‘there is no time or room for any first objection’. A sense of personal inadequacy can be seen, according to Habel (‘Form and Significance’, p313), in Yahweh’s command to Ezekiel not to be afraid of his addressees (2:6; cf. 3:9) and in the words of reassurance. This kind of personal inadequacy is rather different from Glazov’s, because it does not arise from the prophet’s identification with Yahweh.

⁷² Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp229, 320; Habel, ‘Form and Significance’, p313; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp12, 123; Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p135) asks, ‘Can we see in this...a surreptitious side glance at the possibility of a personal resistance such as appears in Jer 1:6?’ He answers his own question in the affirmative, because he can see no other reason for such a summons to obedience, particularly made so sharply. However Allen (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p14) doubts whether an objection is present here.

⁷³ Cf. Meier, *Speaking*, pp230-31.

⁷⁴ Glazov accounts for Ezekiel’s silence by drawing analogies with Jeremiah and the forbidding of intercession. It still seems to be related to the prophet’s obedience, but his reasoning is rather unclear. See Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, p233.

⁷⁵ For the idea of this command as a test of obedience, see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp73, 77-78 and, especially, Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat’, pp241ff. This does not, however, exclude the notion that the scroll contains the message Ezekiel is to utter (*pace* Odell). See pp55ff. above and Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp228-38.

⁷⁶ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p12.

⁷⁷ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p67. The phrase is missing from LXX. Eichrodt (*Ezekiel*, p60) and Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p92) regard it as a gloss, making connections with Jer. 15:16. Greenberg (‘Ancient Versions’, pp138ff.) defends the MT.

disobedience so much as to show the extraordinary, unenviable task that is before him. By allowing the addressees of the book to experience what he experienced, the possibility of disobedience is brought to the fore, but is decisively rejected. The command that Yahweh uttered is repeated in 3:1, in resumptive fashion, not because the prophet will not eat, but because the readers have now shared in his vision. This heightened tension, resulting in the prophet's obedience, can be seen in the correspondence between Yahweh's command to the prophet in 2:8, which is obeyed explicitly in 3:2-3. In 2:8, Yahweh told the prophet to open his mouth and eat the scroll. In 3:2, the prophet opens his mouth; then, in 3:3, he eats it. Yahweh feeding the prophet (3:2) then should be seen not as a sign of Yahweh's overcoming of the prophet's reluctance, but of the divine initiative at every stage in the process. Once the prophet has put the scroll in his mouth, it tastes as sweet as honey. Since the message itself was one of 'lamentation, mourning and woe', the sweetness cannot be derived from the content of the divine words he has been told to utter. Further, in view of the prophet's reactions in vv.14-15, it cannot be the sweetness of being commissioned *per se*. The sweetness must lie either in the mere fact that God's word is sweet to taste (cf. Ps. 19:11), or, more probably, in the act of obedience, the sweetness of being addressed by Yahweh and of responding appropriately to the divine word.⁷⁸

In 3:4-11, there are so many parallels with 2:3-7 that Block sees this 'need for a second commissioning speech' as reflecting 'Ezekiel's continued hesitation to accept Yahweh's prophetic charge.'⁷⁹ This second commissioning speech should be interpreted differently. It is true that this unit corresponds closely with 2:3-7, but the concentric arrangement militates against seeing it as mere repetition: 3:10-11 mirrors 2:3-5, speaking of the charge to Ezekiel; 3:4-9 speaks of the encouragement to the prophet to carry out the charge, mirroring 2:6-7.⁸⁰ Further, within the encouragement sections, the three elements (the call not to fear, the reason introduced by *כִּי*, and the concluding instruction to speak) are 'structurally inversely parallel to each other'.⁸¹ Such structuring highlights the obedient action of swallowing the scroll. In addition, throughout these opening scenes, the twin themes of anticipated opposition and the prophet's requirement to obey are both highlighted and steadily built up. The dichotomy between the anticipated response of the exiles, as envisioned in vv.5-9, and the call to the prophet in vv.10-11 is again emphasised. The paradigmatic response to the word of Yahweh is set

⁷⁸ Cf. Joel Rosenberg, 'Jeremiah and Ezekiel', in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. R. Alter and F. Kermode, (London, Fontana, 1987), p197: 'The taste of honey...signifies not a sensation of the prophet's tastebuds, still less his reaction to the inscribed woes - only a typically emblematic and allegorical affirmation of the objective "sweetness" of that most precious commodity, obedience to divine imperative.' Thomson comments (on the similar notion in Jer. 15:16), 'To eat God's Word is to make it one's own, by admitting it into the mind, by submitting to it and assimilating it.' J.G.S.S. Thomson, *The Word of the Lord in Jeremiah*, (London, The Tyndale Press, 1959), p12.

⁷⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p128.

⁸⁰ Schwartz, 'Concentric Structure', pp111-13.

⁸¹ Schwartz, 'Concentric Structure', p111.

out again. In 2:8, the prophet was to open his mouth and eat what Yahweh gave him – he was to fill his very self with the word of Yahweh (cf. Ps. 40:9 [8]). Here, he has to receive all the words Yahweh speaks to him in his heart, hear them with his ears, then go. Ezekiel's obedience to this commission, *בא אל-הגולה וְלֵךְ* (3:11), is apparent in vv.14-15: *וְאַלֶּיךָ...וְאַבּוּא אֶל-הַגּוּלָה*.

It might seem that the theme of the prophet's obedience is falsified by his behaviour outlined in 3:14-15. After receiving his call, *רוּחַ* lifted him up and bore him away. We are told that Ezekiel went 'bitter in the heat of my spirit' (*מֵר בְּחַמַּת רוּחִי*). Then, in v.15, the prophet sits among the exiles, 'stunned' (*מִשְׁמָמִים*), for seven days. Greenberg comments, 'Perhaps the greatest inconsistency is that between the behavior of the prophet subsequent to his commissioning and the task he was called to perform.'⁸² This, however, is overstating the case.

With regard to the phrase *מֵר בְּחַמַּת רוּחִי*, questions of interpretation revolve around three issues, though at points they interact. The first is the place and meaning of *מֵר*. Both Allen⁸³ and Zimmerli⁸⁴ see it as a later addition, in view of the fact that there is no corresponding word in either the LXX or the Syriac. While Zimmerli treats it as an explanatory gloss, Allen regards the meaning as having been changed by its addition. He notes the (semantic) relationship to 'sweet' (v.3), and conjectures that 'bitter' was perhaps a marginal gloss on 2:8bβ, with the contrast between something that is naturally bitter, but turns out to be sweet; he also suggests there may be a 'clever interplay' on 'rebellious' (*מָרִי*); 'bitter' became displaced by someone thinking 'passion' (*חַמָּה*) in v.14 is really 'anger'.⁸⁵ This he sees as contrasting with the LXX 'in the "vehemence" (=surging) of my spirit' (*ἐν ὀργῆ τῶν πνεύματός μου*).⁸⁶ Attractive as Allen's suggestion is, it is not possible to be certain here. If *מֵר* is retained, there is still the issue of its meaning. Some scholars have related it to the Ugaritic *mrr*, 'to strengthen, empower', rendering it 'empowered' (cf. Jdg. 18:25),⁸⁷ but this link has been disputed.⁸⁸ In his commentary on Ezekiel, Block retains *מֵר* but changes his mind on the meaning from his earlier article, 'Prophet of the Spirit', preferring the 'normal meaning' ('bitter'): 'Ezekiel is infuriated by the divine imposition on his life and the implications of Yahweh's commission for him.'⁸⁹ However, *מֵר* can also speak of 'bitter' not in the

⁸² Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p79. He notes the close parallels with Jer. 15:17.

⁸³ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p13.

⁸⁴ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp94, 139.

⁸⁵ As elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel, though according to Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p137, it is always used of divine anger, except in 23:25.

⁸⁶ The noun *ὀργή* occurs 7 times in LXX: Num. 11:11, 17; Prov. 3:25; 21:1; Jer. 29:3; Ezek. 3:14, 27:11. None have the meaning 'anger'. The closest instances are those in Num. 11, where it means something like 'burden' or 'pressure', which rises up against Moses. The people are distressed. It is Yahweh who is angry.

⁸⁷ E.g. Lys, *Rûach*, pp136-37; Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', pp44-45.

⁸⁸ See Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p136 for bibliography.

⁸⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p137.

sense of 'resentful' towards someone, but in the sense of 'bitterly distressed', in the sense of suffering a bitter blow (e.g. Ezek. 27:31; Isa. 33:7).

The second issue is the meaning of the word חֲמָה. Elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel, חֲמָה occurs thirty-two times. Always the meaning is 'anger', 'wrath', with every instance except 23:25 speaking of Yahweh's anger.⁹⁰ In 3:14, however, it is clearly Ezekiel's emotional state that is in view, so the other instances are not determinative. There are different possibilities here, other than 'anger'. We have already seen Allen's rendering, supported by the LXX, of 'vehemence'. Another related meaning is 'heat',⁹¹ or 'excitement', given the root יחם (וחם), 'to be on heat', from which the noun is derived.⁹²

The third issue is whether the emotion encapsulated in the phrase is Ezekiel's attitude to Yahweh in response to his commissioning,⁹³ Ezekiel's reflecting and embodying Yahweh's response to a rebellious people,⁹⁴ or Ezekiel experiencing the effects that the message of the scroll will have on the people.⁹⁵

If Allen's suggestion concerning מַר is taken up, the phrase means something like, 'I was passionately moved.' If Allen's suggestion is not taken up, the bitterness should be associated not with the prophet's attitude to Yahweh, but with the bitterness of the word, now it is in his stomach. It was sweet to taste in his mouth, but now he is being carried back to his peers, the bitterness of his task overwhelms him. He is bitterly distressed in the heat of his spirit. The prophet obeys, because it is Yahweh's word he is obeying. But what is entailed in that obedience may be a difficult task that causes pain and anguish. The sweetness lies in the fact of obedience, the bitterness and inner turmoil in what obedience entails. At no point is Ezekiel's *obedience* in doubt, for vv.14-15 recount it: וַאֲלֵךְ... וַאֲבֹא אֶל-הַגּוֹלָהּ.

With regard to the word 'stunned (מִשְׁמָם)', Block discusses the use of שִׁמָּם at some length and notices some of the nuances: 'silence, desolation, despair, distress, shock.'⁹⁶ There have been four main interpretations of the word. The first is that it speaks of the disobedience of the prophet. His sitting for seven days was a reflection of his 'resisting the call of God'.⁹⁷ The second is that it speaks of the prophet being overwhelmed for

⁹⁰ In 23:25, it is closely associated with Yahweh's jealous actions and speaks of the nations, Oholibah's lovers, acting against her 'in fury'.

⁹¹ So HALOT, p326.

⁹² See G. Sauer, 'חֲמָה *hēmā* excitement', TLOT 1, pp435-36.

⁹³ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp136-38; Douglas Stuart, *Ezekiel*, MOT 18, (Dallas, Word, 1988), p45.

⁹⁴ E.W. Hengstenberg, *The Prophecies of Ezekiel Elucidated*, tr. A.C. Murphy and J.G. Murphy, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1869), p37; Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, NIVAC, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1999), p70. Cf. Greenberg's comment, 'It is not clear whether his bitterness (answering to the "laments and moaning and woe" he must proclaim, as 27:31-32 show) and his rage are reflections of God's feelings toward Israel (cf. the thesis of Heschel, *The Prophets*, ch. 18), or his own distress over the dismal, thankless, and perhaps dangerous task imposed on him.' Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p71. He notes the similar ambiguity in the close parallel, Jer. 15:17.

⁹⁵ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp236-38.

⁹⁶ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p138; see further Tyler F. Williams, 'שִׁמָּם', NIDOTTE 4, pp167-71.

⁹⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p138.

seven days, in similar fashion to Ezra and Job (Ezr. 9:4; Job 2:13), by the ‘initial shock and despair of the awesome judgment he had seen.’⁹⁸ The third is that Ezekiel’s sitting apart for seven days is part of his initiation ceremony into becoming a prophet, borrowing some of the imagery from the ordination of priests (cf. Lev. 8:33).⁹⁹ The fourth is that Ezekiel is experiencing some of ‘the forthcoming overwhelming devastation of his people.’¹⁰⁰

There is no need to see, in מְשָׁמִים, disobedience on the part of the prophet. Each of the other three interpretations has something to contribute. The sense of desolation comes from the task that he had to perform – he was one of the exiles, indeed he sat there ‘among them, desolate’ for seven days. By the use of an oxymoron, the isolation of the prophet is brought to the fore, as is the distinction between the prophet and the people. Though he is among them, and is one of them, yet he is isolated from them. Indeed, it is precisely his obedience that isolates him. It is not his anger with Yahweh, nor his resistance that is in view here, but his isolation and devastation at the message of judgement. The ‘seven days’ speaks not of his disobedience, sitting and doing nothing despite the charge, but of the separation of his consecration and preparation for the ministry lying ahead.

The place of 3:16-21 within the narrative, and its relations to chs. 33 and 18, have been discussed by commentators at great length.¹⁰¹ Greenberg defends the authenticity and originality of its position here against Zimmerli, Cooke, and Wevers. Block, while noting the awkwardness of these verses in terms of the change in language (and other reasons for seeing it as an artificial insertion here) regards the unit as appropriate here. The ‘stern tone’ and its ‘brutally direct warning’ confirm, for Block, what he noted in 3:14-15 – the stubbornness of the prophet.¹⁰² While Block is right to emphasise the function of this passage in its context (as opposed to debating its originality), there is an alternative view of its function here. Given the motif already established of the relationship between the prophet’s obedience and the exiles’ disobedience, this passage serves not only to anticipate the lack of repentance to Ezekiel’s message (see above), but also to demonstrate the *similarity of status* before Yahweh’s word of both prophet and exiles. Failure to obey the word of Yahweh is a sentence of death for both prophet and people, though in different ways. The prophet, though given a specific and different task, is aligned with the exiles in terms of his situation. What matters is how he, and they, respond to that word of Yahweh.

⁹⁸ Lamar E. Cooper, Sr., *Ezekiel*, NAC 17, (Nashville, Broadman and Holman, 1994), p83 n102.

⁹⁹ Carl F. Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, tr. Rev. J. Martin, vol. 1, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1876), p58; Odell, ‘You Are What You Eat’, p236.

¹⁰⁰ Duguid, *Ezekiel*, p70.

¹⁰¹ See Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp140-43; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp55-57; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp87-97; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, pp142-46.

¹⁰² Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p141.

In 3:22-27, Yahweh commands Ezekiel, 'Rise up, go out into the valley, and there I will speak with you' (v.22); the prophet responds, 'So I rose up and went out into the valley...'. What Yahweh had commanded, the prophet did. Though the power of Yahweh, as represented by the divine hand, has constrained the prophet, nonetheless, the prophet here is not just acted upon, he is subject too ('So *I* rose up and went out into the valley' (v.22)). Unlike in 37:1, where the hand of Yahweh is upon him and the רִיחַ of Yahweh brings him, here the prophet acts too. Here, again, the prophet's obedience is evident on closer reading.

Later in the book, there are a number of other examples of the prophet's obedience. Within the vision in chs. 8-11, he is told to lift his eyes (8:5), which he does; he is told to dig through the wall that he has been shown (8:8), which he does; he is told to go in and see the vile abominations (8:9), which he does (8:10). In 12:1-6, the prophet is told to portray the exile, and so serve as a sign for the people. 12:7 recounts how 'I did just as I was commanded.' When instructed to act as a sign, the prophet is obedient. The same motif is found in chapter 24. There, the prophet is obedient, even to the point of not mourning in public for his wife (vv.17-18), for 'I did as I was commanded', an action that was to function as a 'sign' for the exiles (v.24). As Glazov comments,

'The crucial point to grasp is that by retaining silence and suppressing lament, he shows compliance with, rather than resistance to, this stroke [*maggēfā* (24:16)]: the destruction of the city and the exile, all that was in fact part and parcel of the message of doom to which he had to open his mouth at the start and retain quietly and obediently.'¹⁰³

In the vision in chapter 37, Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy to the bones (v.4); in v.5, he carries it out. In v.9, he is commanded to prophesy to the breath. In v.10, he relates how 'I prophesied as he commanded me.'

The picture generated throughout the book is clear: it is a picture of a prophet who suffers, who at points struggles with his call, yet who is obedient to the call of Yahweh. The costs personally and psychologically for him were immense (cf. 3:14-15; also, later, especially ch. 24) – yet these costs came *from*, rather than *despite*, his obedience. In view of these immense costs, we might expect reluctance in the prophet, but the text focuses not on his reluctance, but on his obedience: the prophet *did* heed the word of Yahweh.

These references are all the more remarkable when the paucity of narrative within the book is considered. Throughout the book, it is the word of Yahweh that is at the forefront. The prophet is rarely the subject of actions; instead, he is recipient of the divine word. This in itself is significant. The addressees of the book, the intended audience, *would have known* how the prophet had been obedient to the call that he had received. He *had* warned the exiles, he *had* uttered the words he was instructed to utter.

¹⁰³ Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, p273.

That this is the case is clear from the fact that Yahweh speaks of the exiles' reactions to the words that he has uttered (e.g. 12:22, 27).

The exiles, then, are confronted both with the disobedience of Ezekiel's exilic audience, and, as I have argued in this section, with Ezekiel's own obedience. The book, however, does not simply present its addressees with the obedience of the prophet as an alternative way of responding to Yahweh's word. It also establishes him as a model of obedience for those addressees.

2. The establishment of the prophet as a model

There are two main ways in which the narrative establishes the prophet as a model.¹⁰⁴ First, there are explicit instances where the prophet is described as such, in particular in the sign-acts. Secondly, the narrative as a whole points in that direction. We shall look first at the explicit instances.

a) The prophet as a prescriptive 'sign' (Ezekiel 24:15-27)

In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet is not just instructed to communicate by the spoken word, he is also told to perform certain actions, or 'sign-acts' (sometimes designated by either *אוֹת* or *מוֹפֵת*). The precise role that Ezekiel plays within the drama of these sign-acts varies.¹⁰⁵ In some, Ezekiel's role is in no sense parallel with that of the people whom he is addressing.¹⁰⁶ Other sign-acts within the book give a different picture. They present the prophet as a paradigm for the house of Israel: what is true of Ezekiel within the sign-act correlates closely with those whom the sign-act depicts.¹⁰⁷ Thus in Ezek. 12:1-16, Ezekiel is to act out the process of going into exile, for, Yahweh says, 'I have made you a sign (*מוֹפֵת*) for the house of Israel' (v.6). This self-understanding that the prophet is to have is not merely a private one. He is to articulate it to the house of Israel when they ask him (12:9-11).¹⁰⁸ In chapter 24, the prophet is again to be seen as a sign. There, his lack of public mourning is to be interpreted to the people as the prophet being

¹⁰⁴ For the notion of Ezekiel as a 'model' or 'paradigm', see Sheldon H. Blank, 'Prophet as Paradigm', in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics*, J. Philip Hyatt in memoriam, eds. James L. Crenshaw and John T. Willis (New York, Ktav Publishing House, 1974), pp111-30; Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, pp83-84; Odell, 'Genre and Persona', p208 (though she rightly points out that 'Ezekiel is more than a moral exemplar'); Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp116-17.

¹⁰⁵ For the designation of these actions as signs, see especially Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, pp27ff.

¹⁰⁶ There are four examples. First, in Ezek. 4:1-3, the prophet is instructed by Yahweh to portray the city of Jerusalem on a brick, which is then 'besieged.' Yahweh explains to the prophet that this is a 'sign' (*אוֹת*) of what will happen to the city of Jerusalem (v.3); within the sign-act, the prophet represents Yahweh (and the Babylonians), for he himself is to 'lay siege' (v.3) to the city (*וַיִּצְרֹת עָלֶיהָ*). Secondly, in 5:1-4, he is to act as Yahweh, and the fate of hair that he has cut depicts the fate of those in Jerusalem. Thirdly, in 21:23-29 [ET 18-23], Ezekiel is instructed to portray the choice of two routes facing the king of Babylon, in order to make more vivid the imminence of the destruction of Jerusalem. Fourthly, in the sign-act of 37:15-28, the prophet is instructed to join together two sticks in order to symbolise the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms after the restoration.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Blank, 'Prophet as Paradigm', pp123ff.

¹⁰⁸ Note here that he is particularly a sign of what will happen to the 'prince' (vv.12-13), though his experience will be the experience of the house of Israel in general (vv.10-11).

a 'sign' (מוֹפֵת) to them (v.24).¹⁰⁹ The motif of the prophet and his actions being a sign, or paradigm, to 'the house of Israel' is an explicit one within the book of Ezekiel.

Understanding of Ezekiel as a 'sign' or 'paradigm' can be refined further, though, since a paradigm can be either 'descriptive' or a 'prescriptive'.¹¹⁰ Blank's focus on 'prophet as paradigm', at least in his discussion of the book of Ezekiel, deals exclusively with the prophet as a descriptive paradigm.¹¹¹ What is true of the prophet will be true, by analogy, of the people. While not wanting to minimise this dimension of Ezekiel as a 'descriptive' paradigm, I want to contend that, with regard to the prophet's portrayed response to the word of Yahweh, Ezekiel functions as a prescriptive paradigm – his behaviour is a model that should be followed. It is not necessarily that what is true of the prophet *will* be true of the house of Israel, but that what is true of the prophet *ought* to be true of the house of Israel. That this is not a concept foreign to the book of Ezekiel is clear from the sign-act of Ezekiel's lack of mourning for the death of his wife,¹¹² though it may also be evident in Ezekiel's release from speechlessness.¹¹³ In this sign-act, I shall argue that Ezekiel is portrayed as a prescriptive paradigm.

In 24:16-17, Yahweh announces that he will take away Ezekiel's wife in death, and he instructs Ezekiel, 'yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down.' Instead, he is to 'groan (but) be silent (when doing so)'.¹¹⁴ In addition, Yahweh charges him, 'Bind on your turban, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your upper lip or eat the bread of mourners.' In v.18, although the timing is somewhat unclear, Ezekiel narrates how he did as he was instructed, and how his wife died. In 24:19ff., for the only time in the book, the narrative that has centred around the word of Yahweh coming to the prophet changes perspective. Here, Ezekiel's addressees ask him the

¹⁰⁹ See also 4:4-15; 5:1-4 (his hair); 12:17-20; 21:11-12 for other sign-acts where the prophet's experience parallels that of the house of Israel.

¹¹⁰ The distinction is not always made. Klein (*Ezekiel*, p37), for example, says that 'the exiles *are to copy* Ezekiel's stoic response' to his wife's death, yet just a few lines later he says of Ezekiel that 'his actions at his wife's death *will* be echoed by the exiles' (my emphasis).

¹¹¹ Blank, 'Prophet as Paradigm', pp123ff.

¹¹² For recent discussions in addition to commentaries, see Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp148-55; Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, pp329-51, esp. pp339-45; Odell, 'Genre and Persona', pp195-219.

¹¹³ Ezekiel's release from speechlessness is also described in terms of Ezekiel being a sign to the exiles (24:27). The motif of his 'speechlessness' or 'dumbness' (3:25-27; 24:25-27; 33:21-22) has been much debated. Its difficulty is evident from that fact that there is still nothing approaching scholarly consensus. A detailed examination is beyond the scope of this study. See in particular the recent treatments by Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp156-60; Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, pp169-95; Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp238-74. See also Greenberg, 'On Ezekiel's Dumbness', pp101-105; Robert R. Wilson, 'An Interpretation of Ezekiel's Dumbness', *VT* 22 (1972), pp91-104; *idem*, 'Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel', *Int* 38 (1984), pp117-30; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp120-21; N. Tromp, 'The Paradox of Ezekiel's Prophetic Mission: Towards a Semiotic Approach of Ezekiel 3,22-27', in *EHB*, pp201-13; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp61-64. Conclusions depend on the answers to four questions: whether Ezekiel's dumbness is simply informative (i.e. tells the readers *about* the prophet's ministry, and a limitation on it) or also communicative (i.e. is part of the *message* of Ezekiel's ministry); whether Ezekiel's dumbness is literal or metaphorical; of whose behaviour Ezekiel is a 'sign'; whether Ezekiel's release from speechlessness should be understood as a descriptive or prescriptive sign. Tentatively, I follow Friebel in seeing Ezekiel's speechlessness as a literal, divinely-enabled but voluntary, communicative action giving a prescriptive paradigm of how his audience should respond. They should not talk back to Yahweh.

¹¹⁴ Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, p336.

meaning of his actions which he has obediently carried out in response to Yahweh's command. Then the prophet actually addresses the exiles, recounting to them 'the word of Yahweh' which he has received.

In this word, it is apparent that the prophet's behaviour with regard to the death of his wife is to be a 'sign' (מוֹפֵת (v.24)) to the exiles concerning their response to news of the fall of Jerusalem. This parallel between Ezekiel and the exiles is reinforced in a number of ways. First, explicitly, there are the phrases 'and you will / shall do just as I have done (וַעֲשִׂיתֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי) (v.22) and 'according to all that he has done you shall do (כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה תַעֲשׂוּ) (v.24). Secondly, there is the almost identical expression used to describe the one lost, whether Ezekiel's wife or Jerusalem: 'delight of your / their eyes (מְחַמֵּד עֵינֵיהֶם / מְחַמֵּד עֵינַיִךְ)'. Thirdly, there are a number of identical verbs or phrases used to describe the reactions to the loss (e.g. עַל-שָׂפָם לֹא תַעֲטוּ (v.22; cf. v.17), וְלֹא תֵאָכְלוּ (v.22; cf. v.17)), although the order is inverted.¹¹⁵

It has been debated whether Ezekiel is a sign in a descriptive or prescriptive sense. Since both predictive and instructional discourse tend to be marked by *w^eqatal*, and *yiqtol* often has a modal nuance when referring to the future, syntax alone is not determinative. Most commentators favour the descriptive sense: just as the prophet was struck dumb before the death of his wife, so too the exilic community would be struck with shock and would not mourn.¹¹⁶

There are potentially two main pieces of evidence in favour of the descriptive interpretation. First, the word מוֹפֵת only occurs four times in the book (12:6, 11; 24:24, 27). In ch. 12, Ezekiel clearly acts as a *descriptive* sign of what will happen to the 'prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel in it' (12:10). However, in view of the different roles that Ezekiel plays in the different acts, this link is not conclusive. Secondly, in 33:10 the exiles seem to do exactly what Ezekiel has declared they will do, and there is no hint that such an action is an obedient one. In 24:23, Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to declare, 'but you shall pine away in your iniquities' (וַיִּנְמְקוּ בְּעוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם). In 33:10, Yahweh recounts what his addressees have been saying: 'Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we pine away because of them' (כִּי-כָפְשֵׁינוּ וְחַטָּאוֹתֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ) (וַיִּבְּקוּ אֶנְחָנוּ וַיִּנְמְקוּ).¹¹⁷ However, such a correspondence does not preclude a 'prescriptive' understanding. Greenberg suggests the 'disputational' form of the clause shows

¹¹⁵ These parallels make it clear that Ezekiel is not a sign representing Yahweh, a view that might otherwise seem possible because Ezekiel's wife mirrors Jerusalem. See Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, p339. The awkwardness of the order and the change in person has led some (e.g. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p504; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, pp192-93; cf. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p345) to see vv.22-23 as secondary. However, both Block (*Ezekiel 1-24*, p787) and Allen (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p58) give good reasons to keep them.

