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"In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was struck, in the same day, the hand of YaHoVeH was on me, and He brought me there. In the visions of Spirit brought He me into Eretz-Yisra'el, and set me down on a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south. He brought me there; and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. The man said to me, Son of man, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart on all that I shall show you; for, to the intent that I may show them to you, are you brought here: declare all that you see to the house of Yisra'el." Ezekiel 40:1

The Coming of Messiah series
Ezekiel's Temple
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a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:19)

his article will be aimed at the book of Ezekiel - specifically the middle chapters in which is given a time frame for the rebuilding of the Temple of Israel. When we consider that every letter of every book in the Book (including all the prophecies of Yeshua) were written by Hebrews from a Hebrew perspective formed out of a Hebrew mindset that was influenced by Hebrew culture and were addressed primarily to a Hebrew audience which understood the nuances of the Hebrew language, then we find these words take on a context different from those of our contemporary culture. Too often we are influenced by factors in current culture in which we reside that are nearly invisible to us that we unknowingly overlay upon the Hebrew scriptures. Unless we take the time to ask deep questions about the culture, we will simply slide along with the masses, never realizing how much of what we think and do is formed by the patterns of this world (to quote Paul). As mentioned in [the previous article \(click on highlighted words to view content\)](#), most are unaware that the "end-time apocalypse" theology currently promoted by Christianity is relatively new - not found in history prior to the early to mid 1800s. However, that theology was entirely foreign to the first century Hebrews who wrote the Messianic Writings (NT). This is the teaching proposing that "Christ" may return at any second before "the great Tribulation" (also called "pretribulational dispensationalism"). Yet it does not map well with the mind-set of the first-century followers of [The Way](#). This is how what was given to a culture 2000 years ago becomes extrapolated as having meaning in our culture today when the authors who penned those words had no inclination anyone would even be reading their words 2000 years later. With this information in mind, let us examine what the prophecy in Ezekiel actually meant to the Hebrew audience to whom these words were directed.

Ezekiel prophesied about the judgment of Jerusalem and other nations in Ezekiel chapters 1-32. In Chapter 33, a messenger came and gave the news that Jerusalem had been destroyed. Ezekiel then spends the rest of his prophecy telling about the restoration of Israel. He is giving his messages to the Hebrews in exile where he is also among them, living 700 miles from Jerusalem. During the period of his preaching the temple was in ruins. Ezekiel was probably twenty-five years old at the beginning of the exile (working on the supposition that the thirty years of [Ezekiel 1:1](#) refers to his age). He lived in his own house in exile, at Tel Abib on the Great Canal (v.3:15). The location, if the river Kebar can be identified with Babylonian *naru kabari*, was between Babylon and Nippur. He was therefore living in one of the Hebrew colonies that the Babylonians had transplanted from Judah. Ezekiel and

a host of other Hebrews were taken into exile as captives in 597 BCE after Nebuchadnezzar had captured Jerusalem and carried away Jehoiachin, the royal family and the leading citizens and skilled artisans. While he was in exile, Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BCE. The neo-Babylonian empire was conquered by Cyrus about 2500 years ago. That conquest brought a permanent end to the Babylonian empire. As for the city of Babylon, it began a long process of decline after Cyrus' conquest and is said to have been completely deserted by 800 CE. The city was buried in sand until the late 1800s, when archaeologists rediscovered the site. The city began a new life as an archaeological site, although progress has been stymied by wars that have occurred during the past few centuries. Babylon, as a people, as a nation, and as an empire, has ceased to exist or function in any way shape or form. The city itself was buried under sand for centuries. It is very safe to say that these facts lend credence to the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah.

Context, context, context. To properly understand the words of scripture, we must always consider the context they are presented in, the context of the Hebrew perspective they are presented from and the audience they are presented to. In trying to understand Ezekiel's prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel, we must realize that he was giving hope to his immediate audience who were the Hebrews in exile. He was giving them a message from YaHoVeH that told them that all was not lost and that their nation would be restored in the near future. This restoration would take place beginning when many of the Hebrews returned to Israel under Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel and the temple was rebuilt. However, we cannot say that Ezekiel's prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel were fully completed in this return of the Hebrews from exile. True, there was a definite restoration and the temple was rebuilt in the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel. But, it is quite clear that the completed temple was substantially lacking from the description given Ezekiel - prompting many over the centuries to assume that the temple vision given to Ezekiel is reserved for some completion date in the future. However, scripture does not support such an assumption. **Jeremiah 28:9** tells us that the first and primary test of prophecy is - does it come to pass. While this premise applies generally in judging a "false" prophet, it is not the sole criterion. So, when does prophecy become "not" prophecy?