¹¹⁶ E.g. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p61; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p269-71; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, pp344, 350; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, p194; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p508.

¹¹⁷ An almost identical phrase occurs in 4:17, where Yahweh declares that the inhabitants of Jerusalem will 'waste away under their punishment' (וַיִּנְמְקוּ בְּעוֹנָם). See Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p155 n62 for the translation. Cf. Lev. 26:39.

Yahweh's verdict, not on their *appropriate* reaction to their sins, but on their inappropriate despair.¹¹⁸ In fact, it is possible to go further and question whether their reaction is in fact appropriate and obedient. The exiles' protest in 33:17, 20 that 'the way of the Lord is not just' shows that they are still protesting their innocence; they have at best only superficially accepted responsibility.¹¹⁹ In fact, most commentators do not marshal this evidence. Mostly, the decision that the sign is descriptive arises from the view that the exiles' grief at the destruction of loss of temple, sons and daughters will be so overwhelming that the exiles will be unable to carry out the usual mourning rituals. This explains Yahweh's declaration that they will not mourn (כָּפַר) or weep (בָּכָה).¹²⁰

However, there are three factors which provide clear evidence either against the descriptive view or in favour of the prescriptive.

First, the notion that the grief would be so great that the exiles would be unable to perform the customary mourning rituals fails to deal with the fact that 'rarely is grief so debilitating that no formal mourning customs are adhered to.'¹²¹

Secondly, the descriptive view fails to distinguish between 'grief', the emotional response, and 'mourning', the public, social response.¹²² This distinction is essential both in the command to Ezekiel, where public acts of mourning are prohibited while inward groaning is sanctioned (וְהִאָּנַן הֵם (v.17)), and in the command to the exiles in v.23, where mourning and weeping are proscribed (v.23a), but pining away on account of their sins and groaning to one another is permitted (v.23b).¹²³ Odell concludes after surveying the David narratives in Samuel, the deaths of Aaron's sons in Lev. 10 and prophetic commands to mourn, 'the act of mourning appears to have little to do with the expression of grief; rather, it is concerned with establishing and severing ties between the living and the dead. Prohibitions against mourning reflect an attempt to dissociate from the deceased.'¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p673.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p144 n87. He suggests that 'פְּשַׁעֵינוּ וְחַטָּאתֵינוּ' in v.10 should be taken to refer not to (acknowledged) sins but rather to (underserved) punishments (cf. Dan. 8.12, 13; 9.24; Zech. 14.19).' This point has been criticised by Mein (*Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p207 n99), since it is hardly the most 'natural reading'. However, it is hard to evade the force of the continued complaints of injustice in vv.17, 20.

¹²⁰ See footnote 116 above.

¹²¹ Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, p340. Friebel identifies seven other variants within the descriptive (he terms it 'predictive') view, and convincingly refutes each. See Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, pp340-42.

¹²² See Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp153-55 and Odell, 'Genre and Persona', pp198-202.

¹²³ Renz points out that the descriptive interpretation demands a 'break' between v.23a and v.23b, since 'you shall pine away in your iniquities and groan to one another' (v.23b) is hardly compatible with shock and numbness, if they are both simply descriptions of what will happen (though Renz notes the dangers of arguing from psychological probability). As he points out, attempts to discern different layers within the text at this point to alleviate this difficulty appear 'an attempt to save an interpretation even against the text.' Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, pp153-54 (quotation p154).

¹²⁴ Odell, 'Genre and Persona', p201.

Thirdly, the context of the book as a whole makes it very difficult to see Ezekiel's lack of mourning as a descriptive sign: 'the concern of the book of Ezekiel is not so much the emotional reaction of the exilic community to the fall of Jerusalem, but the manner in which the community identifies with Jerusalem.'¹²⁵

It is better, then, to see Ezekiel's behaviour as paradigmatic in a prescriptive sense. The exiles are to feel 'joint responsibility' with those in Jerusalem for the fate of Jerusalem. Mourning as an expression of grief is wrong, because Yahweh was right to judge. Their groaning (v.23b) was not to be a mark of sorrow, but of their culpability. Understood in this way, it provides 'a contrast as to the focal point of the people's interests, shifting it from the tragedy of the judgment (the destruction of Jerusalem) to their own responsibility for their personal fate (their iniquities).'¹²⁶ This also fits in well with the theme of the release of Ezekiel from his speechlessness, which is also a 'sign' (מוֹפֵת) to them (24:27). There is a sense in which news of the destruction of Jerusalem signals a new era.

In summary, Ezekiel's lack of mourning, in particular,¹²⁷ presents 'this living, breathing, radical-acting, flesh-and-blood prophet'¹²⁸ as a prescriptive sign of how the people 'should respond to the circumstances, not predictive of how they would respond.'¹²⁹ The prophet as a prescriptive paradigm of how the exiles should behave is not a concept alien to the book.

b) The narrative's portrayal of the prophet as a model

The conclusion that the prophet functions as a model is not based merely on the explicit instances of the prophet being termed a 'sign.' The narrative as a whole portrays the prophet as a model. This can be demonstrated by focusing on the ways in which the narrative identifies the prophet with the exiles – the similarities between the two – and on the ways in which the narrative distinguishes them in their response to the word of Yahweh – the distancing of the two.

¹²⁵ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p155. In similar vein, Boadt comments, 'The prophet is forbidden to perform any sign of grief at the death of his wife. It is a very strong prophetic warning to the people. *They are not to mourn for the loss of Jerusalem because it deserved the punishment it received* (vv. 20-24).' Lawrence Boadt, 'Ezekiel', in *The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, eds. R.E. Brown, J.A. Fitzmyer, and R.E. Murphy, (London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1989), p321 (my emphasis).

¹²⁶ Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, p344. From a different perspective, that of Ezekiel 'symbolically foreshadowing, but by the same token also bearing, the punishment of exile to be meted out to his people', Glazov also sees Ezekiel's behaviour, as commanded in 24:17, as a prescriptive paradigm: 'Here Ezekiel is told that he is to suffer the death of his wife, the "delight of his eyes" without complaint as a sign to his fellow exiles that they ought to do as he has done when God takes away Jerusalem, the "delight of their eyes"'. Glazov, *Bridling of the Tongue*, pp272-73.

¹²⁷ I suggested above that Ezekiel's release from speechlessness should also be understood in the same way. In addition, Friebel regards 21:11 (groaning) and 21:17 (crying out, striking the thigh) in a similar way. See Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, pp289-307.

¹²⁸ Klein, *Ezekiel*, p37.

¹²⁹ Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, p52.

(i) *The similarities between Ezekiel and the exiles*

Though it is of course true that there are many experiences that are clearly unique to the prophet (such as the extraordinary visions), there are three main ways in which the similarities can be seen.

First, there are similarities as people. Though Ezekiel was to be a prophet 'among them' (2:5), and sat desolate 'among them' (3:15), he was not an alien among them. Twice in the book, Ezekiel is spoken of as a sentinel (3:16-21; 33:1-20). In 33:2, in the word of Yahweh that the prophet was to recount to the people, it is said in passing that the watchman was selected by the people. The people would 'take one of their number as their sentinel' (אִישׁ אֶחָד מִקְצֵיהֶם). The word מִקְצֵיהֶם here 'connotes scanning the entire populace to pick the best man.'¹³⁰ What is significant is that the sentinel comes from within, not from outside. Just as the people would take one from their own number as a sentinel to guard the city, so Yahweh had taken one from their number to warn the exiles. Ezekiel belonged to the exilic community. Closely paralleling this is Yahweh speaking of Ezekiel going to 'the sons of your people' (3:11; also 13:17; 33:2, 12, 17, 30; 37:18.). The force of the phrase can be seen in Lev. 19:17-18, where it is juxtaposed with 'your brother' (אָחִיךָ), 'your relation' (עַמִּיתְךָ) and 'your neighbour' (רֵעֶךָ): the prophet is explicitly identified with the people whom he is addressing. The way in which Ezekiel is addressed also indicates the similarity between prophet and exiles as people. Throughout the book, he is never addressed as 'Ezekiel', but always as 'son of man' (בֶּן־אָדָם). The phrase occurs ninety-three times in the book of Ezekiel. Twenty-three times, the focus is further emphasised with 'and you' (וְאַתָּה). Block argues that this phrase emphasises his humanity rather than his mortality (which is not an issue in the book), his identification with his audience, and the distance from the one who has commissioned him.¹³¹ Though the gap between him and Yahweh is narrowed by Yahweh addressing him, the gap is re-established by the form of address.¹³² Though the prophet may speak for Yahweh, he stands with the people.

The second way in which similarities between the prophet and the exiles as people can be seen is in the similarities in their experiences. What I mean by this is not that Ezekiel was in exile, like those whom he was addressing, though this is obviously true. What I mean is that, within the context of the book, events that are true of the prophet are (or will be) seen to be true of the people too. We have already looked at one of the sign-acts that ought to be interpreted prescriptively. To this should be added other sign-acts which are illustrative of the experience of those in exile. For example, in 4:9-15, the

¹³⁰ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p672.

¹³¹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p31; cf. also Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p131, and Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p140, who comments, 'Ezekiel is the human representative, not only as distinct from God ("only human"), but also as the first of many who are to follow his receptiveness of the word (a "proto-human").'

¹³² Ehud Ben Zvi, Maxine Hancock, and Richard Beinert, *Readings in Biblical Hebrew*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993), p118.

diet that Ezekiel is to have, and the mode of cooking that he is to adopt, are to parallel the experience of those in exile (v.13).

The third dimension of the similarities between Ezekiel and the exiles is the similarity in situation with regard to the word of Yahweh. There are two ways in which this similarity in relation to the word of Yahweh is evident. First, they both face the same fate for obedience and for disobedience. As we noted above, though it is of course true in chs. 3:16-21 and 33:1-20 that Yahweh's word to Ezekiel as sentinel (i.e. 'discharge this commission and warn'), is different from his word to the exiles (i.e. 'be warned, the enemy is coming'), their destiny based on their response is the same. For both, disobedience brings death, while obedience brings life. The second way in which the prophet and his addressees correspond in their relationship to Yahweh's word is one created by the narrative as a whole. The book of Ezekiel is dominated by Yahweh encountering the prophet both in word and vision. Of secondary importance is the prophet's performing of the commands he is given, uttering the words he has been told, and the reaction of the addressees. This stress on the prophet as recipient, not as speaker, as object, not as subject, causes the word of Yahweh (and Yahweh himself) to be the focus of the book. As Renz comments, 'the prophet is cast in the role not of a mediator between Yahweh and his people, but of the first audience.'¹³³ Thus 'by portraying himself as a listener rather than an initiator of speech, Ezekiel... through representation of his own impressions and behavior, ...shows how hearers of God's word are to understand it and respond.'¹³⁴ This is further reinforced by instances where the 'word' that comes to Ezekiel is clearly meant for a wider audience, without any hint that the prophet is meant to convey it (e.g. ch. 18, where Ezekiel is given no instruction to speak the words he is given). When the word of Yahweh comes to the prophet without instruction to speak, it is still in a public dialogical context.

In summary, the book portrays clearly the similarities between the prophet Ezekiel and his exilic addressees as people, in their experiences, and in the fact that they are both portrayed as recipients of Yahweh's word.

(ii) *The distancing of Ezekiel and the exiles*

The previous section showed how the narrative highlights similarities between the prophet and the exiles. If it is to be demonstrated that the book of Ezekiel portrays the prophet's response to the word of Yahweh, and not his addressees', as the model, the other necessary task is to show how the narrative clearly contrasts them with regard to their response to that word. I have demonstrated above how the book portrays the prophet's response as one of obedience, and his addressees' response as one of disobedience. This section explores how these contrasting responses are exploited or highlighted within the book.

¹³³ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p137.

¹³⁴ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p83; cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p112.

There are three motifs, all occurring within the commissioning of the prophet, that serve in particular to contrast the two responses. First, there is that of rebelliousness. In 2:3-8, the house of Israel, Ezekiel's addressees, are clearly pictured as rebellious.¹³⁵ Yahweh, however, makes it very clear that the prophet is to respond differently to the word of Yahweh that comes to him: 'But you, mortal, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious (מָרִי) like that rebellious house...' (2:8). Here, 'the prophet is warned not to let himself be infected by the Israelite disease – insubordination to the covenant Lord...'.¹³⁶ The author of the book leads the addressees of the book to ask the question throughout the commissioning, and, indeed the rest of the book, 'Is Ezekiel being like that rebellious house?'

Secondly, there is the motif of 'hearing (with their ears).' This is closely related to the theme of rebelliousness, since rebellion consists in not listening to the word of Yahweh. In 2:8, the prophet is instructed, 'Hear (שָׁמַע) what I say to you.' Again, in 3:10, the prophet is told to 'hear with your ears (וּבְאָזְנוֹיֶיךָ שָׁמַע)' (cf. also 3:17). The prophet's response to the word of Yahweh was to 'hear' the word that Yahweh spoke to him. The exiles' response was different. Already in the commissioning there has been an anticipation that the exiles will not hear (שָׁמַע), reflected in the repeated 'whether they hear or refuse to hear' (2:5, 7; 3:11, 27; cf. 3:6, 7). In the narrative itself, as we have seen, they do not 'hear.' In 12:2, they, like the prophet, have ears to hear. However, unlike the prophet, they do not hear. The same is true in 33:30-33. It is with irony that the narrative recounts their call to each other, 'Come and hear what the word is that comes from Yahweh!' Again, their hearing is valueless, because it does not penetrate their hearts.

The third motif is that of the 'heart.' In 3:10, Ezekiel is instructed, 'receive in your heart (קַח בְּלִבְךָ)' all the words that Yahweh shall speak to him. The order of the phrases, 'receive in your heart and hear with your ears' is a strange one.¹³⁷ Blenkinsopp sees the order as reflecting 'the way in which prophetic communications were thought to be received: first, as an impulse in the heart (we would say, mind), then in a form that is intelligible and communicable...'.¹³⁸ A more plausible explanation comes from Greenberg, who suggests that the strange order is explicable as a *hysteron proteron* 'in which what (chrono)logically is last in a series is placed first owing to its importance'.¹³⁹ Another possible reason, he suggests, is 'the desire to resume the topic *leb (ab)* "heart," which has been suspended since vs. 7.'¹⁴⁰ In view of the other contrasts

¹³⁵ They are described as 'rebellious' (מָרִי) in 2:5, 6, 7, 8 (cf. 3:9); the verb מָרַד is predicated of their ancestors, and clearly of the exiles too ('to this day') in 2:3.

¹³⁶ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p123.

¹³⁷ Allen (*Ezekiel 1-19*, p13) describes it as 'awkward', and notes Ehrlich's comment that it is a mark of Ezekiel's 'inelegant diction.'

¹³⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, p27.

¹³⁹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p69.

¹⁴⁰ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp69-70.

established between the prophet and the exiles, both of Greenberg's explanations are likely. The receptivity of Ezekiel's heart is to contrast with the hard-heartedness of the exiles (2:4; 3:7), a contrast that is developed throughout the book.

E. SUMMARY / CONCLUSIONS

We have seen, then, that the book of Ezekiel does not simply portray the disobedience of the exiles to Yahweh's word and a future obedience to that word; it also presents to its addressees the prophet Ezekiel as a prescriptive paradigm of obedience – the exiles are to respond to Yahweh's word as he has done. Such a paradigmatic role is apparent both from the book's presentation of the prophet's obedience and from its clear establishment of him as a model, both by explicit references to him as a (prescriptive) sign, and the similarities and differences between Ezekiel and his audience. Only then will the vision of the future be a present reality for the exiles.

At this point the objection might be raised that it is most implausible for a prophet to have such a significant role in a book that focuses on his oracles. However, a number of scholars have highlighted the prominence of the *persona* Ezekiel in the book. Collins observes that '*Ezekiel* is remarkable for the important place it gives to the individuality of the prophet whose name it bears', and he notes in particular the strong connections between the portrayal of Ezekiel, on the one hand, and Elijah and Elisha on the other.¹⁴¹ Similarly, McKeating identifies a number of parallels between Moses and Ezekiel, both of structure (the three visionary experiences) and content (especially in chs. 40-48).¹⁴² Odell, too, in her examination of the prohibition against Ezekiel's mourning, notes the important part played by the prophet's *persona*, and suggests that at least part of the impetus for such characterisation may lie in Esarhaddon's Babylonian inscriptions.¹⁴³ Finally, Patton explores what it means for the central figure of the book, Ezekiel, to be portrayed as a priest, and why there is such a portrayal.¹⁴⁴ It is certainly plausible, then, for the *persona* Ezekiel within the book to be a model. Whether this was at his own instigation, or was the work of the author of the book, is harder to say. Collins does not commit himself.¹⁴⁵ That it *could* come from the prophet himself is apparent from the role Ezekiel plays in the restoration of the dry bones: 'in ch. 37 of Ezekiel the prophet is invited to stop being a mere spectator and to become an active participant in the drama he is describing. The restoration of the bones to life only happens, and happens in at least two stages, *at the instigation of Ezekiel himself.*'¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Collins, *Mantle of Elijah*, p100.

¹⁴² McKeating, 'Ezekiel the "Prophet like Moses"?', pp99ff.

¹⁴³ Odell, 'Genre and Persona', pp195-219.

¹⁴⁴ Corrine L. Patton, 'Priest, Prophet and Exile: Ezekiel as a Literary Construct', in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Number 39*, (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), pp700-27.

¹⁴⁵ Collins, *Mantle of Elijah*, p101.

¹⁴⁶ McKeating, 'Ezekiel the "Prophet like Moses"?', p106 (his emphasis). Fox sees Ezekiel as 'an essentially passive spectator' here ('Rhetoric', p9); so too Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p171.

There is also a different kind of problem that needs addressing. This is a problem for the addressees of the book. The history of the house of Israel that the book portrays is that of rebellion from first to last (ch. 20). The vision of restoration portrays a return to the land on a permanent basis (cf. chs. 38-39), which is accompanied by, and dependent upon a renewed obedience for continued residence in the land. The critical questions for the readers of the book are precisely *how* such obedience would come about, and *how* it would be ensured, given this catalogue of failure which extended even to Ezekiel's intended audience. This will be the subject of the next chapter. The answer, as I shall argue, lies in the prophet's experience of רָחַץ , which will be mirrored in the exiles' experience.

However, this downplays the significance of Ezekiel's speaking. See Klein, *Ezekiel*, p155 n9. Renz (*Rhetorical Function*, p205) adopts something of a mediating position, regarding the $w^c qatal$ verb forms which describe Ezekiel's actions (vv. 7, 8, 10) as marking statements that are 'off-line'. This is possible, given the prominence of *wayyiqtol* forms elsewhere in the narrative. It is difficult to be certain, since v.2 also opens with a $w^c qatal$ (וְהָעֵבְרִינִי) where a *wayyiqtol* might have been expected, and the move away from *wayyiqtol* to w^c with the simple *qatal* is evident in Ezekiel (e.g. 11:6; 18:10) and characteristic of late biblical Hebrew. See Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition*, p101.

CHAPTER 6: RESPONDING TO YAHWEH'S WORD - THE ACTION OF YAHWEH'S SPIRIT

In the previous chapter, we observed how there is symmetry in the book of Ezekiel between the portrayals of judgement and restoration. We saw how it depicts the disobedience of Ezekiel's addressees as something that endures throughout the prophet's ministry. At the same time, we noted how the book also looks forward to a day when the exilic house of Israel will again be characterised by a renewed obedience. I argued that this dichotomy serves to demonstrate to the exilic addressees of the book that the unresponsiveness of Ezekiel's addressees was not surprising; the prophet was not a failure. Further, it provides a powerful call to the book's addressees to distance themselves from the response of Ezekiel's addressees. Finally, I argued that the book portrays the prophet Ezekiel as a model of the obedience that is both desired and required. The chapter closed by observing that there is potentially a problem. Given the history of the house of Israel is marked at every point by rebellion, the pressing question for the book's addressees would be how such a vision could become a reality.¹

In this chapter, I shall expand further on the paradigmatic nature of the prophet's experience. Ezekiel provides not just a paradigm of future obedience, but also points to the way by which such a vision of the future becomes a reality. I shall argue first that רִיחַ is essential for the prophet's obedience to Yahweh's word, and that, in turn, רִיחַ provides the link between the present disobedience of the exiles and their future obedience. It is to this action of רִיחַ within transformation that we shall now turn. First we shall look at the prophet's obedience, and then at the exiles'.

A. רִיחַ AND EZEKIEL'S OBEDIENCE

There are three main places where the impact of רִיחַ on the prophet and his obedience can be seen. All are within those passages that we have already examined from the perspective of prophetic inspiration. This should not be surprising, since our discussion of 'word-communicating' inspiration and 'potentiating' inspiration focused on those instances where רִיחַ is intimately linked not with the content of the prophet's message, but with his life.

The first, and the most important, instance is that in Ezek. 2:2. Confronted with a vision of a figure which was 'the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh' (1:28), Ezekiel had fallen on his face. Then he heard 'the voice of someone speaking' (1:28). The voice commanded him, 'Son of man, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you.' V.2 continues, 'And when he spoke to me, רִיחַ entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me.'

¹ Cf. 'How then can we live?' (33:10). See further below.

We have already examined in some detail the nature of רִיחַ here and its relationship to the word that Yahweh spoke.² I concluded that, while the use of רִיחַ is deliberately ambiguous here, Yahweh is still the source of its action, and that רִיחַ functions not to communicate the words, but to revive the prophet, so that he is *enabled* to hear and to respond to Yahweh's word. It is, in fact, possible to go further than this. A comparison between v.1 and v.2 (see Table 10) points to the fact that רִיחַ *brings about* Ezekiel's obedience to the command that Yahweh has given.

Table 10. Comparison of Ezek. 2:1 and 2:2

v.1 – Yahweh's command	v.2 – Ezekiel's response
עָמַד	וַתָּבֵא בִי רִיחַ...וַתַּעֲמֵדְנִי
עַל-רַגְלֶיךָ	עַל-רַגְלֵי
וַאֲדַבֵּר אִתְּךָ:	וְאֶשְׁמַע אֶת מִדְבַּר אֱלֹהֵי:

The command to 'stand' in v.1 is answered directly in v.2 by 'רִיחַ entered me...and stood me up.' Of the eighty-five instances of the hifil of עָמַד in the Old Testament, this instance and Ezek. 3:24 are the only ones where there is what would otherwise be understood as an 'impersonal' subject. Here, explicitly, רִיחַ is the agent that brings about Ezekiel's obedience to the command that Yahweh has uttered, and sets the prophet on his feet before Yahweh, so that he may serve him.³ At the outset of the book, in response to the first command that the prophet receives from Yahweh, רִיחַ brings about obedience to that command.⁴ Redpath has expressed succinctly the nature of the work of רִיחַ here: 'Man cannot fulfil God's word without His Spirit "preventing" him (in the old sense of the word).'⁵

The second instance is the similar phrase in 3:24, where again רִיחַ sets the prostrate prophet on his feet. Though this is not a response to Yahweh's command, the agency of Yahweh's 'hand' (v.22) and רִיחַ (v.24) follows directly from the commission in 3:16-21, where the question is raised for the readers of the book, 'Will Ezekiel be obedient to his commission?' Here, Ezekiel 'is empowered by the spirit to stand and so assume the prophetic position of a servant standing in the presence of his divine master, like Elijah and other prophets'.⁶ As the readers of the book will know, Ezekiel was indeed obedient both to the immediately subsequent commands (3:25-27), and to his commission in general.

² See above, pp77ff. and especially pp102ff.

³ For the hifil of עָמַד being used of someone presenting another before Yahweh, see e.g. Gen. 47:7; Lev. 14:11; Num. 5:16. For the notion of a prophet 'standing' before Yahweh, see 1 Kgs. 17:1; 18:15; 2 Kgs. 3:14; 5:16; Jer. 15:19.

⁴ Cf. Hildebrandt's comment: 'The task of Ezekiel as presented in 2:3-8 is clearly a difficult one that will bring much opposition and thus requires much divine help. In 2:2 the *rûah* is described as coming into Ezekiel, implying possession by the Spirit for the completion of his role (3:1-11).' Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, p189.

⁵ Henry A. Redpath, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, (London, Methuen & Co., 1907), p8; cf. Lys, *Rûach*, p131; Schwartz, 'Concentric Structure', p110.

⁶ Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, pp60-61.

The third place, or better, way, in which רִיחַ can be seen to be integral to the prophet's obedience is the compelling action of רִיחַ within the visions that Ezekiel receives (3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5). This is particularly evident in 3:14-15. In 3:11, Ezekiel had been told 'then go to the exiles... (וְלֵךְ בָּא אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה)'. The narrative account of his movement once Yahweh's speech finishes highlights the agency of רִיחַ. In 3:14, Ezekiel relates, 'The spirit (רִיחַ) lifted me up and bore me away; I went (וַאֲלַךְ)...and I came to the exiles... (וָאָבִוּא אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה)'. The fact that the action of רִיחַ in transporting Ezekiel opens the narrative in 3:12 after the commissioning speech and is then repeated in 3:14 highlights not the movement of Yahweh's glory (3:12aβ-13), which is 'parenthetical', but the action of רִיחַ, which is 'paramount'.⁷ These instances, along with Yahweh's hand and verbs expressing Yahweh's acting upon Ezekiel, point to Yahweh bringing about the prophet's obedience to him. The prophet is one constrained by Yahweh. Sometimes explicitly mentioned, but always present, Yahweh is one who generates the obedience of his prophet.

The picture, then, is of רִיחַ being intimately involved in bringing about the prophet's obedience to Yahweh. This is not to say that the book portrays the prophet as passive (cf. 3:22-24). Nonetheless, the involvement of רִיחַ in the ministry of the prophet, especially in 2:2, points to a prophet constrained by Yahweh, and whose obedience is effected by רִיחַ.⁸ Further, the agency of רִיחַ is clearly at the initiative of Yahweh – it is at the instigation of Yahweh that רִיחַ brings about the prophet's obedience. Finally, and perhaps most strikingly, the action of רִיחַ as agent in 2:2 and 3:24 is not simply external, seizing the prophet like an object, but is now *internal*.⁹

B. רִיחַ AND THE EXILES' OBEDIENCE

When we turn to the exiles and to their (future) obedience, we are at once faced with a tension created by two apparently contradictory facts. The tension requires exploration because Yahweh's word and Yahweh's רִיחַ are closely bound up with it. In this section, I shall argue that the action of רִיחַ, rightly understood, sheds some light on a possible synthesis.

The first fact is that, as we have seen, the book of Ezekiel presents the call to repentance not as something which simply belonged to a phase in Ezekiel's ministry, but as something which still applies to its exilic addressees. Drawing on this, the

⁷ Schwartz, 'Concentric Structure', p110.

⁸ Pace Schüngel-Straumann (*Rûah*, pp43-44), who argues that 'רִיחַ does not simply replace the personal initiative of the prophet. Ezekiel can also act himself in other places at the command of God.' ('רִיחַ ersetzt nicht einfach die persönliche Initiative des Propheten. Ezechiel kann auf Befehl Gottes an anderen Stellen auch selbst handeln.') For her, it is only when his own power is lacking that רִיחַ enters. Then it should be translated not as 'spirit' but as '(God's) vital force' ((Gottes) Lebenskraft). However, we have seen how this רִיחַ *brings about* Ezekiel's obedience and sets him on his feet. Further, the open-ended entering of רִיחַ in 3:24 can be seen to pertain to the rest of Ezekiel's ministry, particularly when comparisons with Ezek. 37:1-14 are borne in mind. See further below.

⁹ Cf. Lys, *Rûach*, p131.

relationship between judgement and restoration could, potentially, be depicted as in Figure 3. Such a picture portrays restoration as the result of repentance and future obedience.

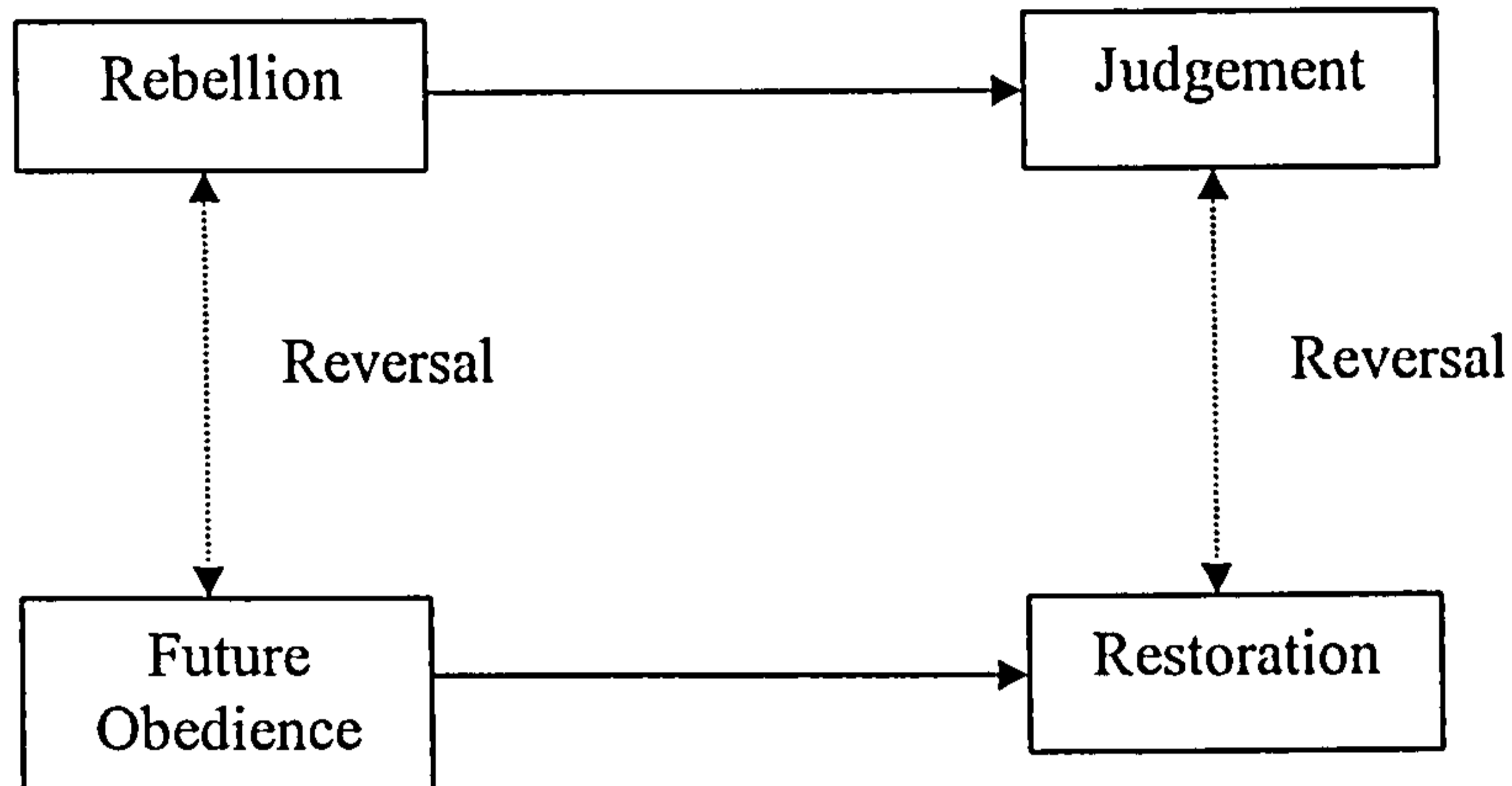


Figure 3. The place of obedience as might be suggested by the presence of ongoing calls to repentance

However, Figure 3 is clearly erroneous when the fact of these ongoing calls to repentance is set alongside another, apparently contradictory fact: restoration is the result of Yahweh's sovereign initiative. The book of Ezekiel makes this sovereign initiative clear in a number of ways.

First, as Joyce, in particular, has pointed out, Yahweh's motive for delivering Israel is not a quality or an action of Israel upon which Yahweh is contingent, but is something within Yahweh himself. He delivers them for the sake of his 'name' (36:22).¹⁰ This contrasts with the picture found in Leviticus 26, where blessings are contingent on the obedience of the people.¹¹

Secondly, while it is a mistake to distinguish between a 'spiritual restoration' and a 'physical, national one,' or to regard them as strictly sequential,¹² since both are inextricably linked¹³ and the order is not maintained consistently in the book,¹⁴ it is important to note that the images used to describe the restoration of Israel – that of 'a creation,¹⁵ resurrection, exodus,¹⁶ or a new gift of the land' are 'activities which by definition are solely the work of God.'¹⁷

¹⁰ See Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp97-103.

¹¹ Compare Lev. 26:3 and Ezek. 36:26-27; also Lev. 26:9 and Ezek. 36:9. See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p720; Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p162; Wong, *Idea of Retribution*, pp110-11.

¹² As Greenberg does when he comments 'first, the dispersed would be gathered and brought to their land, while still in their unregenerate state...there they would be purged of their pollution – absolved from their guilt – by a unilateral act of God' (*Ezekiel 21-37*, p735).

¹³ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, pp235-37.

¹⁴ So 36:24-27 seems to envisage restoration to the land, followed by 'spiritual renewal', while 37:14 envisages a new רִיחַ before restoration to the land. See Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p207.

¹⁵ The two stages of Ezekiel 37:1-10 parallel those of Gen. 2:7. So Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p185; Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p379; Hals, *Ezekiel*, p269; Bruce Vawter and Leslie J. Hoppe, *A New Heart: A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ITC, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991), p167; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p261.

¹⁶ As reflected in the language of the exodus tradition (36:24; 37:12); cf. Hals, *Ezekiel*, p270.

¹⁷ Klein, *Israel in Exile*, p84.

Thirdly, in chs. 40-48, neither Israel nor the new king of 34:23-24 are involved in the building of the new temple, the design of the worship or the appointment of priests.¹⁸ As Ackroyd comments, 'reorganization depends upon the presence of God and is not a prerequisite of it.'¹⁹ The presence of Yahweh (43:1-5), in turn, follows from the temple built by Yahweh (40-42); it is 'his building.'²⁰ It is not an exaggeration, then, to say that chs. 34-48 as a section 'describes the kingship of Yahweh as the beginning and end of Israel's transformation'²¹ or that 'the promised future in Ezekiel is solely the product of God's monergistic actions.'²²

Precisely how calls to repentance can be related to Yahweh's sovereign initiative at every stage has taxed many scholars. Such a question is particularly relevant for our purposes because, as Joyce's *Divine Initiative* explores, this apparent antinomy is encapsulated by the command for the exiles to get for themselves a 'new heart and a new spirit' (18:30-31) and the promise of Yahweh to give to the exiles 'one / a new heart and a new spirit' (11:19; 36:26).

Commentators naturally have addressed this tension between the promise and the command. Calvin sees the call in 18:31 as God showing the people 'their duty' such that when 'they acknowledge that they cannot discharge it, they fly to the aid of the Holy Spirit, so that the outward exhortation becomes a kind of instrument which God used to confer the grace of his Spirit.'²³ Cooke reconciles the different perspectives by suggesting that 'the full truth is arrived at by combining the two statements,'²⁴ and he points to Philippians 2:12-13. Greenberg, commenting on 18:31, sees this as 'a human capacity' to get 'a new heart and a new spirit.' He notes that Ezekiel is alone in ascribing to man such a capacity, that it is unique within Ezekiel, and that, elsewhere, the people's incorrigibility is stressed (chs. 16, 20). He comments: 'This singular empowering of the people, so contrary to the general mood of the book, is of a piece with the liberating, encouraging tidings of this oracle, designed as an antidote to despair.'²⁵ With regard to 36:26-27, Greenberg sees that human freedom is curtailed by

¹⁸ Daniel I. Block, 'Bringing Back David: Ezekiel's Messianic Hope', in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, eds. P.E. Satterthwaite, R.S. Hess, and G.J. Wenham, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1995), p187; Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, pp50-55.

¹⁹ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, p115 n59.

²⁰ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, p115.

²¹ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p60. For further discussion on Yahweh's kingship and the relationship to human kings, see Paul M. Joyce, 'King and Messiah in Ezekiel', in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*, ed. J. Day, JSOTSup 270, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), pp323-37.

²² Klein, *Israel in Exile*, p95; cf. Ackroyd's comment, 'All this is effected by divine action and by that alone. The new life is divinely given (cf. ch. 36, 37); the reordered land is made what it is by God; the new Temple is his building' (*Exile and Restoration*, p115); more recently, see also Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, pp239-55 and Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp160-73.

²³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, tr. T. Myers, reprint from 1843 edn., vol. XII, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1999), pp265-66.

²⁴ Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p391.

²⁵ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p341.

Yahweh's action, such that there is 'enforced obedience'.²⁶ Rather than attempt to reconcile the two, he says that Ezekiel 'vacillates between calling on the exiles to repent and despairing of their capacity for it.'²⁷ Nonetheless, 'there is no question that for him the change of human nature was not an act of grace.'²⁸ Greenberg's approach does not allow for any reconciliation of the two perspectives. Instead, the exigencies of the situation in ch. 18 justify the unique emphasis on human responsibility. In similar vein, Block maintains that the use of the imperative in 18:30-31 'does not mean that Ezekiel believes his audience capable of moral and spiritual self-transformation. The command...is a rhetorical device, highlighting the responsibility of the nation for their present crisis and pointing the way to the future.'²⁹ Thus it is 'the contextual emphasis on personal human responsibility'³⁰ in 18:30-31 that gives rise to that call to repentance, while the dominant perspective is on Yahweh's restorative actions.³¹ Zimmerli comments that '18:31...offers to faith, as something to be taken hold of, what is promised as a gift in 11:19.'³² The 'logical tensions' serve to show that 'in the divine salvation man never appears simply as a vague object, but always as the purposeful subject of grace for a new beginning.'³³ Four other contributions to the debate also merit particular attention: those of Joyce, Matties, Mein and Lapsley.³⁴

Joyce, in defending a pre-587 date for chapter 18, suggests two reasons for calls to repentance before the final disaster. The first is to 'underline Israel's responsibility for the inevitable punishment.' The second is to say that 'this is not what Yahweh would wish for Israel.'³⁵ Joyce denies, however, that an aversion of the final disaster is possible. The call functions as a rhetorical device, with no expectation of success. In his diachronic solution to the tension between the calls to repentance and Yahweh's sovereign initiative, it is only after the fall of Jerusalem that Yahweh acts in a sovereign way to bring about the restoration without the repentance or involvement of the exiles. He concludes that, since 'obedience is guaranteed, it would seem that the responsibility of Israel has been subsumed in the overriding initiative of Yahweh.'³⁶

²⁶ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p735.

²⁷ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p737; similarly *idem*, 'Salvation of the Impenitent', p271.

²⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p737.

²⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p588.

³⁰ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p355 n89.

³¹ Cf. Verhoef's comment, 'This admonition does not suggest what they *can* do, but what they *ought* to do: what God requires from everyone of them. God alone can give them a new heart and spirit.' Pieter A. Verhoef, 'חרש', *NIDOTTE 2*, p36 (his emphasis).

³² Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p262.

³³ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p386.

³⁴ See also Fishbane, 'Sin and Judgment', pp131-50; Benjamin Uffenheimer, 'Theodicy and Ethics in the Prophecy of Ezekiel', in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, eds. H.G. Reventlow and Y. Hoffman, JSOTSup 137, (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp200-27; Baruch J. Schwartz, 'Repentance and Determinism in Ezekiel', in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies: Division A*, (Jerusalem, The World Union of Jewish Studies, 1994), pp123-30.

³⁵ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p57.

³⁶ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p127.

Joyce is right to say that repentance would not avert disaster for Jerusalem,³⁷ but he underestimates the significance of the fact that the oracle in ch. 18, and indeed the other calls to repentance, are directed towards the *exiles*. Repentance, leading to life, is a possibility, indeed a necessity, for the exiles. Even if, with Raitt, such calls to repentance were not part of Ezekiel's preaching to the exiles after the fall of Jerusalem, still the *book* portrays repentance as necessary for its exilic addressees.

Matties focuses on ch. 18 as a 'hinge text, offering a way of being in the liminal moment between judgment and transformation.'³⁸ Given this perspective, it is not surprising that he gives particular weight to the 'call to conversion' in 18:30-32.³⁹ He argues that 'the call to repentance is a fundamental facet of Hebrew moral discourse.'⁴⁰ This call should not be misunderstood either as indicating that repentance would avert judgement, nor as indicating that salvation is guaranteed. 'Rather, the exhortation serves as the basic statement of human responsibility in a cosmos that is characterized by order.'⁴¹ Yet this call is a real 'call to life', with a real 'possibility of action'.⁴² He tries to reconcile this with 'divine action' by observing that 'keeping *tôrâ* is based ultimately on the prior act of God in deliverance.'⁴³ However, the ambiguity⁴⁴ that he discerns in the place of human moral responsibility also characterises his own treatment. In his discussion of the relationship between 'divine enablement and human responsibility',⁴⁵ he notes 'the fact that people are not capable of responding faithfully' (cf. 33:10; 37:11).⁴⁶ He is right, in my judgement, to comment,

'By offering the human alternative in chap. 18, in the midst of judgment, the prophet suggests that divine intervention beyond the present experience is not the only option for the exilic community. By fashioning its own character as a *tôrâ*-keeping peoplehood, Israel in exile is already participating in the divine intention of restoration.'⁴⁷

The relationship between present and future is not as sharply delineated as most commentators argue. However, it is neither clear why he has privileged ch. 18 in this fashion, nor is it clear *how* divine enablement relates to human responsibility.

Mein reconciles the two in carefully-argued fashion. For him, the calls to repentance found particularly in chs. 14 and 18 represent genuine calls to repentance to

³⁷ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp55-60.

³⁸ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p208.

³⁹ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, pp105-109.

⁴⁰ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p108.

⁴¹ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p109.

⁴² Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p109; the second phrase is from n200.

⁴³ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p109.

⁴⁴ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p110.

⁴⁵ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, pp205-208.

⁴⁶ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p207.

⁴⁷ Matties, *Ezekiel 18*, p207. See further below.

those in exile.⁴⁸ However, for him, the language of 'life' that is at stake in these chapters is not related directly to life in the land that is spoken of in the salvation that is Yahweh's act, and Yahweh's alone. Rather, it is related to the temple and worship there.⁴⁹ To the extent that Yahweh is a sanctuary to some extent in the exile (cf. 11:16), the now powerless Jerusalem elite can experience some kind of 'life' in exile. Noting the comparisons with 1 Kgs. 8:50, he comments, 'it looks as if repentance will bring blessing in exile rather than a return from exile'.⁵⁰ The exilic community remain wholly passive in the 'promises of salvation' that 'appear extravagant and unrealistic' when set alongside the oracles of judgement and the 'present status of the exiles'.⁵¹ Mein argues persuasively that there is in chs. 14, 18 (and 33) a more 'domestic' purview reflecting the change of circumstances in exile.⁵² He is also right to notice the lack of explicit links between 'life' and 'land' in ch. 18.⁵³ However, within the context of the *book* of Ezekiel, 'life' in ch. 18 is associated with the acquisition of 'a new heart' and 'a new spirit' (18:31-32). In ch. 36, these are explicitly part of Yahweh's eschatological gift to his people. Further, in ch. 37:12-14, 'life' is clearly associated directly with return to the land. Mein provides no obvious reason for the shift in the solution for the exiles' hopelessness, from calls to repentance (after the cry, 'Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?' (33:10)) to the declaration of unconditional salvation in 37:1-14 (in response to the cry, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely' (37:11)).⁵⁴

Lapsley's work is aimed directly at the question of the relationship between calls to repentance and declarations of divine sovereign initiative in restoration. She surveys in depth the tension between these two perspectives,⁵⁵ and concludes that the 'inconsistencies' found in Ezekiel provide evidence of a tension that is fundamentally irreconcilable between two different anthropologies.⁵⁶ The call to the exiles to repent and get for themselves a new heart and a new spirit (18:30-32) reveals an anthropology that conflicts with the anthropology implicit in the deterministic language evident both

⁴⁸ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p207. Although he overstates the degree of responsibility claimed by the exiles in 33:10, he rightly observes the importance of the phrase 'turn and live' in ch. 18 and the greater emphasis on the wicked man who repents in ch. 33 over against the one in ch. 18.

⁴⁹ So Walther Zimmerli, "Leben" und "Tod", pp494-508; *idem*, *Ezekiel 1*, p382, followed by Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p210.

⁵⁰ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, pp208-11 (quotation from p211).

⁵¹ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p220.

⁵² Cf. footnote 17 on p158 above.

⁵³ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p209.

⁵⁴ Mein does speak of the shift 'from responsibility to passivity' (*Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, ch. 7), but he ties *both* the (albeit limited) possibility of repentance *and* passivity to the circumstances of the exile. That the fall of Jerusalem is not the reason for the shift is clear, for 'Ezekiel's community in exile have *already* experienced this loss [of institutions that serve to mediate between the people and Yahweh], and their situation before 587 in some ways anticipates that of the whole nation after the disaster.' Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p214 (my emphasis).

⁵⁵ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, ch. 2.

⁵⁶ Her particular contribution, as I noted above (p10), is to focus on the tension not so much for what it reveals about Ezekiel's theology, but for what it reveals about his anthropology.

in chs. 16, 20, 23, 24 and in the promises that Yahweh will give his people a new heart and a new spirit (11:19; 36:26). The former anthropology, which she sees as the dominant one until Ezekiel, but as ‘waning’⁵⁷ in Ezekiel, regards people as ‘capable of understanding their moral failings and transforming themselves.’⁵⁸ The latter anthropology sees this capacity for moral virtue as available *only* as a gift from Yahweh. The need for an ‘organ transplant’ (11:19; 36:26) provides evidence that their moral ‘equipment’ is ‘not right’.⁵⁹ In chs. 1-33, Ezekiel is ‘vacillating principally between two models of the moral self’.⁶⁰ In chs. 34(?)–48,⁶¹ the new moral self is portrayed as a gift from Yahweh. Further, this new moral self has its focus not in action, in doing the right thing, but in knowledge of Yahweh. This is critical for her understanding of human freedom. The main places where action is predicated of the new moral self are 11:20 and 36:27. However, this action arises *willingly* out of the newly created moral self. She quotes Fox with approval, ‘When one has God’s spirit in him he does God’s will because he *wants* to do God’s will.’⁶² Yahweh is directly involved in obedience, insofar as he is the giver of the new moral identity. However, for Lapsley, ‘the right moral actions of these newly created people will flow naturally out of this knowledge.’⁶³ Human freedom, then, is in a profound sense preserved.⁶⁴

Lapsley argues clearly and, particularly in her analysis of the new moral identity, persuasively. At the same time, the polarisation of the two anthropologies that she sees in the book is a bit too neat, and it hardly helps the rhetorical persuasiveness of the book, even if the more deterministic view, giving rise to the new moral self as Yahweh’s gift, prevails. The ‘over-neatness’ can be seen, for example, if we consider the question, ‘How “virtuous” is the “moral self” in passages which call the exiles to repentance?’ In 18:31, the call to ‘get for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit’ implies, for Lapsley, an ability to respond. However, the fact that they need ‘a new heart and a new spirit’ is, according to Lapsley, *itself* evidence that their moral equipment is corrupt.⁶⁵ In other words, on Lapsley’s reasoning, these verses do not in fact call for the possible, but for the impossible. Once this is recognised, calls to repentance elsewhere cannot be seen necessarily as implying an underlying anthropology which speaks of the virtuous moral self.

⁵⁷ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p106.

⁵⁸ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p106.

⁵⁹ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp104-105.

⁶⁰ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p157.

⁶¹ Lapsley (*Can These Bones Live?*) speaks on p157 of vacillation in chs. 1-36. However in her summary on p183, Ezekiel’s ‘struggle’ is evident in chs. 1-33. On p159, the final section of the book is characterised as chs. 36-48. On p186, the final chapters are chs. 35-48.

⁶² Fox, ‘Rhetoric’, p15, cited in Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p182.

⁶³ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p182.

⁶⁴ Though not in a total sense, because there is also an ‘absence of human freedom’ implicit, for her, in the fact that ‘the people in Ezekiel who are transformed by God’s action are for the most part not depicted as possessing the freedom to choose or refuse this gracious gift.’ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p188.

⁶⁵ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp103-106.

It will be helpful at this moment to pause and reflect. The picture of restoration that the book paints is one where Yahweh's restoration is not established or precipitated by renewed obedience as a self-initiated act of the exiles. Rather, renewed obedience is established and maintained by Yahweh's restoration, and is part of that restoration. Since Ezekiel's promises present a picture of future security, Yahweh's intervention cannot merely provide a renewed stage in which Israel will have another opportunity to repeat her history of rebellion and failure.⁶⁶ Yahweh's intervention, bringing about a change in attitudes and behaviour, will ensure that the history of rebellion and failure will never be repeated. I have represented this in Figure 4.

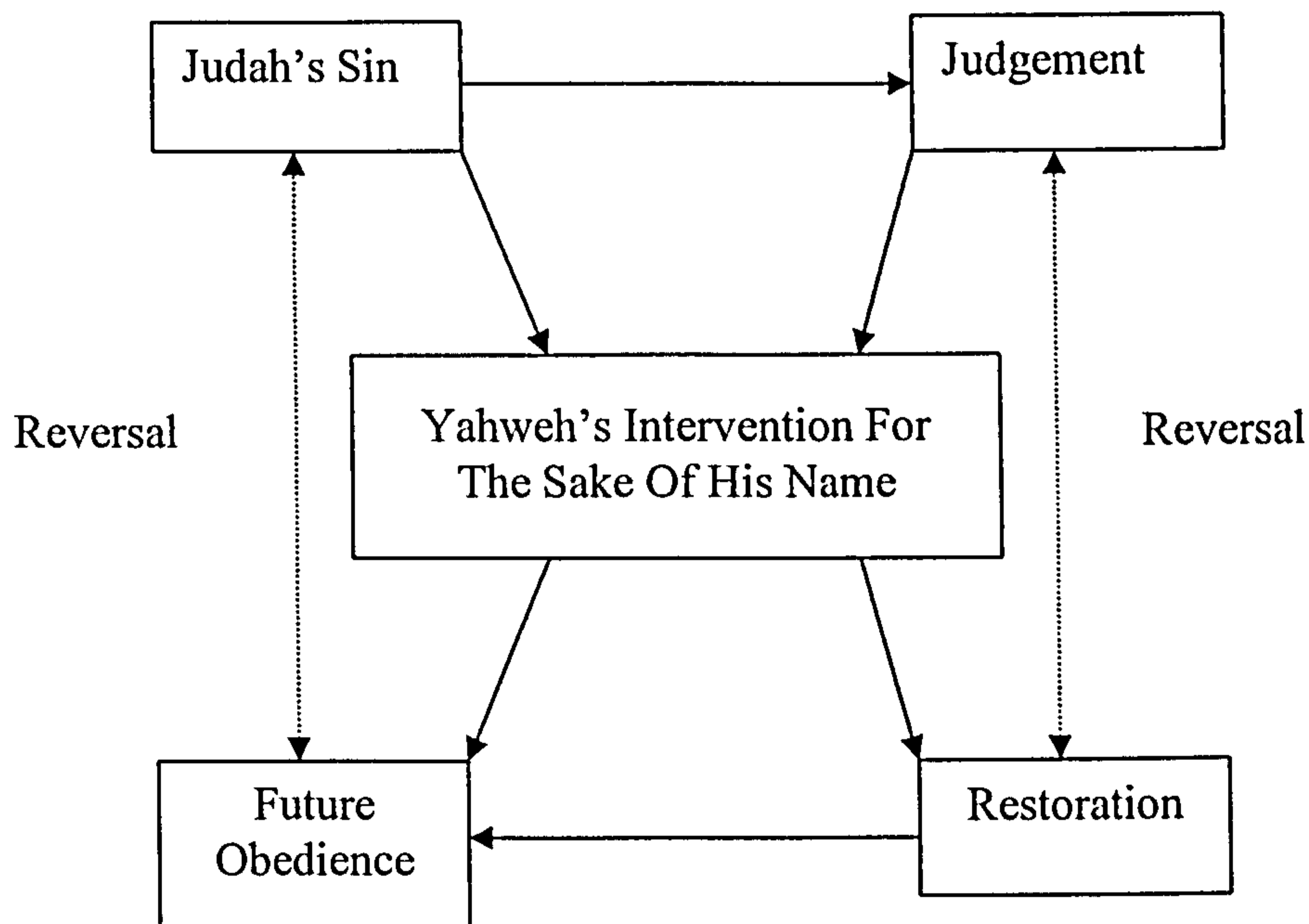


Figure 4. Divine Initiative in Restoration.

Since the calls to repentance are for the exiles, and point to 'a wholesale reorientation of life *and* an internal change in disposition' as 'prerequisites for positive divine action,'⁶⁷ yet the exiles are 'dead', a self-initiated response to Yahweh is inconceivable, and future salvation seems to be the work of Yahweh alone, the readers of the book would need to know *how* such a future vision could become a reality.

The importance of the route from the present to the future is not always acknowledged. Mein argues from a sociological perspective for Ezekiel's salvation oracles being an example of 'the use of dramatic future hopes as a focus of communal solidarity'⁶⁸ that is characteristic of communities that have experienced disaster, deprivation and not comprised of those 'at the very bottom of the social ladder'.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Though the careful guarding of access in chs. 40-48 and the presence of a renewed sacrificial system indicates that 'the possibility of error remains', though at a 'level' that is 'presumably tolerable'. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p188.

⁶⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p588.

⁶⁸ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p219.

⁶⁹ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p227.

Further, he suggests that Ezekiel instantiates a wider phenomenon, whereby 'activism' in the face of domination tends to give way to 'passive revolutionism' when it becomes apparent that action on the part of those dominated is impossible or will make no impact.⁷⁰ This 'passive revolutionism' is marked by 'reliance...entirely on supernatural action.'⁷¹ The shaping of communities by such oracles is an important observation, as is the emphasis on 'supernatural action'. However, for Ezekiel's addressees, and, by extension, for the book's addressees, the expansive vision of the future alone is not sufficient. The burning question for the exiles is *how* to be part of that future. This is clear from their question in 33:10, 'How then can we live?', a pertinent question in view of the sifting evident in 20:32-44 and 34:17-22.⁷² In what follows, I shall argue that Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones does just that. Integral in this vision, and indeed integral in Yahweh's intervention for the sake of his name, is קָרָן.

1. How the vision of the future becomes a present reality: Ezek. 37:1-14

This is almost certainly the most well-known part of the book, and has received extensive attention.⁷³ The hand of Yahweh picks Ezekiel up, and brings him by the spirit of Yahweh to a valley that is full of bones. After Yahweh has shown him the full extent of the bones, Yahweh asks the prophet whether they can live, a question 'calculated to heighten wonder.'⁷⁴ Though Ezekiel answers 'politely,'⁷⁵ his answer should not be interpreted as evasive.⁷⁶ The dialogical approach has rhetorical force, engaging the readers. Yahweh's words are an invitation, a question, that confronts not just Ezekiel, but the book's hearers as they look around: 'Can these bones live?' 'How can they live?' 'Who will make them live?' The emphasis should be focused not on the locutionary act, but on the illocutionary: 'What is Yahweh doing in asking the question?' Similarly, the lack of closure in Ezekiel's reply, with neither a positive or negative answer, induces reader involvement. At one level of course there was no

⁷⁰ Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p241.

⁷¹ Bryan R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third-World Peoples*, (New York, Heinemann Educ., 1973), p272, cited in Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, p241.

⁷² Cf. also the despairing cry of 37:11, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' In a different context, compare the words of the man who ran up to Jesus in Mark 10:17, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'

⁷³ In addition to the commentaries, see e.g. Wagner, 'Geist und Leben'; Fox, 'Rhetoric'; Peter Höffken, 'Beobachtungen zu Ezechiel XXXVII 1-10', *VT* 31 (1981), pp305-17; Adrian Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts His People: The Disputation Speech in the Prophets*, AnBib 104, (Rome, Biblical Institute Press, 1984), pp83-86; Bernhard Lang, 'Street Theater, Raising the Dead, and the Zoroastrian Connection in Ezekiel's Prophecy', in *EHB*, pp297-316; Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, pp283-338; Christopher R. Seitz, 'Ezekiel 37:1-14', *Int* 46 (1992), pp53-56; Leslie C. Allen, 'Structure, Tradition and Redaction in Ezekiel's Death Valley Vision', in *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, eds. P.R. Davies and D.J.A. Clines, JSOTSup 144, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993), pp127-42; Harald M. Wahl, "'Tod und Leben" Zur Wiederherstellung Israels nach Ez. XXXVII 1-14', *VT* 49 (1999), pp218-39.

⁷⁴ Fox, 'Rhetoric', p11.

⁷⁵ Fox, 'Rhetoric', p11.

⁷⁶ Pace Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, p326.

possibility (cf. Job 14:14). At the same time, Yahweh both ‘kills and makes alive’ (1 Sam. 2:6). More than that, he is the creator.⁷⁷ The barely believable possibility is left open.⁷⁸

Then Yahweh gives a prophetic word for Ezekiel to utter to the bones. That word stresses the רוח that Yahweh will ‘bring’ (מביא) (v.5) and ‘give’ (ונתתי) (v.6), for the revivifying רוח is mentioned twice. In v.5, the essence of the revivification is spelled out, ‘I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.’ In v.6, the entire process is outlined. After being embodied, the bones shall ‘live’ (והייתם) (v.6) and shall, by way of climax ‘know that I am Yahweh’ (וידעתם כי־אני יהוה) (v.6). The actual events in the vision, however, in response to that first prophetic word, culminate in a puzzling, even astonishing, anti-climax at the end of v.8, which seems to interrupt the flow: ‘but there was no breath in them (ורוח אין בהם).’⁷⁹ Within the vision, there needs to be another word uttered, summoning הרוח to come from the four winds, before the embodied bones can be on their feet, alive. Such an anti-climax demands an explanation.⁸⁰

As noted above,⁸¹ the two-stage vision of life for the bones resonates with the creation account in Gen. 2:7 and its context; the presence of two stages (forming, then in-breathing), the repetition of נפח (Gen. 2:7, Ezek. 37:9), the goal of becoming ‘living’ (Gen. 2:7 - לנפש חיה; Ezek. 37:6 - והייתם),⁸² the ‘setting’ (נחה; Gen. 2:15; Ezek. 37:14)⁸³ in their ‘land’ (אדמה; Gen. 2:5; Ezek. 37:12, 14)⁸⁴ and the ‘movement from chaos to order’⁸⁵ point in this direction. The fact that ‘breath’ in Gen. 2:7 is נשמה should not be seen as significant, since the need to exploit the polysemous nature of רוח in 37:1-14 makes it impossible for the breath that entered the bones to be נשמה, and by the time of the exile, the two words clearly had overlapping semantic domains (cf. Gen. 7:22; Isa. 42:5).⁸⁶ Hals sees this link with creation as a sufficient explanation. The two-staged

⁷⁷ See further below and Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp138-39 n143.

⁷⁸ So Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p56.

⁷⁹ It is interesting to note that Allen’s translation can accidentally miss out this phrase ‘but there was no breath in them’, yet it still makes sense! (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p181).

⁸⁰ It will be apparent from what follows that I am not persuaded by those who appeal to redactional activity to explain the two stages (e.g. Höffken, ‘Beobachtungen’, pp307-308; Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, pp290-93; Wahl, “‘Tod und Leben’”, pp224ff.; Pohlmann, *Der Prophet Hesekiel 20-48*, pp497-99). I am similarly unconvinced by those who attribute the shift in form between vision and oracle or the imagery between ‘bones’ and ‘graves’ to redactional activity (e.g. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, pp277-79; Graffy, *A Prophet Confronts*, pp83-84; Pohlmann, *Der Prophet Hesekiel 20-48*, p493). See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, pp256-58; Allen, ‘Structure, Tradition and Redaction’, pp138-39; Wagner, ‘Geist und Leben’, p153; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p60.

⁸¹ P191 n15.

⁸² Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p56.

⁸³ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp133-34.

⁸⁴ Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p61. The phrase אדמת ישראל occurs 17 times in Ezekiel, once in Ezek. 37:1-14 (v.12) and nowhere else in the Old Testament. The notion of ‘working’ (עבד) the ground is present in Gen. 2:5 and Ezek. 36:34 (though there ‘ground’ is ארץ).

⁸⁵ Fox, ‘Rhetoric’, p10.

⁸⁶ Albertz and Westermann see the occurrences here as the earliest instances of רוח as ‘breath of life’, and regard them as instrumental in the semantic shift. See ‘רוח’, *TLOT3*, p1209. However it is not easy to see how this observation relates to their comment on p1208, in discussing the ancient notion of רוח as ‘vitality’: ‘it is unthinkable that the Israelites could conceive of the force of vitality without a perceptible expression’. LXX makes the link explicit by reading πνεῦμα ζωής at the end of v.5.

approach, he argues, is one of two ways of introducing a message of salvation; specifically, it is ‘the establishment of the continuity of divine action.’⁸⁷ The new creation corresponds to the old creation (Gen. 2:7); the same God can do a similar thing one more time.

Others, while acknowledging the links with Genesis, stress the drama: Greenberg remarks, ‘unexpectedly the process halts before life is restored to the reconstituted bodies, delaying, and thus highlighting, the climax.’⁸⁸ All attention will now be focused on the “‘very, very great army” standing on its feet, ready – for what?’⁸⁹ Allen says that ‘the process accentuates the power of God even as it concedes the difficulty of the enterprise’,⁹⁰ and Fox comments in similar vein that such a failure parallels that of ‘the magician who invariably “fails” once or twice...in order to intensify suspense and to focus attention on the climactic success to follow.’⁹¹

Kutsko explains the two stages rather differently, although preserving the creational links. Drawing on what Kutsko maintains is the common understanding of Ezekiel’s audience concerning the Mesopotamian imperial practices towards cult statues of vanquished foes, Ezekiel ‘fills the old pattern with new content’ in chs. 36-37.⁹² He deliberately ‘parodies’ for rhetorical purposes the refashioning of cult images before their return, evidenced in inscriptions, in order to emphasise the cleansing and removing of idolatry from Yahweh’s people.⁹³ It is within this framework that he interprets 37:1-14. The vision of the reformed bones he sees as reversing the punishment for idolatry declared by Yahweh in 6:4-6, where Yahweh announces, ‘I will scatter your bones around your altars’ (v.5). The phrase in v.8 speaking of the lack of breath in the refashioned bones (וְרוּחַ אֵין בָּהֶם) Kutsko sees as echoing the prophetic mocking of idols (e.g. Jer. 10:14, וְלֹא-רוּחַ בָּם; cf. Hab. 2:19). He summarises, ‘It appears that the vision in Ezekiel 37 halts (in v.8) at a point that leaves Israel equal to its idols – and no better. Neither they nor the intermediate formation of bodies has רוּחַ. Thus the re-creation process must continue, as it did at creation, with God’s breathing life into them.’⁹⁴

The link between ch. 6 and ch. 37 is more tenuous than Kutsko maintains, since the only significant verbal link is that of ‘bones’, and ch. 6 relates to events in the land, not in exile, so the reversal is not exact. The bones belong to different people. However his point about the language of idols being reflected in the salvation oracles in chs. 36-37 is more persuasive. There are strong echoes of idols, both in the language of 37:8b, and in the language of a ‘stone heart’ which is, Kutsko proposes, a figurative way of speaking

⁸⁷ Hals, *Ezekiel*, p269.

⁸⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p747.

⁸⁹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p747.

⁹⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p185.

⁹¹ Fox, ‘Rhetoric’, p11.

⁹² Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, ch. 4. The quotation is from p124.

⁹³ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p134.

⁹⁴ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p137.

of Israel's attraction to foreign idols (cf. 20:32, 'serve...stone').⁹⁵ Within the critique of those who worship idols becoming in some sense like those idols (cf. Ps. 115:5-8),⁹⁶ the clear implication, which Kutsko does not draw, is that the 'bones' addressed by Ezekiel are *still* idolatrous. This fits with the book's portrayal of Ezekiel's addressees. I shall return to this below, but need first to look at another scholar's analysis which in many ways complements that of Kutsko.

Renz states that '37:1-11a expose the prophetic word as achieving at first only a gathering of bones without giving those bones life.'⁹⁷ He suggests that the first stage looks like 'a failure of the prophetic word,'⁹⁸ for Ezekiel's word has not yet come to pass; it has not had the powerful impact that might have been expected. He does not think that the increased drama is adequate to account for such a serious issue. After refuting arguments that the two-stage restoration might be 'something to do with Yahweh'⁹⁹ or a 'spiritual restoration following a physical restoration,'¹⁰⁰ he argues that the two-stage restoration is a way of reassuring the audience of the power and efficacy of the prophetic word.

He notes that the prophetic word was often accused of being slow to come into effect (e.g. Ezek. 12:21-28), and proposes, 'by affirming that a second step will complete what was lacking after the first step, the text claims that Yahweh will bring about what he promised, in spite of the ineffectiveness experienced so far.'¹⁰¹ If the experience of people is that the prophetic word is not coming to pass, then it is more effective to portray the two stages than simply to reaffirm dogmatically the power of the prophetic word. He sees confirmation of this in the behaviour of the audience portrayed in 33:30-33. The editor, Renz comments, clearly regards the fall of Jerusalem as the confirmation of Ezekiel's prophetic authority, but the original audience of the prophet is presented as still unconvinced about the claims Ezekiel makes: 'The prophetic word has, so to speak, gathered "the bones" without yet breathing life into them.'¹⁰² He then reapplies Hals' understanding, noted above: the link to Gen. 2:7 then points not to failure because of the two stages, but to the continuity of divine action. The "small things" that shaped and formed the community in exile should not be seen as a failure, but as 'the first step towards full restoration.'¹⁰³ A prophet is present. The hopeless sentiment expressed in 37:11 is precisely, Renz suggests, because the audience do not

⁹⁵ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp128-29. He also draws particular attention to 20:16 and 14:4.

⁹⁶ Cf. Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp137-38. Cf. Isa. 41:29 where images are תהוה, and 44:9, where those who make idols are similarly תהוה.

⁹⁷ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p207.

⁹⁸ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p207.

⁹⁹ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p206.

¹⁰⁰ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p207.

¹⁰¹ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p207.

¹⁰² Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p208.

¹⁰³ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p208.

believe the prophetic word. 'The book presents the vision as Yahweh's reassurance to his prophet that the prophetic word will accomplish its task.'¹⁰⁴

Renz's argument has much to commend it. First, it makes sense psychologically. Since Ezekiel was not instructed initially to report the vision,¹⁰⁵ any explanation of the two-staged vision must account for the effect of the vision on Ezekiel himself. Here, it serves to reassure him that his prophetic word will do its work, even though it appears feeble and frail at the moment, and people are not listening to him. They are still, to borrow Kutsko's phrase, 'equal to...idols'¹⁰⁶ because they are still idolatrous.

Secondly, it explains the sense of anti-climax. Purely 'dramatic' explanations underestimate the anti-climax and downplay the significance of the 'failure' of the prophetic word. If initially the vision served to reassure the prophet, it reappears in the book of Ezekiel with the same perlocutionary aim, that of reassurance, but with a different audience: it aims to provide reassurance and confidence to the readers that this seeming delay in the restoration was part of God's purposes – the two stages are *part* of Yahweh's vision.

Thirdly, the correspondence between Ezekiel's ministry to the bones and to the exilic addresses fits this picture. The goal of the proclamation in the vision was that the bones would 'live' and 'know that I am Yahweh' (vv.5, 6). Ezekiel prophesied to the bones (v.7). He has prophesied to the exiles, as instructed (vv.12-14). The goal is the same, that they 'live' and 'know that I am Yahweh' (v.14). The exiles are not yet alive, nor do they yet 'know that I am Yahweh'. The purpose of the oracle is to convince them that the next stage is coming. They are located at the end of v.8, gathered but lifeless. It is an interesting point whether Kutsko and Renz differ in how positive this stage is. It might seem that Kutsko's is more negative, because Israel are effectively still idols, having 'no breath in them.' However, against the backdrop of the refashioning being an unfinished process, with the next stage coming, there is no reason to think Kutsko would regard this stage as wholly negative. What both Renz and (my extrapolation of) Kutsko have in common is that this perspective is entirely *realistic*. Ezekiel has prophesied to the bones. They have to a degree been reformed, in that they are gathered around the prophet, but they are still rebellious. There is something transitional about this stage.

Finally, Renz is right to refute the notion that the two stages correspond to 'consecutive acts' of physical, and then spiritual, restoration, both because it does not fit with what is said elsewhere in the book (e.g. 11:17-20, where removal of idols implies some internal workings by the exiles, yet it precedes the giving of a new heart and a new spirit), and because 'the order in 37:14 is reversed.'¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p209.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p262.

¹⁰⁶ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, p137.

¹⁰⁷ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p207 (his emphasis); see further p191 above.

However, the role of the divine רִיחַ needs revisiting. Renz says that ‘the present text does not support the contention that Yahweh needs...the help of the Spirit (understood as an independent entity) to accomplish his task.’¹⁰⁸ He goes on, rightly, to point out that ‘Yahweh’s spirit is Yahweh’s efficacy’ which ‘makes life possible’ and ‘enables people to accomplish deeds they could not otherwise do.’¹⁰⁹ Further, ‘winds and breath are completely at Yahweh’s disposal.’¹¹⁰ He concludes that the two stages are not explicable in terms of Yahweh, and therefore must be to do with Israel. While Renz is right to stress Yahweh’s authority over רִיחַ, such that he does not need the help of the Spirit, yet Yahweh may *choose* to use רִיחַ as his instrument. After the bones have been formed into lifeless bodies, there is no further word addressed to them. A further word to them is not needed for them to come to life. In that sense, the vision is an *apologia* for the book of Ezekiel itself; no further word beyond the words of the prophet Ezekiel, as recorded in the book, is necessary.¹¹¹ It is at this point, though, that my understanding diverges from Renz’s, for it is of great significance that the vision calls neither for a passive waiting, nor for an active response on the part of the reformed bodies (i.e. repentance of the exiles), until the apparently weak, ‘failed’ word proves itself to be powerful by bringing about the desired effects in due time. What *is* needed is something different, something radical, something from the outside breaking in to bring to completion what the word has started. What is needed is רִיחַ. It is this רִיחַ that will move the exiles from being in their idolatry like idols to the final goal of knowing that ‘I am Yahweh.’

In other words, what is at issue in the two stages is not so much the power of the word per se, but *how that word can become effective in their experience*. Ezek. 37:1-14 is not about ‘affirming the absurd’.¹¹² Rather, it explains *how* the absurd will happen, and makes it seem less absurd by using language redolent of creation. While it is true, with Renz, that the exiles are the bones gathered and re-formed by the prophetic word of the prophet, they are still idolatrous and still disobedient to that word. They are awaiting not a further word, nor a fulfilment of the original word, but רִיחַ to come and make that word effective in their experience. Further, the agent of this change is not simply רִיחַ as ‘life-breath’ that will revivify the ‘dead’ exiles, for in 37:14, there is the dynamic shift in meaning from רִיחַ as ‘breath of life’ to רִיחַ as Yahweh’s spirit. ‘Ezekiel introduces a new idea by subterfuge just by adding the possessive suffix.’¹¹³ In ch. 37, רִיחַ moves beyond the *Lebenskraft*, the ‘vitality’ that was lost, to *Lebensodem*, the ‘breath of life’ for those who were dead. In 37:14, it moves beyond *Lebensodem* to *Geist Gottes*,

¹⁰⁸ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p206.

¹⁰⁹ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p206.

¹¹⁰ Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p206.

¹¹¹ I shall look at the significance of v.9 below.

¹¹² Fox, ‘Rhetoric’, p1.

¹¹³ Fox, ‘Rhetoric’, p15.

echoing 36:27.¹¹⁴ Not simply revivification, but moral transformation and a new community united in their knowledge of Yahweh is in view. It is as the exiles respond in repentance to the call made to Ezekiel's audience, and now made, indirectly, through the book, to the addressees of the book, that Yahweh's רוח works to bring about precisely that response, breathing new life into them, as part of the holistic restoration.

The continuity in divine action that Hals maintains, and that can be seen in the disputation oracle that explains the vision (37:12-14), serves, then, to show two things. From a divine perspective, it shows the intimate link between the prophet speaking the word and the response that is both desired and will be produced by Yahweh's רוח. From the perspective of the exilic addressees of the book, it shows how their response to Yahweh's word is appropriate, indeed essential, as an integral part of one event – the revivifying of the 'dead' that they themselves are. Here, then, Yahweh's word and Yahweh's רוח are intimately related. Here, too, divine initiative and sovereignty, expressed in the action of רוח, are held together with human responsibility, expressed in the ongoing need of repentance. The response to their helpless complaint, 'How shall we live?' (33:10), was met there by the call to repent (33:11). The response to their helpless complaint, 'Our bones are dried up' (37:11), is that Yahweh will put his spirit *qua* breath in them (v.14). The two passages provide complementary perspectives. The initiative lies with Yahweh. It is he who commands Ezekiel to address הָרוּחַ, while the reformed bodies are still not alive. But the image of רוח revivifying the bones should not be interpreted as obviating the need for a response.

Before we look at evidence that supports such a view, it is necessary to address one notion that would invalidate such an understanding, and that is the notion that the word itself is inherently powerful. Were this the case, then there would be no need for רוח to effect Yahweh's word.

It has often been said that the ancient Israelites had a different conception of the word from that of modern western thinking. So, for example, Eichrodt has written that it 'possessed an importance quite different from that which it enjoys today.'¹¹⁵ This different perspective is, exponents say, seen particularly in the power that the ancients supposedly saw as inherent in the word.¹¹⁶ So Koch comments, 'in the prophet's view the dynamic aspect of the word, which calls forth historical events, is more important than the dianoetic information it contains.'¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Cf. Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, pp63-64; D.M.G. Stalker, *Ezekiel: Introduction and Commentary*, Torch, (London, SCM Press Ltd, 1968), p257. The clear link with 36:27, noted particularly by Allen (Allen, 'Structure, Tradition and Redaction', pp127-42), suggests that it is more simply than his own 'breath' that he gives to them in analogous fashion to Ps. 104:29-30, *pace* Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p125 and Woodhouse, "'Spirit" in the Book of Ezekiel', p18.

¹¹⁵ Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p69.

¹¹⁶ von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 2, pp80-98; Isaac Rabinowitz, *A Witness Forever: Ancient Israel's Perception of Literature and the Resultant Hebrew Bible*, (Bethesda, CDL, 1993).

¹¹⁷ Koch, *The Prophets*, vol. 2, p94; also pp165-66.

Such a notion could potentially be seen in both the first and the second stages of the vision in 37:1-10. Thus Rabinowitz argues that speech directed to inanimate objects such as dry bones reflected ancient Israel's understanding that 'the speech was designed to create a physical reality.'¹¹⁸ In similar vein, Eichrodt says that the prophet 'has experience of the effectiveness of the divine word of power which he has been ordered to proclaim.'¹¹⁹ What the word has declared in vv.4-6 comes to pass in vv.7-8, even as Ezekiel is prophesying. Further, in v.9, the divine word spoken by the prophet summons רוח, and רוח comes.

However, such a conclusion, of the inherent power of words in general in the ancient world, and of the power of the word in Ezek. 37, is mistaken. The notion that words in general in ancient Israel were understood to be powerful has been subject to a devastating critique by Thiselton.¹²⁰ Of particular significance is his criticism that proponents of the 'powerful word' do not give adequate attention to the fact that often it is Yahweh (or, in the ANE, the deity) who speaks the word, thus confounding the issue of where the power actually lies. More significant even than that for our purposes is the fact that it is not Yahweh's word *per se* that is seen to be powerful in Ezek. 37 at all. Thus in the first stage, although Ezekiel addressees the bones, the word that he utters in vv.5-6 is a declaration of what Yahweh, not Yahweh's word, will do for the bones. There is silence on *how* the bones came together; Yahweh's word reveals Yahweh's will, and no more; it shows that Yahweh's actions are not arbitrary.¹²¹ In the second stage, it is true that the prophetic word spoken by Ezekiel summons הרוח, but that does not mean that the word itself is powerful to act, independently of Yahweh, whose word it is. What it does serve to show is that the action of רוח is intimately linked with the prophetic word spoken through the prophet Ezekiel, and now re-presented to the exilic addressees. רוח comes in and through the words of the prophet.¹²² There is no hope for revival and renewal separate from the words of the prophet; there is also no hope for revival and renewal separate from the revivifying work of רוח. Schüngel-Straumann comes close to summarising it neatly, though her strict distinction of roles is unwarranted:

'The all-powerful word of Yahweh admittedly brings the *rwḥ*, but the making alive happens through the power of God, *rwḥ*, alone; so neither a super- nor a subordination between *rwḥ* and word can be maintained, rather something like a complementarity.'¹²³

¹¹⁸ Rabinowitz, *A Witness Forever*, p55.

¹¹⁹ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p508.

¹²⁰ Anthony C. Thiselton, 'The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings', *JTS* 25 (1974), pp283-99.

¹²¹ Cf. Fretheim, 'Word of God', *ABD* 6, p965.

¹²² Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p59.

¹²³ Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p65. 'Das vollmächtige Jahwewort bringt zwar die *rwḥ* herbei, aber das Lebendigmachen geschieht durch die Gotteskraft *rwḥ* allein; so läßt sich weder eine Über- noch eine Unterordnung zwischen *rwḥ* und Wort behaupten, eher so etwas wie eine Komplementarität.'

Though arguments about the power of Yahweh's word do not refute the understanding put forward above, that רִיחַ effects the word in the experience of those who hear it, such an understanding still needs positive evidence. Three pieces of evidence point in this direction.

First, the outcome of repentance to the prophet's call elsewhere in the book is identical to that produced by the action of רִיחַ in ch. 37. In a number of places (e.g. 13:22; 18:32; 33:11), 'life' for the exiles is explicitly portrayed as the product of Ezekiel's addressees' repentance or of obedience to Yahweh's laws (e.g. 20:11). In ch. 37, 'life' is clearly the outcome of the action of רִיחַ that comes in and through the words of the prophet. I have argued above that the addressees of the book are still confronted with calls to repent. From the perspective of the book as a whole, as it confronts its exilic addressees, רִיחַ can be seen to bring about in their own experience the response that is required of them.

Secondly, the parallel with creation traditions, already noted in the presence of the two stages in the process of restoration, extends further, as evinced in the relationship between the divine word and the divine רִיחַ in Gen. 1.¹²⁴ Yahweh's רִיחַ acts to bring about Yahweh's word. It needs to be acknowledged at this point that such an interpretation of Gen. 1 is by no means universally accepted. The phrase אֱלֹהִים רִיחַ in 1:2 has been interpreted in four main ways, as a 'great wind',¹²⁵ as 'the wind of God',¹²⁶ as 'the breath of God',¹²⁷ and as 'the spirit of God'.¹²⁸ The difference between the first of these interpretations and the other three cannot be underestimated. The first suggests

¹²⁴ Caution over speaking of allusions to creation in Ezekiel has been rightly expressed by Petersen (David L. Petersen, 'Creation in Ezekiel: Methodological Perspectives and Theological Prospects', in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Number 38*, (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), pp490-500). He is, however, unduly sceptical about the presence and significance of creation traditions in Ezekiel. Some parallels with the Genesis creation account attributed to J (2:4b-3:24) have already been noted; see further Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration*, pp25-36; Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp129-34. Although Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 1*, p52) states that 'the specific theological ideas of the historical outline of P...find no echo in Ezekiel' and Kutsko's argument that Ezekiel knew and built on the notion of humans as 'in the image of God' relies perhaps too much on circumstantial evidence, there are still pointers towards common ideas (e.g. וָרִיחַ וּפָרוּ (36:11); the role of רִיחַ in (re-)creation; the emphasis on Yahweh's spoken word (Zimmerli, "Leben" und "Tod", p507)). My argument is not that Ezekiel is alluding to Genesis 1. Rather, there is a similarity of ideas present in both places.

¹²⁵ So e.g. von Rad, who comments that 'this "spirit of God" takes no more active part in creation' (Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A commentary*, 3rd edn., original tr. J.H. Marks, (London, SCM, 1972), p49; also Harry M. Orlinsky, 'The Plain Meaning of רִיחַ in Gen. 1.2', *JQR* 48 (1957/58), pp174-82; E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1, (New York, Doubleday, 1964), p5; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, tr. J.J. Scullion, (London, SPCK, 1984), pp79, 107-108; P.J. Smith, 'A Semotactical Approach to the Meaning of the Term רִיחַ 'ēlōhîm in Genesis 1:2', *JNSL* 8 (1980), pp99-104.

¹²⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1, (Waco, Word, 1987), pp16-17; 'רִיחַ', *ThWAT* 7, pp405-407; Dion, 'La רִיחַ dans l'Heptateuch', p172.

¹²⁷ N.H. Ridderbos, 'Gen. 1.1 und 2', *OTS* 12 (1958), pp214-60.

¹²⁸ Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, (London, SCM Press, 1960), p35; van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p187; Johnson, *Vitality*, pp32-33; Neve, *Spirit of God*, pp64ff.; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, NICOT, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990), pp111-14; Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, pp32-37; Michael DeRoche, 'The רִיחַ 'ēlōhîm in Gen 1:2c: Creation or Chaos?' in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, eds. Lyle Eslinger & Glen Taylor, *JSOTSup* 67, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1988), pp303-18; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, pp173-75.

that רוח אֱלֹהִים refers to the substance out of which God creates the universe, while the others suggest that this phrase refers in some sense to the creator of the universe. The difference between the second, third and fourth interpretations lies not in the source of רוח, since all agree that the phrase refers to the deity as origin, but in the primary referent. The second interpretation, while acknowledging that God may be responsible for the wind, sees the text as describing what is essentially a meteorological phenomenon. The third interpretation argues that the phrase רוח אֱלֹהִים refers to a life-giving force that underpins all of creation. The fourth interpretation sees God's רוח being portrayed as separate from God, not in the sense of being independent of God, but rather speaking of 'the impending creative activity of the deity.'¹²⁹ The Targumim capture some of the difficulty. Targum Onqelos has 'a wind from before the Lord',¹³⁰ while Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Targum Neofiti 1 have 'a wind / spirit of mercy from before God / the Lord.'¹³¹

Syntactically, the phrase parallels 'the earth was desert-like and empty'¹³² and 'darkness covered the deep'. The parallelism is further enhanced by the virtual synonymy of 'deep' and 'waters' in v.2b and v.2c. Thus v.2 consists of three parallel clauses which describe the situation prior to God speaking in v.3.

This parallelism leads some scholars, such as Westermann, to see any kind of positive connotations in רוח אֱלֹהִים as inappropriate. Thus they prefer the translation 'a fearful wind'.¹³³

However, this view is not without its problems. There are six main arguments against this, the first interpretation. First, this interpretation regards אֱלֹהִים as expressing a superlative, yet אֱלֹהִים is never elsewhere used with 'wind' to express a superlative.¹³⁴ Secondly, such a rendering ignores the parallels with the next occurrence of the phrase in Exod. 31:3, where Bezalel is filled with the רוח אֱלֹהִים. According to Hamilton (following Fishbane), 'this key phrase unites.., via an intertextual allusion, world

¹²⁹ DeRoche, 'The *rûah 'ēlōhîm*', p318.

¹³⁰ Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 6, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1988), p42. In the quotation, I have removed Grossfeld's square brackets from 'and a wind'. His brackets indicate that the text is missing from Vat. 448, but present in the Sabbioneta text (see p36).

¹³¹ McNamara renders the phrase 'a spirit of mercy from before the Lord' (Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1A, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1992), p52. Maher, on the other hand, prefers 'a merciful wind' (Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1B, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1992), p16 (his emphasis). Maher notes the possibility of translating as 'a spirit of mercy', but expresses his preference for 'wind' because of the verb 'blow' (p16 n5). Both note that there is the same phrase in 8:1.

¹³² David T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*, JSOTSup 83, (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1989), p42. Tsumura argues cogently that 'both the biblical context and extra-biblical parallels suggest that the phrase *tōhū wābōhū* in Gen 1:2 has nothing to do with "chaos" and simply means "emptiness" and refers to the earth which is an empty place, i.e. "an unproductive and uninhabited place"'(p43).

¹³³ Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p107; cf. n125 on p206.

¹³⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, pp16-17.

building and tabernacle building.¹³⁵ Thirdly, of the 35 occurrences of אֱלֹהִים in Gen. 1:1-2:3, 34 clearly refer to the deity; it is unlikely that its occurrence in this clause would have a different meaning.¹³⁶ More particularly, אֱלֹהִים in v.2 would hardly have a different meaning from that in v.1 and v.3 without any indication.¹³⁷ Fourthly, there are other unambiguous ways of expressing 'a mighty wind.' Fifthly, this wind can hardly be part of the 'unproductive and uninhabited place' before God spoke, since there is no logical reason for its inclusion.¹³⁸ Finally, the main argument in favour of this position, the textual one based on the parallelism in v.2, can be answered by saying that simultaneity rather than synonymity is in view.¹³⁹

Distinguishing between other interpretations is more difficult. The most obvious place to look is at the participle which qualifies אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ, but discussions here are inconclusive. The piel participle describing אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ in v.2 comes from the verb רָחַף, which only occurs in the piel elsewhere in the Old Testament in Deut. 32:11. There, it describes the eagle that 'hovers' (?) (יִרְחֹף) over its young before they fly off. However, the rendering of יִרְחֹף there is not without its difficulties. For example, the verb parallel with רָחַף in Deut. 32:11, עוּר, may not mean 'stir up' but rather 'watch over'. Evidence for this includes the LXX, which has σκεπάσαι, and, in Hamilton's view, the Ugaritic parallel *gyr*.¹⁴⁰ This may suggest a meaning for the piel of רָחַף of something like 'watch over' rather than 'hover'. However, the LXX for יִרְחֹף in Deut. 32:11 is ἐπεπόθησεν ('yearns over'), a meaning somewhat removed from the Ugaritic usage of the verb *rḥp*, which is always associated with eagles, and means something like 'soar'. On this basis, Hamilton says that רָחַף 'describes the actions of birds, not winds',¹⁴¹ and prefers to render אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ with 'spirit of God.' Wenham, however, commenting on the same data, adopts the rendering 'Wind of God'.¹⁴²

Comparisons with texts elsewhere in Genesis or the Pentateuch are also not conclusive. In Gen. 8:1, 'God made a wind blow (וַיַּעֲבֵר אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ) over the earth, and the waters subsided.' This may be an echo that illuminates Gen. 1, pointing to the unstated action of רוּחַ in the separating of the waters. The close relationship between the wind as a meteorological phenomenon sent by God and God's own breath is apparent from the parallels between Exod. 14:21 and Exod. 15:8, 10. In Exod. 14:21, 'Yahweh drove the sea back by a strong east wind (בְּרוּחַ קָדִים עֹזָה) all night.' The same action is

¹³⁵ Hamilton, *Genesis*, p112; so too J.H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: a Biblical-Theological Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1992), pp32-33; *idem*, 'Genesis', in *The Expositors' Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990), p25.

¹³⁶ DeRoche, 'The *rûah 'ēlōhîm*', p307.

¹³⁷ Childs, *Myth and Reality*, p35.

¹³⁸ As the wind of God, drying out the waters at his disposal, there is a place. See 'רוּחַ', *ThWAT* 7, pp405-407; cf. Ps. 104:4-9.

¹³⁹ DeRoche, 'The *rûah 'ēlōhîm*', p315 n26. He also notes that appeals to Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies have proved indecisive. See DeRoche, 'The *rûah 'ēlōhîm*', pp307f.

¹⁴⁰ Hamilton, *Genesis*, p115.

¹⁴¹ Hamilton, *Genesis*, p115.

¹⁴² Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p17.

expressed in 15:8 with the words, ‘At the blast of your nostrils (וּבְרוּחַ אֶפְיֶיךָ) the waters piled up’, an unmistakable reference to Yahweh’s breath. Yahweh is again involved when the sea swamps Pharaoh’s army, ‘You blew with your wind/breath (נָשַׁפְתָּ בְּרוּחְךָ), the sea covered them’ (15:10). Further evidence for the parallels between the two, and with Gen. 1, are found in the effects of this רוּחַ in revealing ‘dry ground’ (Gen. 1:9; Exod. 14:22; 15:19). These links point to an ambiguity in Gen. 1:2 that is surely deliberate. There is some kind of reference both to Yahweh’s breath and to a wind sent by Yahweh. It should of course be noted that רוּחַ in Ezekiel 37 is at one moment the wind summoned by the prophetic word (v.9), at the next moment the creative revivifying breath of life (vv.5, 6, 8, 10), a breath that is itself interpreted as God’s spirit (v.14).

On balance, I think it preferable to see the primary referent here not as a meteorological phenomenon, the wind of God, but as theological, the creative ‘breath/spirit of God’. This rendering is supported by other similar texts (Isa. 40:13; Ps. 33:6; Job 26:13), in which רוּחַ functions ‘not as a created element, but as a creating power.’¹⁴³ It is also supported by the comparison noted above¹⁴⁴ with Deut. 32:10-11, where Yahweh’s guiding is like an eagle ‘hovering’ (pi. רָחַף) over the wilderness (תְּהוֹמָה).¹⁴⁵ It is also supported by the next occurrence of the phrase, where the parallel between the making of the world and the making of the tabernacle is striking. As Sailhamer comments, ‘in both accounts the work of God (*m^elāḳāh*, Gen 2:2; Exod 31:5 [also v.3]) is to be accomplished by the “Spirit of God” (*rū^aḥ ^elōhīm*). As God did his “work” (*m^elāḳāh*) of creation by means of the “Spirit of God” (*rū^aḥ ^elōhīm*), so Israel was to do their “work” (*m^elāḳāh*) by means of the “Spirit of God.”’¹⁴⁶ The notion that רוּחַ performs no useful function (see footnote 125) misses the point. While רוּחַ as ‘wind’ never reappears in Gen. 1, רוּחַ as spirit ‘joins the God of creation in v.1 to the same God in v.3, maintaining the continued action of the creative God’ and can be seen, in parallel with Ps. 33:6, to have a close link with the creative word.¹⁴⁷ ‘The spirit of God is the creative power of God which joins with the word, bearing and articulating it, in the creative act.’¹⁴⁸ In other words, the spirit of God *makes effective* the spoken word; it has an integral function within creation. Such a point has also been expressed by Fretheim, who, in discussing the role of God’s word in creation, maintains that ‘God’s creative activity’ should be understood not just in terms of what God said, but also with reference to ‘the work of the Spirit of God’ in Gen. 1:2.¹⁴⁹ At this point, his reference to

¹⁴³ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p68.

¹⁴⁴ See footnote 77 on p13.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, (Eugene, Wipf and Stock, 1999) (first published: Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1980), pp14-15.

¹⁴⁶ Sailhamer, ‘Genesis’, p25.

¹⁴⁷ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p69; Montague, *Holy Spirit*, pp67-68.

¹⁴⁸ Neve, *Spirit of God*, p69.

¹⁴⁹ Fretheim, ‘Word of God’, *ABD* 6, p965. In his commentary on Genesis, Fretheim comments, ‘God’s speaking does not stand isolated from God’s making (e.g., 1:6-7, 14-16; see also Ps 33:6; Isa 48:3). This

Isa. 34:16¹⁵⁰ is particularly significant. The function of רִנָּה there is to give ‘expression’ to the word not by uttering it, nor by gathering it into the book of Yahweh, but ‘by executing it’.¹⁵¹ For Fretheim, then, spirit and word go together: ‘it is not suggested that there was no divine activity apart from speaking. God’s spirit and power follow in the train of the word and produce certain effects.’¹⁵² The same view has been articulated clearly by Warfield: ‘God’s thought and will and word take effect in the world, because God is not only over the world, thinking and willing and commanding, but also in the world, as the principle of all activity, *executing*’.¹⁵³ In Gen. 1, God’s רִנָּה is the power by which Yahweh brings to effect what his word expresses. Ezek. 37:14 mirrors the creation accounts not just at the point of ‘two stages,’ but also with regard to the relationship between divine word and divine רִנָּה. Yahweh’s רִנָּה makes effective the word that has been uttered.¹⁵⁴

The third piece of evidence pointing to רִנָּה making effective Yahweh’s word is the symmetry between Ezekiel, in his commissioning, and the experience of the dry bones of the exilic community. In 2:2, the prophet, prostrate before the vision of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh, is set on his feet by רִנָּה that enters him. In 37:10, the hopeless exiles (cf. 33:10b; 37:11) stand on their feet because of רִנָּה that enters them. The similar wording in the two points strongly to conceptual links.

speaking-doing rhythm may reflect earlier forms of the text that have now been decisively integrated. Hence, the word itself does not explain sufficiently what comes to be; the word is accompanied by the deed. God does not create by “word events” but by “word-deed events.” T.E. Fretheim, ‘Genesis’, in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 1, eds. Leander E. Keck et al., (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1994), p343; cf. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, pp82-87.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Seek and read from the book of Yahweh:

Not one of these shall be missing;
none shall be without its mate.

For the mouth of Yahweh has commanded (כִּי־פִי הוּא צִוָּה),
and his spirit has gathered them (וְרוּחוֹ הוּא קִבְּצָן).’

¹⁵¹ Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p77-78 (quotation from p77). Ma is swift to add that ‘they are not separate actions by different agents.’

¹⁵² ‘Word of God’, *ABD* 6, p965.

¹⁵³ Warfield, ‘Spirit of God in the Old Testament’, p108 (his emphasis).

¹⁵⁴ Note how a similar understanding of the work of God’s spirit has been combined with speech-act theory by Vanhoozer, such that God’s spirit brings about the perlocutionary effects of an illocutionary act of speaking. He comments, ‘there is a connection...between pneumatology and perlocutions...a perlocution is what one brings about *by* one’s speech act. Speech frequently presents an argument, but arguments are intended to produce assent. Perlocutions have to do with the effect on the hearer of a speech act.’ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ‘Effectual Call or Causal Effect? Summons, Sovereignty and Supervenient Grace’, *TynBul* 49 (1998), p248; cf. *idem*, ‘God’s Mighty Speech-Acts: The Doctrine of Scripture Today’, in *A Pathway into the Holy Scriptures*, eds. P. E. Satterthwaite and D. F. Wright (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1994), pp143-81; *idem*, *Is there a meaning in this text?: The Bible, the reader and the morality of literary knowledge*, (Leicester, Apollos, 1998); *idem*, ‘From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of the Covenant’ in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, & Karl Möller, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol. 2, (Carlisle, Paternoster / Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2001), pp1-49.

Table 11. Comparison of Ezek. 2:2 and 37:10

Ezek. 2:2	Ezek. 37:10
<p style="text-align: center;">וַתָּבֵא בִי רוּחַ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלַי וַתַּעֲמִדְנִי עַל-רַגְלִי וַאֲשַׁמַּע אֶת מִדְבַּר אֵלַי:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">וְהִנֵּבֹאֲתִי כַאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי וַתָּבֹא בָהֶם הַרוּחַ וַיִּחְיוּ וַיַּעֲמִדוּ עַל-רַגְלֵיהֶם חֵיל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד-מְאֹד:</p>

Before the prophet himself can have a hope for the future, before he can stand in Yahweh's presence, hear his word and obey, he himself must experience the divine *רוּחַ*;¹⁵⁵ the same is true of the exiles. As I argued above, it is *רוּחַ* that makes effective the divine word in 2:2; in the same way, in ch. 37, what the reformed bones of the exiles need is Yahweh's *רוּחַ* to come so that they can stand on their feet – to make effective in their experience the word that has been spoken to them by the prophet, and which is recorded for them in the book.

Similar links are present in 3:22-24. There, *רוּחַ* enters Ezekiel and sets him on his feet (*וַתָּבֵא-בִי רוּחַ וַתַּעֲמִדְנִי עַל-רַגְלִי*). What is particularly striking is that this happens in the 'valley' (*הַבְּקָעָה*). The only other occurrences of this word in the book are in 8:4, where Ezekiel refers to the vision that he saw 'in the valley' and in 37:1-2, where it is referred to again as 'the valley' (*הַבְּקָעָה*). Just as *רוּחַ* caused Ezekiel to stand in the valley (3:22-24), so *רוּחַ* enables the refashioned bones to stand 'in the valley' (37:1-2, 10).¹⁵⁶ Such parallels between the experience of the prophet and the experience of the exiles are reinforced by three further links, all internal to ch. 37.

The first can be derived from structural observations about the construction of the unit 37:1-14.¹⁵⁷ Although it is not necessary to agree with Fishbane that there is a chiasmic structure in these verses, he notes several inclusions which serve to tie the prophet's experience to the exiles':

'(A) the text opens with a reference to Ezekiel's inspiration by means of the divine spirit (*רוּחַ*) and his relocation (*ויניחני*) in a death valley (vv.1-2), and it concludes (A') with references to Israel's resuscitation through YHWH's spirit-breath (*רוּחַ*) and its relocation (*והנחתי*) in its ancestral homeland (v.14).'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ That it is divine is clear not from the immediate context, but only retrospectively. See pp102ff.

¹⁵⁶ The reason for the move from *רוּחַ* as subject in 2:2 and 3:24 of *עמד* (hif.) to the refashioned bones being the subject of *עמד* (qal) in 37:10 is not certain. It could be to encourage the possibility of a theological understanding in 2:2 and 3:24 (cf. Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, p303), generating deliberate ambiguity. The alternative is that it serves to stress the action, not the mere passivity, of the refashioned bones in 37:10. Enabled by *רוּחַ*, they, as agents, stand on their feet.

¹⁵⁷ That these verses form a literary unit is clear from both the start and the conclusion. See Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p370; Allen, 'Structure, Tradition and Redaction', pp127-42. The start is marked by the 'hand of Yahweh' coming upon the prophet and bringing him out, something that is clearly distinct from what has preceded. The conclusion is marked by a combination of the recognition formula, the formulaic 'I have spoken and I will do it', by the concluding signatory formula in v.14, and by the word-event formula introducing a new unit in 37:15.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985), p452. Allen (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p183) also draws attention to the inclusions. Fox ('Rhetoric', p14), however, disagrees, arguing that the author does not conspicuously draw attention to v.1 in v.14 and that the two

Secondly, and derived from the first point, there is the link between רִיחַ יְהוָה in 37:1 and רִיחֵי in 37:14. Carley sees the occurrence of the explicit 'spirit of Yahweh' as being something significant at this point in the book.¹⁵⁹ He argues that throughout the rest of the book, רִיחַ is not specifically Yahweh's רִיחַ. This enables Yahweh's רִיחַ to be used exclusively in the book 'in connection with the restoration of the nation, or the revival of the people as those who "know Yahweh."' The shift marked by the introduction of 'spirit of Yahweh' is due, in Carley's view, to the 'difference between the old and the new Israel...In the context of the hope of restoration, common phenomena no longer served as satisfactory images to describe the new, dynamic power which would enable the people to honour Yahweh's name'.¹⁶⁰ Thus, in 37:1, 'the promise of the future is realized in the prophet's own experience.'¹⁶¹ Carley's basic observation about the relationship between prophet and people stands, even if the self-evidently theological references to רִיחַ in 11:5 and 11:24 are accepted. Within the prophet's experience, there is a move from רִיחַ as the breath of life that enters and restores the prophet, and sets him on his feet (2:2) to the spirit of Yahweh that explicitly is seen to transport him (within his vision) in 37:1. In the same way, the meaning of רִיחַ with regard to the exiles permutes within ch. 37 from רִיחַ as revivifying 'breath' (v.5) through to רִיחַ as Yahweh's 'spirit' in v.14.

Thirdly, it has already been noted how the prophet is addressed by Yahweh throughout the book of Ezekiel as 'son of man.' The Targum of Ezekiel does not render it with a phrase that connotes the 'mortal unworthiness of the prophet',¹⁶² such as the Aramaic *bar 'ēnāš* or its variants, but on every occasion translates it with *bar 'ādām*. Levey comments, 'the Targumic phrase can only mean "son of Adam" or "Adamite"',¹⁶³ for in Aramaic, *'ādām* is a proper name. Levey notes that 'while it seems evident that the intent is deliberate, we can only conjecture as to the purpose of the phrase.' One way of reading it might be derived from Ezek. 37. We have already observed how the two distinct stages of resuscitation parallel closely the two phases of the creation of Adam in Gen. 2:7; as Block observes, 'the two-phased process of resuscitation also serves a theologico-anthropological function, emulating the paradigm of Yahweh's creation of *'ādām*.'¹⁶⁴ If the prophet is a paradigm of the people in his experience of the divine רִיחַ, then he can be seen as the first human in Yahweh's new

occurrences of רִיחַ 'function too differently to be able to combine into such a summary.' This is not compelling, since the presence of the other links (נוח and the theme of 'place') do establish the links.

¹⁵⁹ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp28-31.

¹⁶⁰ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p31.

¹⁶¹ Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, p31.

¹⁶² Samson H. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 13, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1987), p6.

¹⁶³ Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel*, p7.

¹⁶⁴ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p379.

work of creation amongst the exiles.¹⁶⁵ Twice, he is addressed as בֶּן-אָדָם in these verses (vv.3, 9). In the context of these verses, the prophet, as the first one who has received the life-giving רִיחַ of Yahweh, is indeed ‘son of Adam’ in another sense.¹⁶⁶

In summary, we have seen that Ezek. 37:1-14 serves to show to the exilic addressees of the book *how* the vision of the future, modelled by the prophet, can become ‘real’ in their experience, despite a history of constant failure to respond aright to Yahweh’s word, right up to their fathers, Ezekiel’s addressees. If the gathered, but lifeless, exilic community is to follow the prophet’s call to repentance, רִיחַ, intimately linked to the word spoken by the prophet, is essential. Only then can it be the revived, restored, united house of Israel in the land once again, knowing that ‘I am Yahweh’. Further, just as Ezekiel, in contrast to his intended audience, is paradigmatic for the readers in his response to Yahweh’s word, so too he is paradigmatic in his experience of Yahweh’s רִיחַ as that which enables an appropriate response. Seitz asks quizzically, ‘Are the condemned people now to undergo the same transformation that the prophet experienced at his call?’¹⁶⁷ We can answer in the affirmative.

This picture of רִיחַ as essential for the obedience of the exiles is not restricted, however, to their response to Yahweh’s word as spoken by the prophet (situation ‘2’ in Table 8 on page 154); רִיחַ is also essential for their ongoing obedience to Yahweh’s statutes and ordinances (situation ‘3’ in Table 8), as can be seen from 36:26-27. It is to this that we now turn.

2. How Israel’s long-term future is secured: Ezek. 36:26-27

In view of the organic link between the behaviour of those in Jerusalem and the judgement that had come, future obedience would be essential if the exiles’ long-term future back in the land was to be secure. Ezek. 36:26-27 speaks directly of an effected future obedience. In v.26, Yahweh promises to the exiles, in words very similar to the promise in 11:19 and the command in 18:31, ‘A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.’ This promise is then extended in words not found elsewhere: ‘I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances’ (v.27).

The context of the promised רִיחַ is the literary unit from 36:16 to 36:38, marked at the beginning by the characteristic word-event formula.¹⁶⁸ Vv.17-21, in which ‘Ezekiel

¹⁶⁵ Targum Onqelos reads אָדָם in Gen. 2:7. Grossfeld observes in his comment on אָדָם in Gen. 1:26, ‘from the moment of his actual creation, depicted in this verse, the Targum treats this term as referring to an actual individual, hence Adam.’ Grossfeld, *Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, p43 n11.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Renz, *Rhetorical Function*, p140. Renz suggests Ezekiel is ‘proto-human’ in view of his designation ‘son of man.’ This suggestion is not tied specifically to ch. 37. Cf. Lys, *Rûach*, pp143-44 n1.

¹⁶⁷ Seitz, ‘Ezekiel 37:1-14’, p53.

¹⁶⁸ It should be noted that the oldest LXX manuscript, Papyrus 967, does not have 36:23b-38. It also follows a different order in chs. 36-39 from the MT. Wevers explains the omission as parablepsis (*Ezekiel*, p273). This is unlikely given the length and the significant content (Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p340).

appears to function as Yahweh's confidant and friend,¹⁶⁹ outline the crisis for Yahweh's honour brought about by profanation of his holy name among the nations (cf. v.20). In vv. 22-32, framed by two inclusios, 'not for your sakes' and 'house of Israel', Yahweh explains *how* he will restore the honour of his name. If his name is not to be profaned again, it is vital that the 'deity-nation-land' relationship is fully restored once more.¹⁷⁰ This requires two things. First, Yahweh must make sure that the fundamental problem of Israel's disobedience is tackled. It was their behaviour that had caused the land to be defiled (vv.17-18) and had led to Yahweh pouring out his wrath upon them and scattering them (vv.18-19). Therefore Yahweh must effect their cleansing and obedience. Secondly, the land must be restored, so that the nations will not be appalled at it (cf. Ezek. 36:30; Lev. 26:32-33). Both these things are dealt with in vv.24-32. There follow two other oracles that are marked off as separate by the citation formulae in v.33 and v.37. However, they are not out of place in the current literary context, since they have a number of themes in common with the preceding material,¹⁷¹ and עור זאת in v.37 clearly assists integration.

The significance of these two verses, and of v.27 in particular, for our analysis of the relationship between Yahweh's word and Yahweh's רוח, can be summed up by answering two questions. First, 'What is understood by רוח in these verses?' Secondly, 'How does what is being promised relate to the word of Yahweh?'

a) רוח in Ezek. 36:26-27

Without v.26, Yahweh's promise that he would give 'my spirit (רוחי)' in the midst of the exiles (v.27) could be nothing other than a promise of revivifying breath within the reconstituted 'person' that is the new house of Israel;¹⁷² in so far as Yahweh is the source of רוח, it is Yahweh's while it remains outside the person, but becomes that person's once it is 'inside' them.¹⁷³ It would then be a picture of new life coming to what is dead. However, the close correspondence in the wording of v.26 and v.27 points in a different direction: the new רוח promised in v.26 is further identified as none other than Yahweh's רוח:

However, Papyrus 967 is probably not a reflection of the original text, since the inclusio (v.22 and v.32) points towards the MT as being correct; further, the announcement that Yahweh will 'act' (v.22) and will 'sanctify' his great name (v.23) is left hanging, if Yahweh's actions themselves are not present (Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p245). For a fuller discussion, bibliography of the issue, and defence of the authenticity of the MT, see Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp337ff.; also Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, pp739-40 and Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, pp177-78.

¹⁶⁹ Block, *Chapters 25-48*, p344.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp347-49.

¹⁷¹ Links from the first oracle (vv.33-36) include: 'cleanse' (v.25); 'resettle / rebuild' (v.10b); 'tilled' (v.9b). See M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p732. There is also the reaction of the nations (v.30). Links from the second oracle include the increase in population (36:10-11, 33, 35) and 'sheep' (ch. 34).

¹⁷² The language is better understood as corporate, rather than individual. See Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp112-13.

¹⁷³ Cf. Psalm 104:29-30; see p103 above.

Table 12. Comparison of Ezek. 36:26a β and 36:27a

Ezek. 36:26	וְרוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה אֶתֶן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם
Ezek. 36:27	וְאֶת־רוּחִי אֶתֶן בְּקִרְבְּכֶם

To understand what is meant by Yahweh's רוּחַ in v.27, then, we need to do two things. First, we need to explore the significance of רוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה in v.26 and, in particular, its relation to לֵב. Secondly, we shall need to look at how the two occurrences of רוּחַ in these verses relate to one another.

As we turn to the significance of רוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה in v.26, we shall look first at לֵב, since how לֵב is understood will affect our interpretation of רוּחַ חֲדָשָׁה.¹⁷⁴ In 11:19 and 36:26, Yahweh promises to give the exiles 'one heart'¹⁷⁵ (לֵב אֶחָד) or a 'new heart' (לֵב חֲדָשׁ). This is expanded upon later in both verses by the promise that Yahweh will change the 'heart of stone' (לֵב הָאֲבָן) for a 'heart of flesh' (לֵב בָּשָׂר). The heart here stands neither for the whole 'person', since this 'heart' is removed and replaced, nor for the seat of emotions (cf. 36:5), since obedience not emotional response is in view, nor even for the intellectual faculty, the mind (cf. 3:10; 38:10), since it is not their understanding, but their response that is wrong, as is evident from the words qualifying 'heart' here. Rather, it speaks metonymically of the human will, especially the moral will, the deepest orientation in a person for a particular direction.¹⁷⁶ It is this heart that is hard to Yahweh's word (2:4; 3:7), yet welcoming to idols (14:3; 20:16) and greedy for gain (33:31). The significance of the heart being 'of stone' lies in part with the figurative way of speaking about Israel's unresponsiveness in Ezekiel's initial commissioning,

¹⁷⁴ For more on לֵב, see Johnson, *Vitality*, pp75-87; Wolff, *Anthropology*, pp40-58; F. Stolz, 'לֵב *leb* heart', *TLOT* 2, pp638-42; Alex Luc, 'לֵב', *NIDOTTE* 2, pp749-54. For לֵב in Ezekiel, see especially Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp108-109, 119-21. I follow his categories in what follows.

¹⁷⁵ The reading אֶחָד is debated, because LXX reads here καρδίαν ἑτέραν (suggesting a Vorlage with אֶחָד), Syr. reads 'new', and Targ. ('fearful', 'fearing') could be a paraphrase of either אֶחָד (cf. LXX) or חֲדָשׁ (cf. Syr.) but not אֶחָד (MT). Further, the MT of Jer. 32:39 reads לֵב אֶחָד לָהֶם לְוַנְחָתִי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד (cf. LXX) or חֲדָשׁ (cf. Syr.) but not אֶחָד (MT). Further, the MT of Jer. 32:39 reads לֵב אֶחָד לָהֶם לְוַנְחָתִי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד, giving a close parallel here, while the LXX of Jer. 32:39 reads δώσω αὐτοῖς ὁδὸν ἑτέραν καὶ καρδίαν ἑτέραν, paralleling the LXX of Ezek. 11:19. In addition, 1 Sam. 10:9 has לֵב אֶחָד לָהֶם which LXX renders with καρδίαν ἄλλην. Those who favour 'another' include Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, p129; H.L. Ellison, *Ezekiel: The Man and his Message*, (London, Paternoster Press, 1956), p48; Wolff, *Anthropology*, p54; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p230; Dominique Barthélemy, "Un seul", "un nouveau" ou "un autre"? À propos de l'intervention du Seigneur sur le cœur de l'homme selon Éz 11,19a et des problèmes de critique textuelle qu'elle soulève', in *Der Weg zum Menschen: Zur philosophischen und theologischen Anthropologie*, eds. Rudolf Mosis and Lothar Ruppert, (Freiburg, Herder, 1989), pp329-38. Those who favour the MT reading here include Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, pp342, 353; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p190 (he speaks of 'rich overtones'); Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp160-61 n8. If the MT is allowed to stand, 'one' speaks of an undivided heart in two possible senses that overlap. First, it 'could possibly reflect hopes of renewed national unity', suggesting a singleness of purpose (Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p161; also noted but not adopted by Ellison, *Ezekiel*, p49; cf. Ezek. 37:22). This usage is found in 1 Chr. 12:39 [ET 38]. The alternative is that of an undivided heart as the antithesis of insincerity (cf. Deut. 6:4-5; 1 Chr. 12:34; 2 Chr. 30:12 and especially Ps. 12:3 [ET 2] 'they speak with double-heart' (וַיְדַבְּרוּ בְלֵב וְלֵב)). See Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', pp45-46; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, p190. On the other hand, Barthélemy argues that the MT reading reflects a deliberate and straightforward scribal change from אֶחָד to אֶחָד because of perceived negative connotations in the word אֶחָד (cf. אֶלֶהִים אֶחָדִים), and positive connotations in אֶחָד (cf. שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֶחָד (Deut. 6:4)).

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp108-109. Joyce suggests (p109) that in 11:19-20 and 36:26, לֵב is the 'the locus of the moral will' (cf. 2:4; 3:7) and 'the symbol of inner reality as distinct from mere outward appearance' (cf. 33:31; 14:3).

where their heart is hard (חֲזֵק־לֵב (2:4)). This adjective is used in 3:9 in conjunction with ‘flint’ and ‘rock’. However, the precise significance needs to be derived also from the heart with which it is replaced: a ‘heart of flesh’. This positive sense of בָּשָׂר is ‘absolutely unique’.¹⁷⁷ Greenberg accounts for this by suggesting that the heart will now be ‘of the same element as its body.’¹⁷⁸ This certainly suggests that the house of Israel is currently in some sense *less than human*. This may be because to have a heart of stone is to be like an animal, for Leviathan has a heart like stone (Job 41:16 [ET 41:24]).¹⁷⁹ However, there it is used positively, speaking of a quality of invincibility, impenetrable to any weapon, rather than pejoratively, of the impossibility of Leviathan being tamed. More likely is Kutsko’s suggestion that Israel takes on the characteristics of the idols they have taken into their heart.¹⁸⁰ On both these readings, there is something profoundly deficient in the very humanity of the person Israel. There may also be a further nuance here, which certainly fits with 37:1-14. In 1 Sam. 25:37, the narrator comments on Nabal’s death, ‘when Nabal’s heart died within him, he became like stone.’ The exiles’ heart is not simply ‘hard’ in the sense of unresponsive, but even dead to Yahweh.¹⁸¹ In this way, while the main thrust of the picture in 36:26 is that Israel will be responsive and malleable now to Yahweh and his word, the ‘heart of flesh’ might also suggest that one who was less than human will now be truly human, and the one dead to Yahweh will now be alive again.¹⁸²

When we turn our attention to רוּחַ חַדְשָׁה, it is clear that the ‘new spirit’ in 11:19, 18:31 and 36:26 is anthropological.¹⁸³ Many scholars regard לֵב and רוּחַ here as synonymous, chiefly because they ‘both refer primarily to the gift of a renewed capacity to respond to Yahweh in obedience.’¹⁸⁴ Further evidence pointing to synonymy here comes from the fact that רוּחַ elsewhere in Ezekiel can be the seat of moral thinking: in 11:5 of those in Jerusalem, and in 20:32 of those in exile (cf. Jer. 51:50). This clearly parallels the usage of לֵב (e.g. 2:4; 3:7; 6:9; 14:3; 38:10; cf. also the parallels in 13:2-3).¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷ Wolff, *Anthropology*, p29.

¹⁷⁸ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p730.

¹⁷⁹ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p104.

¹⁸⁰ Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, pp128-29.

¹⁸¹ In this regard, it is interesting in the case of Nabal that the body’s turning to stone is associated with the death of the לֵב; though his heart died, he went on living for another 10 days. See 1 Sam. 25:38.

¹⁸² Cf. Dieter Baltzer, *Ezechiel und Deuterjesaja: Berührung in der Heilserwartung der beiden großen Exilspropheten*, BZAW 121, (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1971), p76.

¹⁸³ See p75 for our preliminary discussion.

¹⁸⁴ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p111; cf. Johnson, *Vitality*, p86; Pieter A. Verhoef, ‘חַדְשָׁה’, *NIDOTTE* 2, p35; ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT* 3, p1212. So too Block, ‘Prophet of the Spirit’, pp45f., on 11:19 and 18:31; cf. van Imschoot, ‘L’esprit de Jahvé et l’alliance nouvelle dans l’Ancien Testament’, p219: ‘Ici l’esprit est, comme le coeur, le siège ou l’organe des sentiments, des pensées, de la vie morale; c’est l’esprit humain, qui doit être transformé et, pour ainsi dire, créé à neuf.’

¹⁸⁵ For the close links between anthropological uses of רוּחַ and לֵב, see Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, pp48ff.

Others, however, see לֵב and רוּחַ as complementary (cf. Deut. 2:30).¹⁸⁶ Wolff maintains that ‘the new *ruah* brings to the perception and will of the heart the *new vital power* to hold on steadfastly in willing obedience,’¹⁸⁷ and Knierim comments that ‘the “heart” is the anthropological complementation to the cosmological or theological “spirit” and as such is structured to be susceptible to the influences of “spirit” and its notions.’¹⁸⁸

With Block, I think it likely that they are not synonymous in 36:26.¹⁸⁹ Block gives three reasons: first, synonymy is rarely exact in Hebrew poetry; secondly, different prepositions are used (‘to you’ (לְכֶם), ‘within you’ (בְּקִרְבְּכֶם)); thirdly, and most significantly for him, the distinction is confirmed by the elaboration. Although Yahweh supplies both the new heart and the new spirit, the new heart is not said to be Yahweh’s, but a ‘heart of flesh’; the new רוּחַ, however, is Yahweh’s. To this can be added the observation that while the ‘new heart’ involves replacing something that is *present* and defective, the ‘new spirit’, while hinting at something present because of the parallel with ‘new heart’, seems to involve supplying something that had once been present but now is *absent*, for there is no mention of an old ‘driving force’ being removed. Care, however, should be taken in overstating the case based on the third reason, because the elaboration, as I shall argue below, plays on the different meanings of רוּחַ. The shift in the meaning of רוּחַ evident when moving from v.26 to v.27 should not then be read back into v.26.

The implication, then, is that the ‘new רוּחַ’ of 36:26 is not so much the ‘new center of volition necessary for repentance and new obedience to the commandments’,¹⁹⁰ as something like the new ‘driving force’ that empowers the locus of the moral will, the heart of flesh.¹⁹¹

Secondly, then, we turn our attention to how Yahweh’s רוּחַ (v.27) relates to the new ‘driving force’ within Israel. There are three main choices.

¹⁸⁶ Schoemaker, ‘Use of רוּחַ’, p29; Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p125; Lys, *Ruach*, p141; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p499; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, p97; Wolff, *Anthropology*, pp38, 54; Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986), pp70-71; Knierim, *Task*, p282; Ohnesorge, *Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, pp269-70; Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, pp104-105 n118; Matties (*Ezekiel 18*, p206) notes the synonymity elsewhere, but suggests that the presence of the ‘new spirit here seems to nuance the parallelism to suggest a holistic personhood.’

¹⁸⁷ Wolff, *Anthropology*, p54 (my emphasis).

¹⁸⁸ Knierim, *Task*, p282. Knierim makes this point based on his understanding of רוּחַ and of the differences between the לֵב and רוּחַ. For him, רוּחַ is perceived ‘not only as the vitalizing power as such, but also as that endowment which disposes human(s) toward the fulfillment of God’s manifold purposes for the world and for the life of humans...’ (p277). The differences between לֵב and רוּחַ reside in the fact that לֵב is created, while רוּחַ exists. רוּחַ ‘signifies the concept of life, God’s life, its coming *to* humans and their dependence on it’, while לֵב ‘signifies the concept of the central relay-station *in* humans in which the inspired life – or the influences of other “spirits” – can be received’ (p282, his emphasis).

¹⁸⁹ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp355-56.

¹⁹⁰ ‘רוּחַ’, *TLOT3*, p1212.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Fohrer’s ‘treibende Kraft’. Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, p205.

First, it is logically possible to view these two different uses of רִיחַ as *univocal*.¹⁹² This understanding obtains if the רִיחַ of the house of Israel is used in the same literal¹⁹³ way of the personified Israel as רִיחַ is used (anthropomorphically) of Yahweh. One who seems to regard the relationship between the two senses as univocal is Greenberg. Yahweh ‘will replace Israel’s hopelessly corrupted spirit with *his own* impulsion to goodness and righteousness.’¹⁹⁴ Univocal explanations require that the ‘new spirit’ of v.26 corresponds directly with Yahweh’s רִיחַ in v.27. If רִיחַ is ‘the driving force in a person’, then it is essential to see רִיחַ in v.27 as something akin to ‘the driving force in a person,’ and that ‘person’ is Yahweh. Another who seems to regard the two senses as univocal is Lapsley, though she speaks of רִיחַ as ‘mind’ here. For her, ‘Yahweh is not simply the *source* of the new spirit; in 36:27 it is *Yahweh’s* spirit (רוּחַ) that will animate and suffuse the people. In a sense, then, the *people will receive the “mind” of God...*’¹⁹⁵ Lapsley’s first sentence is straightforwardly true. It is Lapsley’s final statement, treating the two uses as univocal, that is more debatable. While it is true that the book of Ezekiel is accustomed to bold anthropomorphisms,¹⁹⁶ it is unlikely that language of Yahweh’s רִיחַ should be understood of as simply univocal at this point. This is chiefly because 36:27a anticipates 37:1-14.¹⁹⁷

A second way is to regard the two uses of רִיחַ in vv.26-27 as *equivocal*. In other words, the two instances need to be clearly differentiated, although happening to use the same word (רִיחַ). Lind seems to see the two in this light, when he comments, ‘God’s fourth act is to put the divine *Spirit* within them (36:27). This is to be distinguished from the *new spirit* of 36:25 [sic].’¹⁹⁸ The correspondence, then, is at the level of words chosen, but not at the level of what the words denote or connote. This, however, is unlikely, for the two instances of רִיחַ are ‘quite clearly intended to refer to the same reality’,¹⁹⁹ because of the almost identical wording in the two phrases (see Table 12).

¹⁹² Univocal: ‘any word or phrase used in the same way on two or more occasions is used univocally.’ Edward L. Schoen, ‘Anthropomorphic Concepts of God’, *Religious Studies* 26 (1990), p134. This is the opposite of ‘equivocal’: any word or phrase used in more than one sense which bear no relation to each other is used equivocally (an example is ‘run’ in the phrase ‘colours run’ and ‘run a business’).

¹⁹³ The distinction between ‘literal’ and ‘non-literal’ is ‘assumed to be determined by the actual practices of linguistic communities. Words or phrases are used literally if they are used in accustomed, standardized ways’ (Schoen, ‘Anthropomorphic Concepts’, p134).

¹⁹⁴ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p730 (my emphasis).

¹⁹⁵ Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p166 (the emphasis on the final phrase is mine).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Rimmon Kasher, ‘Anthropomorphism, Holiness and Cult: A New Look at Ezekiel 40-48’, *ZAW* 110 (1998), pp192-208.

¹⁹⁷ See further below.

¹⁹⁸ Lind, *Ezekiel*, p291.

¹⁹⁹ Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, pp110-11.

The third way of regarding the two senses is as *analogical*.²⁰⁰ This presupposes some kind of correspondence between the two different instances of רִיחַ, but not that of univocity. Yahweh's רִיחַ that he will put in the people is analogous to their own רִיחַ. This must be partly correct, since, as we have seen, the two uses of רִיחַ are clearly meant to speak of the same reality. However, 36:27 expands the horizon limited by 36:26 (and 11:19; 18:31). Though the house of Israel's 'driving force' is in view in 36:26f., רִיחַ as the absent 'breath of life' lies beneath the surface, only to appear in 37:1-14.²⁰¹ Such a view is supported by Hals' observations about the strong links between 36:26-27 and 37:1-14, to be seen in the shift from 'spirit' to 'my spirit,' in the language of the exodus tradition (36:24; 37:12), and in the language of covenant restoration (36:28; 37:2-13).²⁰² It is also supported by the fact that there is no mention of the old רִיחַ being taken away, although mention of 'a new spirit' in 36:26 leads us to believe there *is* an old one, and we have already met the exiles' corrupt רִיחַ in 20:32.²⁰³ If רִיחַ in 36:26 was simply 'breath' that was absent, there would be no need to qualify it with the adjective 'new'.

This analysis of רִיחַ should not be seen as a case of 'illegitimate totality transfer,'²⁰⁴ adding the semantic value of a word in one context ('breath of life' (37:5-10)) to its semantic value in another context ('driving force' (36:26)), then reading the sum of these values into a particular case. While Nida is right to say that as a general principle that 'the correct meaning of any term is that which contributes least to the total context,'²⁰⁵ the fact that רִיחַ as 'driving force' in v.26 is not described as 'corrupt' or 'hard', but seems to be absent here, points to a deliberate play on רִיחַ as 'driving force' and רִיחַ as 'breath of life.' In 36:26, then, רִיחַ as 'driving force' merges seamlessly with רִיחַ as absent 'life-breath.' Just as in 37:1-14, where רִיחַ shifts from 'breath of life' to Yahweh's life-giving רִיחַ, so here there is a shift from רִיחַ as 'human driving force' to רִיחַ as Yahweh's spirit. This development, caused by the juxtaposition of v.26 and v.27, means that the presence of 11:19-20 is not an 'insoluble problem'²⁰⁶ because of its anticipation of the very similar passage in 36:26-27. Rather, there is a dimension of רִיחַ

²⁰⁰ 'Analogical': according to Soskice's understanding of Aquinas, a way of talking 'between' univocal and equivocal (such as 'Tom is happy'; 'this song is happy'). See Janet M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985), pp64-66. Soskice wants to affirm that analogy is not a form of metaphorical speech, but a form of literal speech. She comments that 'analogical usage...from its inception...seems appropriate' (p65), for it is concerned with 'stretched uses, not figurative ones' (p66). In her example, if we came across a Martian who could not speak, but arranged its fibres in a particular way such that it could communicate, then we could say, by *analogy*, that the Martian 'told me'.

²⁰¹ Cf. Block ('Prophet of the Spirit', p39), who proposes that 37:1-14 serve as an expansion of 36:27; also Lys, *Rûach*, p133; Allen, 'Structure, Tradition and Redaction', pp140-41.

²⁰² Hals, *Ezekiel*, p270.

²⁰³ In Ezek. 20:32, Ezekiel is to declare concerning their idolatrous desires to worship wood and *stone* like the other nations, 'What is in your mind (וְהָעֵלָה עַל-רִיחֲכֶם) shall never happen.'

²⁰⁴ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1961), p218.

²⁰⁵ Eugene A. Nida, 'The Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical Scholarship', *JBL* 91 (1972), p86.

²⁰⁶ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p111.

that is absent in 11:19 and 18:31. The addressees of the book, faced with the already prominent role of רִיחַ within the ministry of Ezekiel, are left to wonder on the significance of רִיחַ in 11:19, and its ultimate identity.²⁰⁷ It is only in 36:27a that this identity is revealed. The stubborn, rebellious house of Israel has no 'driving force' to obey. It needs Yahweh's dynamic, potentiating, revivifying רִיחַ.

b) Relating the word of Yahweh and רִיחַ

We have just observed how the 'empowering spirit of Yahweh'²⁰⁸ will come as the 'new spirit', the new 'driving force' acting on the 'heart of flesh.' In the second part of 36:27, Yahweh declares that he will 'make' the exiles 'follow' his 'statutes' and 'be careful to observe' his 'ordinances' and do them (וְעָשִׂיתִי אֵת אֲשֶׁר-בְּחָקֵי תִלְכוּ וּמִשְׁפָּטַי) (תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם).

The syntax at the start of v.27b, of עָשָׂה followed by אֵת אֲשֶׁר, usually entails a description of the subject 'doing that which' had been said.²⁰⁹ אֵת אֲשֶׁר introduces a noun clause which serves as the object of the verb עָשָׂה. The construction here is unique for yielding the meaning 'cause.'²¹⁰ Cooke cites Eccl. 3:14 as the only other instance of עָשָׂה followed by the relative having the same meaning ('cause'), but notes that there is no sign of the accusative there.²¹¹ Although the syntax is unusual, the force of the sentence is clear. Yahweh declares that he will cause obedience to his word, expressed in his statutes and judgements.

Most scholars judge that it is by the action of the 'new spirit', Yahweh's רִיחַ (36:27a) (and the new heart) that the new obedience of the house of Israel will be ensured.²¹² Allen, however, while acknowledging the role of the 'new spirit',²¹³ puts much greater emphasis on the correspondence between 36:27 and ch. 37. He regards the first half of 36:27 as resumed in 37:1-13, highlighted with v.14a, and the second half as resumed in 37:15-24a, highlighted with 37:24b. His conclusion is that

'the editorial function of 37.1-13 in its present position is to throw light on the gift of the spirit in 36.27a. That of 37.15-23 is to clarify a means by which Yahweh would bring about the obedience of 36.27b, namely via a Davidic king who would

²⁰⁷ Cf. also the ambiguity surrounding רִיחַ in 2:2 and the transporting רִיחַ.

²⁰⁸ Cf. the role of רִיחַ within the book of Judges. See Block, 'Empowered by the Spirit of God', pp42-61.

²⁰⁹ E.g. Gen. 28:15; 1 Sam. 16:4.

²¹⁰ For the construction more generally, see GKC 157c.

²¹¹ Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p395.

²¹² E.g. Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, p205; Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, p168; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p730; Hildebrandt, *Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, p95; Joyce, *Divine Initiative*, p127; Bernard J. Lee, 'God as Spirit', in *Empirical Theology*, ed. R. Miller, (Birmingham, Religious Education Press, 1992), pp135-36; Gary V. Smith, *An Introduction to the Hebrew Prophets: The Prophets as Preachers*, (Nashville, Broadman & Holman, 1994), p23; John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, (London, IVP, 1969), p232; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, p275; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p249. Ohnesorge (*Jahwe gestaltet sein Volk neu*, p234), however, links renewed obedience directly to Yahweh because of the 'I will cause'. However as with the transporting רִיחַ, Yahweh's actions are mediated by רִיחַ as the agent (so e.g. 37:1).

²¹³ Allen comments, 'thanks to him [Yahweh], their lives would be governed by a new impulse that was to be an expression of Yahweh's own spirit' (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p179).

impose order among God's people, uniting southern and northern elements with his royal staff or scepter.²¹⁴

This observation concerning how 36:27 relates to ch. 37, confirmed by the shift in meaning in רִנָּה between 36:26 and 36:27 for which I argued above, and the right recognition of the role of the Davidic king in obedience might suggest a diminution in the role of the new heart and the new spirit in the renewed obedience.

However, this is not so. First, the Davidic king²¹⁵ in the book of Ezekiel plays no part in the restoration of the nation; he neither gathers the people nor leads them back; he is not an agent of peace or righteousness (cf. Isa. 9:6-7), for Yahweh does these. Renewed obedience has already been ascribed to the work of Yahweh in giving a 'heart of flesh' and a 'new spirit' (11:19-20). In that sense, the king is not an agent of the transformation, but a feature of the transformed people. The declaration in 37:24b that the united people of Israel will follow Yahweh's ordinances and be careful to observe his statutes under the new מְלֶכֶךְ does not specify *how* they will do them, although it does give a role to the Davidic king.

Secondly, the link between מְלֶכֶךְ / נְשִׂיאָה and renewed obedience depends ultimately on the action of Yahweh's רִנָּה. In the lamentation of ch. 19, any hope envisaged for the exiled king Jehoiachin dies;²¹⁶ indeed, the lamentation means 'a judgement upon all existing members of the Davidic dynasty.'²¹⁷ Death pervades the scene.²¹⁸ However, as Duguid argues, the end is not permanent: 'it is an end which does not inherently rule out the possibility of a new beginning by means of divine intervention and for the sake of the divine name.'²¹⁹ He sees the heart of this divine intervention in 37:1-14, 'where a scene redolent with death gives way to unexpected new life through the intervention of the spirit of Yahweh.'²²⁰ In other words, where life comes out of death, there Yahweh's רִנָּה can be seen; the vision of the future for the Davidic dynasty should be seen to depend on the operation of the divine רִנָּה, though רִנָּה itself is not explicitly linked with the renewal of Davidic promises. Such a view makes good sense when we also observe the role of רִנָּה within the Davidic tradition: 'the spirit of Yahweh' 'rushed' (צִלַּח) upon David when Samuel anointed him king (1 Sam. 16:13); the spirit of Yahweh speaks

²¹⁴ Allen, 'Structure, Tradition and Redaction', p140.

²¹⁵ Though LXX reads ἄρχων in 37:22, 24 and 25, while MT has מְלֶכֶךְ in 37:22, 24, and elsewhere Ezekiel is reluctant to use מְלֶכֶךְ of the Israelite monarchy, thus suggesting a possible original נְשִׂיאָה, Block ('Bringing Back David', p179 n38) defends the MT on two main grounds. First, LXX varies in rendering מְלֶכֶךְ; secondly, the presence of 'kingdoms' (מַמְלָכוֹת; v.22) and 'nation' makes מְלֶכֶךְ preferable here, for it 'highlights the restoration of Israel to full nationhood.' See also Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p190; Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp413-15; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, pp269, 275, 277-78.

²¹⁶ For the identification of the second cub as Jehoiachin, see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, pp355-56, who notes the parallels with Jer. 22:10-12 (Jehoahaz) and 22:24-30 (Jehoiachin).

²¹⁷ Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, pp45-46.

²¹⁸ Cf. Hals' comment, 'To conduct a dirge beside the hospital bed of a still living patient would be incredibly crass. Something of that dimension of bizarre crudity is inherent in prophetic dirges.' Hals, *Ezekiel*, p130.

²¹⁹ Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p46.

²²⁰ Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p46 n226.

through David (2 Sam. 23:2); Isaiah's vision of an eschatological, Davidic, ruler gives רִיחַ great prominence (Isa. 11:1-5).²²¹ It also makes good sense when it is remembered that the Davidic king, Yahweh's anointed, was described as 'the breath of our life (רִיחַ אֲפִינוּ)' (Lam. 4:20).

In summary, the obedience which is made possible by 'one heart and a new spirit' in 11:19, and which will be the case under the new king (מֶלֶךְ) in 37:24 will be brought about by the divine רִיחַ in 36:27a. Here, again, the apparent antinomy of divine initiative and human responsibility reappears. The house of Israel is to be marked by repentant shame (36:32), even in the present; yet the obedience that is envisaged (36:27b) is clearly brought about by the initiative of Yahweh. The presence of a new heart and a new driving force, in fact Yahweh's own רִיחַ, within the house of Israel points to willing action by them in obedience – yet the fact that both are the gift of Yahweh points to Yahweh's sovereign initiative. Yahweh's action is more than simply 'creating the conditions for human responsibility,'²²² for Yahweh 'causes' obedience (v.27). Yahweh's רִיחַ moves Israel to go (הֵלֵךְ) where he wills, just as in the chariot vision the living creatures would 'go' (הֵלֵךְ) 'where the spirit (הַרִיחַ) would go' (1:12, 20; 36:27). However, Davis is right to say that 'it is no more true that the divinely given heart of flesh obviates human responsibility than that the first bestowal removed Israel's culpability.'²²³ Both are held together. Further, and critical for our study, is the observation that, as in 37:1-14, Yahweh's רִיחַ is instrumental in bringing about obedience to Yahweh's word, though this time it is Yahweh's word as seen in his statutes and ordinances.

3. The outpouring of Yahweh's רִיחַ: Ezek. 39:21-29

In 39:29, there is the third and final instance of Yahweh speaking of 'my spirit' (רִיחִי) in the book. It occurs in the conclusion of the Gog oracle, from 39:21-29, a conclusion that was shaped with the whole of chs. 38-39 in view, and that gives integrity to the whole.²²⁴ Vv.21-24 focus on the impact of Yahweh's acting in judgement, both in the

²²¹ Ma sees this pre-exilic passage describing the coming king (Isa. 11:1-5) as 'redactionally deroyalized' because of subsequent references to רִיחַ in the servant figure (42:1-4) and the 'prophet-like person' in 61:1 (*Until the Spirit Comes*, p201). At the same time, he notes how 'the רִיחַ of Yahweh...becomes an eschatological element in the "messianic" expectation.' (*Op. cit.*, p42). Blenkinsopp (*Ezekiel*, pp176-77) suggests a correspondence between the reduced role of the eschatological ruler in Ezekiel (as reflected both in the common title for this ruler, נָשִׂיא, and in the designation עֲבָדָי) and the servant in the first 'servant song' in Isa. 42:1-4. There, too, רִיחַ is prominent in the servant's ministry. The reduced role of Ezekiel's future Davidic ruler should not be exaggerated, though. He will not simply be 'among' them as a servant (34:24; cf. Klein, *Ezekiel*, p123), but he will also be king 'over' them (37:24; cf. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p49), his rule will be for ever (לְעוֹלָם), 'a continuous state of righteous rule' (Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p49 n248), and his work will be to unite a divided country (cf. Werner E. Lemke, 'Life in the Present and Hope for the Future', *Int* 38 (1984), p180). He will be a 'powerful ruler' but also a 'gentle shepherd' (Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders*, p55).

²²² Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p115.

²²³ Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll*, p116.

²²⁴ The connection between these verses and the Gog oracle has been disputed (as indeed are many things about the Gog oracle). Cooke (*Ezekiel*, p422) comments, 'These verses have nothing to do with the

future, on Gog (39:21-22), and in the past, on the house of Israel (vv.23-24). Such an impact lies in the future, the other side of the anticipated salvation.²²⁵ With v.25, there is a shift in focus back to the present, to the scene of the exile, highlighted by עָתָה. In vv.25-29, Yahweh again speaks of the future restoration, and the effect that it will have on the house of Israel (vv.26, 28). As with the destruction of Gog, Israel's restoration shall prove to Israel Yahweh's covenant relationship with them.²²⁶ It is in this context that Yahweh declares, 'I shall not leave any of them still there [i.e. in exile], and I shall not again hide my face from them, when I pour out my spirit upon (אֲשַׁר שֶׁפָּכַתִּי אֶת־רוּחִי) the house of Israel – oracle of the Lord Yahweh.'²²⁷

There are two questions that are important for our purposes. The first one is about the authenticity of the phrase: the textual question. I shall argue, against Lust, that the MT should be retained. The second is about the scope of the phrase, its relation to 36:27 and 37:14 and hence its relation to Yahweh's word: the significance question. I shall argue, principally against Block, that the more concrete imagery of the pouring of Yahweh's רוּחַ does not indicate a significant shift in meaning from the 'giving' of Yahweh's רוּחַ. It is not simply the 'presence' of Yahweh's רוּחַ among the people that assures their future,²²⁸ but the permanent transformation effected by the outpouring.

apocalypses 38¹-39¹⁶ and 39¹⁷⁻²⁰; they give a summary of Ezekiel's teaching and form a conclusion to Part III.b., chs. 34-37.' Eichrodt (*Ezekiel*, p521) regards 39:25-29 as a conclusion not of the Gog oracle, to which it 'shows no acquaintance', but of chs. 34-37. Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 2*, p319) sees some connection. He notes the links between 39:21-22 and the Gog oracle, but regards 39:23-29 as 'a final oracle looking back on Ezekiel's total message', linking 'directly' to 39:21-22. However, Block makes a strong case for the structural unity of chs. 38-39 as a whole, as well as of 39:21-29. See Daniel I. Block, 'Gog and the Pouring Out of the Spirit: Reflections on Ezekiel xxxix 21-9', *VT* 37 (1987), pp257-70. Further, he notes several significant links between 39:21-29 and 38:1-39:20 (pp265f.): the link of Yahweh's glory and the concern for his holy name (v.21 paralleling 39:13; v.25 paralleling 39:7); the temporal, historical 'now' (עָתָה) of v.25 which contrasts with the eschatological phrases to be found in 38:1-39:20; the transitional vv.21-22 presuppose what has gone before. More recently, Cook has argued, as part of his thesis that 'deprivation' is not essential for the production of 'apocalyptic' literature (p86), that there is essential continuity in 'idioms, style and theology' (p103) between the book of Ezekiel and chs. 38-39 (pp97-105), and that Ezek. 39:21-29 'presupposes' the rest of the Gog narrative because of many links between them (pp117-21) and is probably 'one of the last layers in the book, postdating the proto-apocalyptic redaction' (p120). See Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting*, (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1995). His analysis of the links is persuasive, even if his dating (as mostly post-exilic) and genre classification (as apocalyptic (p109)) can be challenged (see Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp424-32), and if his thesis on the insignificance of 'deprivation' needs qualification (see Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile*, pp228-31).

²²⁵ So Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p480.

²²⁶ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p209.

²²⁷ The syntax of the phrase is somewhat awkward. אֲשַׁר is treated in one of three ways: *causal*, 'because' = אֲשֶׁר; cf. LXX ἀνθ' οὗ; Vg. *eo quod* (so Cooke, *Ezekiel*, p424 and Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p478; but they point to Ezek. 12:12 whose occurrence and meaning is disputed (see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, p267); a better example is 21:9 [ET 21:4]); *temporal*, 'after' (so Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p295; Hals, *Ezekiel*, p280); *relative*, '(I) who will have...' (so Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p202; he regards the relative as giving the literal meaning, but translates more idiomatically (and temporally), 'once I have' (p199)). The perfect שֶׁפָּכַתִּי may be explicable in terms of 'relative time' (for which term, see especially Goldfajn, *Word Order and Time*), indicating an event preceding that of Yahweh not hiding his face again (cf. Vg. *effuderim*).

²²⁸ Block, 'Prophet of the Spirit', p48.

a) The textual question

With regard to the textual question, most scholars accept the reading of the MT, as cited above. Lust, however, noting that the LXX speaks of Yahweh pouring out his ‘wrath’ here (ἐξέχεα τὸν θυμόν μου), argues strongly for a different *Vorlage* from the MT.²²⁹ He observes that the phrase ‘I pour out my spirit’ is ‘transformed’ from one of Ezekiel’s favourite phrases (‘I pour out my wrath’ – (אֲשַׁפּוֹךְ הַמָּהִי) (Ezek. 7:8; 9:8 etc.)), and that הַיָּהוָה can function as a synonym for both הַמָּהִי and זַעַם.²³⁰ He acknowledges that, on these grounds, the different readings in MT and LXX could be explained by the LXX translator treating the (unusual) ‘I pour out my spirit’ as if it were the more usual Ezekielian phrase. However, he disagrees for two reasons. First, he states that the LXX translator does not tend to increase the stereotypical character of the language – rather, he uses synonyms, avoids repetition and stereotypical language. His second argument is based on the sequence of Pap. 967, which he regards as a trustworthy witness of the LXX in its early form. In that papyrus, ch. 37 follows ch. 39. Lust says that it is unlikely that the writer, seeing what was coming up with the significant role of Yahweh’s הַיָּהוָה (in what is now 37:1-14) would have translated הַיָּהוָה with θυμός. He integrates this observation with a number of other observations about 39:26-29, and suggests that the LXX worked initially from a different *Vorlage* from our Hebrew text, where הַיָּהוָה had not yet replaced either הַמָּהִי or זַעַם. It was in a later period that ‘more hopefilled connotations were added.’²³¹ One of these ‘hopefilled connotations’ that was added was the replacement of הַמָּהִי or זַעַם by הַיָּהוָה.

While Lust’s arguments are plausible, Allen is probably right that the explanation for the LXX variant is ‘exegetical.’²³² There are a number of strands of evidence to support this conclusion, which need to be taken together. Some explain the appearance of the LXX variant, while others support the originality of הַיָּהוָה. First, as Lust himself notes, the semantic domains of הַיָּהוָה and θυμός overlap. Thus הַיָּהוָה is sometimes translated by θυμός (though it should be noted that this is only when הַיָּהוָה is used in an anthropological sense (Zech. 6:8; Job 15:13; Prov. 18:14; 29:11; cf. Isa. 59:19)).²³³

Secondly, as Allen notes, the LXX translation ‘relates v 29bα to’ Israel’s ‘experience of past judgement and defeat’ (cf. vv.23-24), and to 36:17-19, in the middle

²²⁹ Johan Lust, ‘The Final Text and Textual Criticism: Ez 39,28’, in *EHB*, pp48-54.

²³⁰ Lust (‘Final Text’, p52) notes first, that the two Hebrew words, הַמָּהִי and זַעַם, can act in ‘parallel’ (i.e. as synonyms) in the Ezekielian phrase ‘pour out my wrath’ (Ezek. 7:8; 9:8; cf. 21:36; 22:31); secondly, that הַיָּהוָה is translated by θυμός in Job 15:13; Isa. 59:19; Zech. 6:8 [though Lust’s reference is 9:8]; thirdly, that in Zech. 6:8, הַיָּהוָה is the object of נָחַח (hifil); in 4 places in Ezek., this same verb has הַמָּהִי as its object (5:13; 16:42; 21:22; 24:13). To these points it can be added that often the LXX of Ezekiel renders הַמָּהִי by θυμός (e.g. 5:15; 9:8). This also happens once with the noun זַעַם (22:31), which itself occurs only 3 times in Ezekiel.

²³¹ Lust, ‘Final Text’, p53.

²³² Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p202.

²³³ This is not surprising. Isaacs has noted that ‘by the time the O.T. came to be translated, the normal Greek vocabulary employed would be θυμός for man’s emotions, and ψυχή when indicating his thought or determination.’ Marie E. Isaacs, *The Concept of Spirit*, Heythrop Monograph 1, (London, Heythrop College, 1976), p11.

of which the phrase ‘pour out my wrath’ occurs (36:18). This linking is also apparent from the language of uncleanness that is found in 36:17 and 39:24.²³⁴ If Lust is right about Pap. 967 (that this is a ‘trustworthy witness’ of the early LXX, and therefore likely to be trustworthy as an indicator of the order of the *Vorlage* from which the LXX was derived), then that in fact strengthens the ‘exegetical’ case, since 39:29 occurs even closer to 36:17-19.

Thirdly, Allen makes point that the whole context is positive. Even if it were granted that some of the more ‘hopeful connotations’ were added later, the context at the start of v.29 and of vv.25-29 as a whole (especially v.25) is sufficiently positive that it is probable v.29a had a positive sense.²³⁵ As it stands, this argument might make it all the more puzzling that the LXX translator should have misinterpreted the phrase so drastically. However, there is a clear strand of thought especially after the exile that the exile was necessary in order to participate in the new age (2 Chr. 36:21; cf. Lev. 26:43),²³⁶ so it would not be strange for the LXX translator to link Yahweh’s not hiding his face with the experience of Yahweh’s outpoured wrath.

Finally, elsewhere in the Old Testament, there are striking links between Yahweh hiding his face, and the presence of רִיחַ. In Ps. 104:29-30, Yahweh’s hiding his face (סָתַר פָּנָיו hif.) occurs in parallel with Yahweh taking away (אָסַף) breath (רִיחַ) (v.29); it also occurs as the opposite of Yahweh sending forth his רִיחַ, a sending forth that creates (v.30). In Ps. 143:7, the psalmist’s lament that his רִיחַ is failing is closely linked with Yahweh hiding his face from him. These suggest that Yahweh’s sending his life-giving רִיחַ is effectively the opposite of Yahweh’s hiding his face. In Ps. 139:7, going from Yahweh’s spirit (מִרְיָחֶךָ) is in parallel with fleeing from his face (מִפְּנֵיךָ) (cf. Ps. 51:13). Therefore, Yahweh not hiding his face in Ezek. 39:29 points to the authenticity of the MT, and the originality of רִיחַ. It could, of course, be argued in reverse, that the presence of Yahweh hiding his face suggested to a scribe the possibility of רִיחַ here. However, it is more likely that רִיחַ was original, fitting appropriately both with the notion of Yahweh hiding his face (as a contrast) and with Yahweh ‘pouring out’ his spirit, not his wrath, than that there were two, independent, reasons why רִיחַ fitted so naturally into this context when it was not there originally.

In conclusion, though it is possible that there was an alternative Hebrew reading from which the LXX acquired its ἐξέχεα τὸν θυμὸν μου, it is more probable that the MT reading, ‘I pour out my spirit’ (שָׁפַכְתִּי אֶת־רוּחִי), is original, and LXX represents an interpretative development.

²³⁴ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p202.

²³⁵ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p202.

²³⁶ Sklba, “‘Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us’”, pp16-17.

b) The significance question

The precise relationship of the phrase, 'when I pour out my spirit' (אֲשֶׁר שִׁפְכֵתִי אֶחֱרוּחִי), to Yahweh's promise that he will 'give' (נתן) his רוּחַ 'within them' (בְּקִרְבָּכֶם) or 'in you' (בְּכֶם) in 36:27 and 37:14 has been disputed. In particular, the debate revolves around the significance of the different verbs and prepositions found in chs. 36 and 37, on the one hand, and in ch. 39 on the other. This is reinforced by the fact that this 'pouring out' (שִׁפְךָ) of Yahweh's רוּחַ is more closely paralleled externally (in Joel) than internally (within the book of Ezekiel).

Zimmerli sees the promise of Yahweh 'giving his רוּחַ' (36:27; 37:14) as being transformed by 'the late redactional formulation of 39:29 to the more concrete image of the pouring out of the spirit by Yahweh',²³⁷ which 'paves the way' for Joel 3:1 ff. This concept of 'pouring out' 'must envisage the concept of the fructifying, beneficent rain from heaven giving growth and nourishment.'²³⁸ He contrasts this with 'the inner transformation of man, which enables him to keep the commandments' in 36:27 (and 37:14).²³⁹ Yahweh's spirit in 39:29 serves 'as the final irrevocable union of Yahweh with his people.'²⁴⁰ For Zimmerli, there is, then, a shift in meaning of רוּחִי from 36:27 and 37:14 to 39:29.

Block, too, sees a shift in meaning between the occurrences.²⁴¹ While he regards the vision of the dry bones coming to life in 37:1-14 as an exposition of 36:27 (where Yahweh promises Israel that 'I will put my spirit within you'), he says that there is a 'fundamental difference in significance'²⁴² between 36:27 and 39:29. In 36:27 and 37:14, רוּחִי was 'within' or 'in their midst,' (בְּקִרְבָּכֶם / בְּכֶם). He notes that this was 'obviously associated with the renewal of the covenant',²⁴³ but 'it seems to relate more immediately to the rebirth of the nation, her receiving new life.'²⁴⁴ He sees this as very different from 'pour my spirit upon' in 39:29, which he regards as 'a sign and seal of the covenant.'²⁴⁵ He then goes on to look at the other contexts of Yahweh 'pouring out' his רוּחַ (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Joel 3:1; Zech. 12:10). He comments,

'it would appear from all these references that the pouring out of the Spirit of Yahweh upon his people signified the ratification and sealing of the covenant relationship. It represented the guarantee of new life, peace and prosperity. But it signified more than this. It served as the definitive act whereby he claimed and sealed the newly gathered nation of Israel as his own.'²⁴⁶

²³⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567. The *terminus ad quem* of the redaction is the date of Joel 3:1 ff.

²³⁸ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567.

²³⁹ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567.

²⁴⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p321.

²⁴¹ Block, 'Gog', pp257-270; also his *Ezekiel 25-48*, pp488-89.

²⁴² Block, 'Gog', p267.

²⁴³ Block, 'Gog', p267.

²⁴⁴ Block, 'Gog', p267.

²⁴⁵ Block, 'Gog', p268.

²⁴⁶ Block, 'Gog', p269.

Thus, he interprets this 'pouring out' of Yahweh's רִיחַ to be the divine mark of ownership, accounting for Yahweh's intervention before Israel is touched in the Gog oracle. The focus is on the presence of Yahweh's רִיחַ, not on the transformation effected by his רִיחַ. This is one argument that he brings in favour of the integration of the Gog oracle at this point. The destruction of Gog functions as a visible evidence of the truthfulness of Yahweh's word 'for the prophet'.²⁴⁷

Eichrodt and Allen, however, see the reference to Yahweh's רִיחַ in 39:29 as fundamentally similar to those in 36:27 and 37:14. For Eichrodt, the outpouring of the spirit on the house of Israel 'serves as a guarantee of their being continual objects of divine favour and of the future unbroken fellowship between God and his people'.²⁴⁸ That this is not different from the promise of Yahweh's רִיחַ in 36:27a and 37:14 is evident from his comments on 36:27. There he sees Yahweh 'giving' his רִיחַ as referring to the 'outpouring of the spirit'.²⁴⁹

Allen regards the outpouring of the spirit as forming a contrast with the outpouring of wrath (a phrase which occurs 12 times in the book of Ezekiel, and most recently in 36:18). His interpretation thus gives the phrase a 'different nuance'²⁵⁰ than in the other instances of the 'pouring out' of Yahweh's רִיחַ (Isa. 44:3; Joel 3:1 [ET 2:28]; Zech. 12:10).²⁵¹ 'The new age would be characterized by the gift of Yahweh's enabling spirit, as 36:26 and 37:14 had proclaimed.'²⁵² Israel is now secure from the onslaught of nations from afar.

While scholars are agreed that the outpouring of Yahweh's רִיחַ serves to guarantee the future of the exiles, in that never again will Yahweh hide his face from them, as he had done (39:23-24), it is preferable, with Allen and Eichrodt, not to see a shift in essential meaning between Yahweh 'pouring out his רִיחַ' and Yahweh 'giving his רִיחַ (with)in them' for three reasons.

First, an analysis of Yahweh 'giving' רִיחַ and Yahweh 'pouring' רִיחַ points to them describing essentially similar actions. In the Old Testament, there are 16 instances of Yahweh giving (נתן) רִיחַ. As is evident from Table 13 and Table 14, the phrase can be used with different senses of רִיחַ, and, more significantly, with different prepositions following.

²⁴⁷ Block, 'Gog', p269.

²⁴⁸ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p529.

²⁴⁹ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p502.

²⁵⁰ Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p209.

²⁵¹ He does not mention Isa. 32:15

²⁵² Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p209.

Table 13. Occurrences of Yahweh 'giving' (נתן) רוח

A	Yahweh's spirit	Num. 11:25, 29 (v.29 shows that 'the spirit' in v.25 is Yahweh's); Isa. 42:1; Ezek. 36:27; Ezek. 37:14
B	A spirit	1 Kings 22:23 (// 2 Chron. 18:22) – 'a lying spirit'
C	Anthropological – 'an interior disposition' ²⁵³	2 Kings 19:7 (// Isa. 37:7) – 'a spirit'
D	Anthropological - the breath of life	Eccl. 12:7 (// to נשמה); Isa. 42:5 (// to נשמה); Ezek. 37:6
E	Anthropological – the 'driving force' within a person	Ezek. 11:19; 36:26 – Yahweh giving Israel 'one / a new spirit'

Table 14. Prepositions used with occurrences of Yahweh 'giving' (נתן) רוח

ב	Ezek. 37:14 ('A') 1 Ki. 22:23 (// 2 Chron. 18:22) (put a lying spirit) (Both 'B') 2 Ki. 19:7 (// Isa. 37:7) (Both 'C') Ezek. 37:6 ('D')
בקרבו	Ezek. 36:27 ('A') Ezek. 11:19; 36:26 (Both 'E')
על	Num. 11:25, 29; Isa. 42:1 (All 'A')
ל	Isa. 42:5 ('D')
אל	Eccl. 12:7 ('D')

The main point to note from Table 13 is how Yahweh is seen to be the giver of רוח, even though רוח may have different senses (and our categorisations may serve to mask the fluidity and flexibility of the word); the use of נתן is not confined to a particular sense of רוח. Snaith is right to observe that רוח is properly 'of God.'²⁵⁴ With regard to Table 14, the important observation to make here is that different prepositions can be used with the different senses of Yahweh giving רוח. In particular, Yahweh can נתן his רוח 'upon' (על) a person (see row 3), where רוח is Yahweh's רוח.

These observations about Yahweh 'giving' רוח need to be juxtaposed with observations about the pouring of רוח, a phrase that itself needs to be set within a wider context, since in the Old Testament, רוח in a number of places is associated with a 'fluid' metaphor, without always necessarily being used of Yahweh's spirit.²⁵⁵

On five occasions, רוח is linked to the language of 'filling' (Exod. 28:3; 31:3; 35:31; Deut. 34:9; Mic. 3:8). Of these, Exod. 28:3 and Deut. 34:9 speak of being filled with 'the spirit of wisdom.' That this 'spirit' is somehow independent of the recipient, external to him, and not merely an anthropological description, seems clear from the fact that Joshua has this רוח through the laying on of Moses' hands.²⁵⁶ Exod. 31:3 and 35:31 speak of being filled [with] רוח אלהים. Here, too, this is linked to being filled with wisdom. The fifth occurrence, which we examined above, is Mic. 3:8.

²⁵³ van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p184 n28.

²⁵⁴ Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas*, p150.

²⁵⁵ Cf. van Imschoot, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, pp184-85; Lys, *Rûach*, p154 n1; 'רוח', *TLOT* 3, p1218; Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, pp224-26; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p33; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p26.

²⁵⁶ Deut. 34:9; though cf. Num. 27:18.

On two other occasions, apart from the language of pouring, רִיחַ is associated particularly with liquid (Isa. 4:4; 30:28).²⁵⁷ First, in Isa. 30:28, in strongly anthropomorphic language, Yahweh's 'breath' (רִיחַ) is likened to an overflowing wadi. The picture is of a once dry wadi bursting its banks, overpowering all that goes before it. There is no reason why Yahweh's רִיחַ *sensu* 'breath' could not be thought of in liquid terms. Therefore, language of Yahweh pouring out his רִיחַ (Ezek. 39:29) should not *necessarily* be distinguished from language of Yahweh giving his spirit *qua* vivifying רִיחַ-breath (Ezek. 37:14). Secondly, in Isa. 4:4, everyone will be called holy 'once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit (רִיחַ) of judgement and by a spirit (רִיחַ) of burning.' It is not certain what is meant at this point by רִיחַ – whether it refers to the storm wind that is at Yahweh's disposal (there has been storm imagery used of the coming day in Isa. 2:19, 21), or to an independent spirit at Yahweh's disposal (cf. 1 Kings 22:21-23) or to Yahweh's own spirit. What is striking to notice is that this רִיחַ (Yahweh's agent) is involved with cleansing and washing the people of Jerusalem. This liquid metaphor is very close in thought to Ezek. 36:17-19 and 39:24. In Isa. 4:4 (indeed from 3:16), Zion has been personified in her 'daughters'. Though the reference to 'blood' is probably a reference to Zion's bloodshed, it is possible that it is deliberately ambiguous, and could refer to the unclean menstrual flow. If that were so, that would provide a close semantic link to Ezek. 36:17-19, where Israel's behaviour has been likened to a woman's uncleanness (v.17), a behaviour that in v.18 is identified in terms of 'bloodshed' (הַקָּדִים).²⁵⁸ The רִיחַ that is at Yahweh's disposal is involved in cleansing the people from their uncleanness and filth.²⁵⁹

For our purposes, though, it is the instances of Yahweh 'pouring' רִיחַ that are of particular significance. Again, as with Yahweh 'giving' רִיחַ, there is variation both in the nature of רִיחַ poured, and in the prepositions associated with the verb of pouring. There is also variation in the verbs for 'pour.'

Table 15. Occurrences of Yahweh 'pouring' רִיחַ

A	Yahweh's spirit	Isa. 32:15 (ערה – nif. 'be emptied out'); 44:3 (יצק); Ezek. 39:29 (שפך); Joel 2:28-29 [ET 3:1-2] (שפך)
B	Anthropological – 'an interior disposition'	Isa. 19:14 (נסך); Isa. 29:10 (נסך); Zech. 12:10 (שפך)

Table 16. Prepositions used with occurrences of Yahweh 'pouring' רִיחַ

בְּקִרְבֵּי	Isa. 19:14 ('C')
עַל	Isa. 29:10; Zech. 12:10 (Both 'C') Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; (All 'A')

²⁵⁷ There are other instances which are close to the 'fluid' metaphor. In Num. 11:17, Yahweh 'sets aside' (אָצַל) some of the רִיחַ which is on Moses and puts (שָׂם) it on the elders. In Isa. 63:11, Yahweh puts (שָׂם) his רִיחַ within (בְּקִרְבֵּי) his people.

²⁵⁸ Though the LXX does not have Ezek. 36:18b. Allen (*Ezekiel 20-48*, p176) and Zimmerli (*Ezekiel 2*, p241) regard this explanation as secondary. Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p344; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, p728.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, pp136-39.

A comparison of the four tables above gives rise to two observations that point to the essential similarity of the two concepts, that of 'giving' רָחַם and of 'pouring' רָחַם. First, the prepositions are to some extent interchangeable. Yahweh can 'pour' רָחַם 'in the midst' (בְּקֶרֶב), though 'pour upon' (עַל) is much more common. In the same way, Yahweh can 'give' רָחַם 'in the midst' (בְּקֶרֶב), but Yahweh also can 'give' רָחַם 'upon' (עַל). Secondly, the desired democratisation of prophecy that in Num. 11 is due to Yahweh 'giving' רָחַם 'upon' (עַל) all people, is promised in terms of Yahweh 'pouring' רָחַם 'upon' (עַל) in Joel 3:1-2; 'giving' and 'pouring' are not fundamentally different. This essential similarity is not to say that the pouring of רָחַם always is identical. Language of pouring implies an extravagance to Yahweh's action not necessarily self-evident in 'giving.'²⁶⁰ In Ezek. 39, this extravagance is appropriate both as a reversal of the pouring out of wrath and as the climax of the section that is full of hope, culminating in Yahweh showing mercy for the first time in the book (v.25). It is, however, to deny that there is a 'fundamental difference' (Block) between the two. It is better to account for the variation in Ezekiel's usage by seeing a deliberate exploitation of the ambiguity inherent in רָחַם, as it moves from the new driving force (36:26) and the new life-breath (37:4-10) to Yahweh's 'spirit' (36:27; 37:14). This 'play' requires that רָחַם is 'within' or 'in' because that is the locus both of the anthropological 'driving force' and of the 'life-breath.'

The second reason why it is preferable to see the conceptual similarity of the three instances of Yahweh bestowing his spirit, despite the different fientive verb in 39:29, comes from the links with the notion of Yahweh hiding his face. Such a concept, not found elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel apart from the three instances in ch. 39 (vv.23, 24, 29),²⁶¹ 'implies a break in communication'²⁶² with Yahweh. Such a break came because of Israel's 'iniquity' (בְּעֵוֹנָם (v.23)), because they had 'dealt treacherously' (מִמְעַלָּיו (v.23)) with him, because of their uncleanness (כְּטִמְאַחָם (v.24)), and because of 'their transgressions' (כְּפִשְׁעֵיהֶם (v.24)). Here, then, is the organic link between Israel's behaviour and Yahweh's judgement, reflected in his hiding his face. In v.29, Yahweh promises that he will never hide his face again 'when (אֲשֶׁר) I pour out my spirit...'. Whether אֲשֶׁר is taken temporally or causally, there is clearly a link between the pouring out of the spirit, and the result that Yahweh will no longer hide his face.²⁶³ The clear implication is that the pouring out of Yahweh's רָחַם will serve to reverse what caused

²⁶⁰ It is striking in this regard to note that the link with 'rain' and a verb of pouring is only explicit in Isa. 44:3. שָׁפַךְ is never used of rain (see Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, pp26-27; also Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, p225). What seems to be in view is the metaphorical unreserved boundless giving of Yahweh's רָחַם rather than the connotations of rain. See Dreytza, *Der theologische Gebrauch von RUAH*, pp224-26; Schüngel-Straumann, *Rûah*, p26; pace Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p567; Koch, *Der Geist Gottes*, p33; Lys, *Rûach*, p154 n1.

²⁶¹ Though Yahweh 'turns away' (סָבַב hif.) his face in 7:22.

²⁶² Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, pp208-209.

²⁶³ A causal sense makes my argument stronger, but even a temporal sense supports my argument, given the organic link between behaviour and the hiddenness of Yahweh's face.

the hiding of his face, according to vv.23-24. In other words, Yahweh's רִנָּה will ensure the obedience of the restored people. This is precisely the force of Yahweh's רִנָּה in 36:27. These links are further buttressed by the fact that Yahweh's 'face' (פָּנִים) as Yahweh's presence²⁶⁴ is linked elsewhere with Yahweh's spirit. In Ps. 104:29-30, Yahweh's hiding his face is tantamount to death, to the taking away of a person's breath (רִנָּה). Hence, Yahweh's turning his face towards a person is tantamount to the giving of רִנָּה, or the giving new life (cf. Ezek. 37:14). In Ps. 51:13, the taking away of the 'holy spirit' is parallel to being cast from Yahweh's presence (פָּנִים);²⁶⁵ it is likely, then, that the reverse is also true – being in Yahweh's presence is to have Yahweh's רִנָּה. In other words, the linking of רִנָּה with פָּנִים points to the fact that the 'pouring out' of Yahweh's רִנָּה in 39:29 should be seen in the same terms as that in 36:27 and 37:14; it also points to the life-giving, as well as the 'obedience-ensuring' dimension of רִנָּה.²⁶⁶

Thirdly, although there is scholarly debate about the relationship between 39:21-29 and the Gog oracle of 38:1-39:20, it is clear that the 'now' (עַתָּה) of v.25 shifts the focus from the future back to the present.²⁶⁷ Vv.25-29 have the same provenance and perspective as the earlier salvation oracles, looking forward to a return to the land and to restoration. It is unlikely, therefore, that the 'pouring out of Yahweh's spirit' speaks of something other than the same promise of Yahweh's רִנָּה mentioned already.

In conclusion, the change in terminology expresses both a symmetry with the pouring out of Yahweh's anger and the extravagance of Yahweh's actions, but does not signify something fundamentally new or different from that which is envisaged in 36:27a or 37:14.²⁶⁸ This being so, here again Yahweh's רִנָּה is directly linked with Yahweh's word. It is Yahweh's רִנָּה that ensures that a rebellious people (cf. 39:23-24) will never again experience Yahweh turning his face away. This can only be ensured by the renewed obedience of the exiles. Yahweh's רִנָּה is the means whereby transformation is effected.

4. Summary

If Yahweh's רִנָּה in 37:14 served to show *how* it would be that the 'dead' exiles would come to respond in repentance to Yahweh's word, the references in 36:27a and 39:29 (partially, in view of the links with Yahweh 'hiding' his face) point to the role of Yahweh's רִנָּה in effecting obedience: 'I will put my spirit within you, and make you

²⁶⁴ Cf. Exod. 33:14; see Montague, *Holy Spirit*, pp56-58.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Ps. 139:7, 'Where can I go from your spirit (מִרוּחְךָ)? Or where can I flee from your presence (מִפְּנֵיךָ)?'

²⁶⁶ This is not to say that the extravagance of the metaphor should be restricted to bringing about obedience. It is to say that entailed within the pouring out of Yahweh's רִנָּה is renewed obedience.

²⁶⁷ Block, *Ezekiel 25-48*, p485, comments that 'the divine speech...opens abruptly with *'attā*, "Now," snatching the hearers' attention away from the distant utopian future, and returning them to the very real needs of the present.' Cf. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, p209.

²⁶⁸ If there is after all an echo of 'rain' brought by the wind (רִנָּה), then this would provide a neat reversal with the scorching רִנָּה that Yahweh has sent in judgement (Ezek. 17:10; 19:12).

follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances' (36:27a). What Jeremiah sees as achieved by Yahweh writing the Torah on the hearts of the house of Israel (Jer. 31:33), what Deuteronomy ascribes to Yahweh circumcising the hearts of Israel (Deut. 30:6-8), Ezekiel ascribes to the giving of the divine קִרְיָן .

CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. SUMMARY

This study began by noting the conceptual link between a person's word and the breath that carries that word. This link is sometimes paralleled in the Old Testament by a theological association (e.g. Ps. 33:6). This study has explored further the relationship between Yahweh's word and Yahweh's *rûah*. The main focus for this exploration has been the book of Ezekiel, both because of its comparatively short composition history and because of its dual emphasis on word and *rûah*. The investigation has fallen into 3 main parts.

In Part I: Gathering the Data, there were two chapters. Chapter 1 did four things. First, it introduced the subject of the study. Secondly, it surveyed the current scene of Ezekiel scholarship, expressing methodological sympathies with the more recent English monographs that focus holistically on the *book* of Ezekiel, and noting seven fields in which Ezekiel studies have flourished as a result. Thirdly, it reviewed scholarship on *rûah*, and commented on three areas: the development of *rûah*-language in the Old Testament, insights from lexical semantics about *rûah*, and the relationship between *rûah* and the prophetic word. Finally, it outlined the thesis, which can be summarised as follows: *The relationship between Yahweh's rûah and Yahweh's word in the book of Ezekiel is to be understood not so much in terms of the inspiration and authentication of the prophet but in terms of the transformation of its addressees.*

Chapter 2 looked more closely at 'word' and *rûah* in Ezekiel, focusing on them separately before exploring the relationship in the rest of the study. First, it discussed where Yahweh's word is to be found in the book of Ezekiel. Although the book itself is dominated by reports expressed in the 1st person of the word coming to the prophet, I identified and explored four distinct types of speech event: Yahweh addressing Ezekiel; Ezekiel addressing his audience; Yahweh's ordinances and statutes; the book of Ezekiel itself. As part of thinking further about Yahweh's word and its addressees, I drew on insights from speech-act theory to show how the illocutionary force of Ezekiel's oracles can shift by virtue of their being re-presented within the book of Ezekiel. In the second part of this chapter, I analysed all 52 instances of *rûah* in the book, identified those occurrences where there is significant scholarly disagreement over meaning, and discussed important cases which would not be discussed later in the study (e.g. 1:12, 20-21). It became apparent that the wide semantic range of *rûah*, combined with the fluidity in categories, created the potential for significant deliberate or unintended ambiguity, and made closer analysis a necessity. Part I concluded by arguing that there a number of places where there is some kind of relationship between word and *rûah*.

In Part II: Word, Spirit and Inspiration, I turned to the question of *rûah*-inspiration and prophecy. Part II set out to explore some of the issues surrounding the prominence

of *rûah* within the ministry of Ezekiel, a prominence that is particularly striking when set against the absence in other classical prophets. Three questions shaped the discussion. The first was whether *rûah* in Ezekiel is or can be understood as Yahweh's breath on which his word is carried. The second was whether Ezekiel recovers *rûah* as foundational in prophetic inspiration. The third was whether the emphasis on *rûah* within the prophet Ezekiel's ministry is best explained in terms of the authentication of the prophet. This is the usual explanation for the importance of *rûah* within the ministry of Ezekiel.

Chapter 3 surveyed the different scholarly perspectives on the place of *rûah* within classical prophecy. Next, it examined the concept of inspiration, and suggested two theoretical distinctions should be acknowledged. The first was that that between 'potentiating' inspiration, where *rûah* inspires the prophet, and 'word-communicating' inspiration, where *rûah* inspires words. The second was that between the prophetic event, of Yahweh's word coming to the prophet, and the rhetorical event, of the prophet speaking Yahweh's word. The chapter then examined *rûah*-inspiration within the book of Ezekiel, and argued that there is evidence of both 'potentiating' and 'word-communicating' inspiration, although more evidence of the former, and that each can be found in both the prophetic and the rhetorical events.

Chapter 4 examined the relationship between *rûah* and prophetic inspiration in the pre-classical prophets, the classical prophets, and in selected post-exilic works. With regard to the pre-classical prophets, I argued that there is strong evidence both of 'potentiating' inspiration and of 'word-communicating' inspiration, but that *rûah* is not especially prominent. With regard to the classical prophets, I argued that, while it is certainly true that *rûah*-inspiration is not prominent, both 'potentiating' inspiration and 'word-communicating' inspiration as concepts may be found. The classical prophets did not repudiate *rûah* in their own inspiration, but downplayed their own inspiration by *rûah* for rhetorical reasons. In post-exilic literature, again both 'potentiating' and 'word-communicating' inspiration may be found. In terms of the three questions raised, I concluded that *rûah* as the 'breath' of Yahweh's mouth is not linked with Yahweh's word in Ezekiel. Secondly, Ezekiel cannot be said to 'recover' *rûah* as foundational in his inspiration because the pre-classical prophets are not depicted as inspired as often as is sometimes said and because the classical prophets are more inspired than is sometimes allowed. Ezekiel does have a greater emphasis on *rûah* in his own inspiration, but that is one of degree, not of kind. Thirdly, regarding language of *rûah* as part of the prophet's own attempt at self-authentication fails to account for the reasons for the almost total silence on *rûah* in the classical prophets. Regarding it as part of the *book's* attempt at authenticating the prophet makes more sense, but does not do justice to the book's overriding purpose of transforming its addressees.

Part III turned to the question of the role of *rûah* in the transformation of the people, effecting obedience to Yahweh's word. In Chapter 5, we observed how there is symmetry in the book of Ezekiel between the portrayals of judgement and restoration. We saw how it depicts the disobedience of Ezekiel's addressees as something that endures throughout the prophet's ministry. At the same time, we noted how the book also looks forward to a day when the exilic house of Israel will again be characterised by a renewed obedience. I argued that this dichotomy serves both to demonstrate to the exilic addressees of the book that the unresponsiveness of Ezekiel's addressees was not surprising, hence did not discredit his ministry. Further, it provides a powerful call to the book's addressees to distance themselves from the past response of Ezekiel's addressees, and to identify with the future, if they are to live and not die (Ezek. 18:31; 33:11). Finally, I argued that the book portrays the prophet Ezekiel as a prescriptive paradigm of the obedience that is both desired and required. The chapter closed by observing that, for the readers of the book, the vision of restoration and renewed obedience does not rest easily with the history of the house of Israel, characterised by rebellion from first to last (ch. 20). The critical questions for them are precisely *how* such obedience would come about, and *how* it would be ensured, given this catalogue of failure which extended even to Ezekiel's intended audience, and given their current plight in exile (cf. 33:10; 37:11).

Chapter 6 argued that *rûah* is fundamental for renewed and long-term obedience to Yahweh's word, whether it is the prophet's word, or Yahweh's statutes. It is precisely in this context that *rûah* within the book assumes its greatest significance. The chapter began by contending that the book of Ezekiel portrays not just the prophet's obedience, but also his experience of *rûah* as paradigmatic. In the rest of the chapter, I argued that *rûah* is essential for the obedience of the prophet, and that this is mirrored in the future vision for the exiles: *rûah* provides the key to how the vision of the future becomes a present reality (Ezek. 37:1-14). The two-staged vision points to the need of *rûah* to effect a penitent response to the prophetic word, now written in the book of Ezekiel, in those who hear it. It also provides the key to how the vision of the future will remain a permanent reality (Ezek. 36:27a; 39:29). Yahweh's *rûah* will so infuse the house of Israel, acting upon its new heart, that it will cause the people to obey in a permanent way – a way that will ensure they are never cast from the land again, even if the renewed sacrificial system points to the possibility of sin. Yahweh's *rûah* transforms the people by effecting Yahweh's word in their experience.

B. CONCLUSIONS

1. The study of רִּיחַ in the book of Ezekiel

Although references to *rûah* are undoubtedly based in the personal experience of the prophet,¹ their place in the book needs to be understood within the ferment in thinking precipitated by the exile. By its very fluidity, *rûah* is able to fuse a number of things that resonate not simply with the personal experience of the prophet, but also with the transformation of the people. Although of necessity these have to be discussed in linear fashion in a thesis, these instances are better characterised as exhibiting a network of connections.

There is *rûah* as the breath of life for those who see themselves 'dead', 'separated from Yhwh's beneficent acts' and 'forgotten by him'² (Ezek. 37; cf. 2:2; 3:24). By the agency of this *rûah* the exiles can and will live again. Yet the problem is not simply that they are dead, for they also have a 'mind' (*rûah*), synonymous with their *lēb*, that is corrupt (11:5; 20:32; cf. 13:3)) and needs replacing. There is, though, another anthropological *rûah*, for *rûah* is also the 'driving force' that acts upon Israel's *lēb* (11:19; 18:31; 36:26; cf. Deut. 2:30), rather than being simply synonymous with it. These notions of 'life-breath' that is absent, 'mind' that is corrupt, and 'driving force' that needs renewing are all answered by the multi-faceted gift of Yahweh's own *rûah*, promised to the exiles. Yet that by no means exhausts the polyvalency of *rûah*.

As the power that transports Ezekiel from place to place (37:1 etc.), *rûah* encapsulates the action of Yahweh (by his *rûah*) in transporting the people back to their land from exile (37:14). As the means by which Yahweh brings about obedience to his word (2:2; 3:24; cf. 36:26-27; 37:1-14), the action of Yahweh's *rûah* echoes the equipping power that clothed the judges, enabling them to fulfil Yahweh's will.³ Further, it points to the transforming power by which the book's addressees can share in Ezekiel's vision of the future, and by which Yahweh himself can 'participate directly in man's new obedience.'⁴ As the inspiring power that takes Ezekiel, though in visions, to the place of revelation where he comes to know Yahweh and his will, so *rûah* will bring the book's addressees to a true knowledge of Yahweh (cf. 36:27; 37:6, 14).⁵ As the outpoured *rûah* of Yahweh, 'fécondante'⁶ in its effects (39:29), an end is signalled to the scorching *rûah* of Yahweh's judgement, metaphorically represented by the storm wind (13:11, 13) or east wind (17:10; 19:12). As the means by which a divine act of

¹ Volz, *Der Geist Gottes*, p69; cf. Carley, *Ezekiel among the Prophets*, pp71ff.

² Olyan, "We Are Utterly Cut Off", p48.

³ Cf. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, p12.

⁴ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p249. For Lapsley, (*Can These Bones Live?*, p62), it is this divine dimension that separates the promise of renewal in Ezekiel from that in Jeremiah, a reflection of Ezekiel's greater pessimism about human ability.

⁵ Cf. Lapsley, *Can These Bones Live?*, p167.

⁶ Lys, *Rûach*, p154.

recreation, replicating the creation of Adam, is accomplished, *rûah* points towards the recreation of a new people (37:1-14). In addition, the role played by *rûah* in effecting Yahweh's spoken word mirrors that found in Gen. 1:2. The importance of Yahweh as creator, and of the role of Yahweh's *rûah* in creation, is often highlighted in discussions of exilic Isaianic theology.⁷ The same emphasis is present in Ezekiel.

Finally, in the exilic and post-exilic periods, *rûah* begins to be seen 'as a representative or manifestation of Yahweh on earth'⁸ (cf. Isa. 63:7ff.). There are nascent signs in the book of Ezekiel of *rûah* acting as the means by which a transcendent deity is present and acts immanently (1:12; 20; cf. 39:29 and the links with *pānîm*). Although for Ezekiel as a priest, divine presence is clearly focused in the mobile *kêbôd yhwah*, yet Ezekiel is not simply a priest, he is a prophet, inspired by *rûah*. The cultic and the charismatic merge. The fructifying and life-giving effect of the stream flowing from the temple in 47:1-12, where *kêbôd yhwah* is present (cf. 43:1-5), is not far from the thought of the life-giving effects of *rûah* in 37:1-14 and the renewal of the land in Edenic fashion that accompanies the renewal of the people.⁹ Such connections are closer after the exile, where *rûah* is said to have performed actions that are predicated elsewhere of Yahweh's glory in the cloud (Neh. 9:19-20; Isa. 63:11-14; Hag. 2:5).¹⁰ The relationship between the two would be a fruitful avenue for further research, particularly if not restricted to Ezekiel.

In terms of the number of occurrences related to the prophet himself, Ezekiel deserves the title, 'prophet of the spirit'. However, discussion of *rûah* in Ezekiel needs to be carried out not by isolating the prophetic *rûah* from the transforming *rûah*, for the book of Ezekiel takes the prophetic *rûah* and marshals it not chiefly for the authentication of Ezekiel as prophet, but as an integral part of the book's wider rhetorical function of transforming its addressees.

2. The study of רוח in the Old Testament

It has been axiomatic amongst many Old Testament scholars that *rûah* does not really relate to the prophetic word until the exile. According to this reading of the evidence, *rûah* was associated with prophecy in the pre-classical period only insofar as it gave rise to ecstatic prophetic behaviour. In the classical period, the prophets either repudiated *rûah* or would not have attributed their prophetic inspiration to *rûah*. It was after the exile, when *rûah* had been subject to a number of developments, that the pre-exilic

⁷ Cf. Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, pp96-101.

⁸ Lindblom, *Prophecy*, pp413-14; cf. Schoemaker, 'Use of רוח', p28; R. E. Clements, *God and Temple: The Idea of the Divine Presence in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp132-34; *idem*, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach*, (London, Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978), pp69-70; Sklba, "Until the Spirit from on High Is Poured out on Us", p15; Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes*, p152.

⁹ Cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, p516.

¹⁰ Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, p15.

prophets were seen to have prophesied under the inspiration of *rûah* (Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12). Such an analysis should be revised.

While it is certainly true that *rûah* was associated with ecstatic behaviour, such prophets did produce words which were clearly understood as related to the activity of *rûah* (1 Kgs. 22:6, 10-11). Whether it was Yahweh's *rûah* or an evil *rûah* sent from Yahweh was a matter of debate, but *rûah* was related to prophetic speech even in early times. For the classical prophets, while prophetic behaviour clearly changed somewhat, and clear statements of their own inspiration are very rare, there is no evidence of their repudiating *rûah*, and there is sufficient evidence to point towards their own *rûah*-inspiration, albeit downplayed for rhetorical reasons. The prophet Ezekiel is not a strange anomaly in his consciousness of *rûah*-inspiration. Rather, the change in rhetorical situation, the message of transformation, and the carefully constructed prophetic persona in the book of Ezekiel explain the prominence of *rûah* in the book.

3. The study of the book of Ezekiel

This study has highlighted the significance of Ezekiel the prophet as a *persona* with a significant role to play in the message of the book, and not simply as a vehicle of Yahweh's word. It has also provided evidence that the prophetic book of Ezekiel is a carefully shaped whole with a clear rhetorical purpose. However, it is in a different area that this study has greatest implications.

The place of calls to repentance in the book and how such calls relate to apparently unilateral and unconditional declarations of salvation by Yahweh has been much debated. Whether the product of different layers, chronological development, rhetorical technique, different moral worlds, conflicting anthropologies or something else, within the *book* of Ezekiel the two remain side-by-side, with neither revoked. Indeed, oracles not originally aimed at eliciting repentance have been re-presented within the book of Ezekiel, as indirect speech acts with different illocutionary force, to bring the exilic addressees to repentance. Within the framework of the book of Ezekiel, I have argued for a different perspective on this antinomy, that they provide *complementary* perspectives on the same event, albeit with divine initiative working through *rûah* enabling a response impossible for the inveterately rebellious nation.

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, there are clear links pointing to Yahweh's word as carried by Yahweh's breath. The book of Ezekiel makes a distinctive contribution to our knowledge of Yahweh, Ezekiel's God, in highlighting the effecting power of *rûah*: Yahweh, by his *rûah*, brings about moral and ethical transformation and renewal, creating a new community obedient to his word.

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