There are three things we must remember about Hebrew prophecy. First, since all of the books of the Book were written by Hebrews and were directed to a Hebrew audience, all prophecy in the Book is about and concerning the Hebrew people, not "the world" or "civilization" - and that includes the book of **Revelation**. Secondly, Hebrew prophecy is "rearview mirror" commentary. After the event is over, as it was with the coming of the Son, then you know what happened. When Yeshua came, every single prophecy written about that event came to pass - but, nobody saw it as it was unfolding before them until after it was over and they were granted understanding (**Luke 24:45**). It is looking at the past with perfect hindsight. Before



Ezekiel's vision

lightning strikes, we can't predict from where and when it will come, but after it strikes there is no doubt about its occurrence. Finally, most Hebrew prophecy is conditional. It is instructional, not a prediction. When men change their ways, YaHoVeH changes His mind and the outcome of prophecy is altered (consider **Jonah 3**). Nothing in this type of prophecy is cast in stone. "IF" you will...then YaHoVeH will (**Exodus 15:26**). Such was the condition laid before the Hebrew people concerning the re-construction of the temple, found in Ezekiel 43:

"As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan. And IF they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, SO THAT they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out." Ezekiel 43:10-11

Ezekiel makes no mention anywhere of any obligation to build a Temple. There is no actual instruction to build it in Ezekiel nor is there a sense that the matter is urgent as it is in Haggai - which is unique in this regard. In fact, even in the Torah we find no explicit command to build a Temple. The portable tabernacle fulfilled its role in the wilderness. The temple that Solomon built was as a result of his father, David's, desire to build a Temple for YaHoVeH as seen in **2Samuel 7**. The latter presents the need for a Temple as a human need - as David's initiative. David regarded the tabernacle as a dwelling that was unbefitting YaHoVeH's glory, in view of the king's own majestic palace (2Samuel 7:2). The initial reaction of Nathan, the prophet, is one of support: "*Do whatever is in your heart, for Elohim is with you*" (2Samuel 7:3), but there is no indication in his words that YaHoVeH mandates the building of a Temple. According to Nathan, YaHoVeH will accede to David's request because He supports him

and his actions. This suggests that YaHoVeH has no need for a Temple, thus, reinforcing His Words of [Isaiah 66:1-2](#). To build it was only a privilege granted to the king and, ultimately, postponed from David's time until the reign of the son who will succeed him. It follows, then, that according to the perspective of this text (a) it could have been possible for Israel to continue for a long time without a Temple ([Jeremiah 7:22-23](#)); and (b) the building of the Temple was considered a human initiative, for the sake of humans and for the sake of the king with YaHoVeH only allowing for its construction subject to certain conditions. This position stands in contrast to the one advanced by the tabernacle tradition in which YaHoVeH is the initiator in [Exodus 26:1-7](#) (see [A Pre-Determined Destination](#)).

So, then, what was the sin that drove the Hebrews into captivity and required their acknowledgement of in order to have this grand design of the temple vision given to Ezekiel rebuilt in Jerusalem? We can see Ezekiel's general accusation against Israel's idolatry in the specific example of Judah in the writings of his contemporary, Jeremiah. This occurred just before Judah completely collapsed and the Hebrews were led into Babylonian captivity. At that time, YaHoVeH flooded the nation with godly prophets to give the people a final warning ([Jeremiah 25:3-7](#)). Many prophets witnessed against the Hebrews, but no lasting repentance occurred. A key to understanding why nothing changed is found in [Jeremiah 25:6-7](#) in the phrase, "...*provoke Me to anger with the works of your hands.*" The Hebrew word translated as the English "hands" is *yad* which means, "an open hand indicating power, means, direction, etc." Thus, "*works of your hands*" would include concepts, ideas, and notions developed from their own **determination**, not from YaHoVeH's. He refers, of course, to their idolatry. We are taught from YaHoVeH **in the Torah** that what we give ourselves to is what we serve and what we serve is what we worship - upheld by Yeshua in [Luke 4:8](#). The deceptive nature of idolatry and Sabbath-breaking is such that their damaging effects are more subtle than the effects of other sins. The pains of the penalties usually come so much later that most are unable to connect the true spiritual cause with the individual's or culture's spiritual degeneracy. If one lies, steals, or commits murder, the effects are almost always immediately evident, but this is not so with idolatry and Sabbath-breaking. With those who do not know YaHoVeH, breaking the first commandment leads to breaking the fourth. However, with the faithful, those committed to practicing Truth, breaking the fourth can just as easily lead to breaking the first. **Scripture** reveals that the effect of breaking the first commandment is to break the second, and eventually all the other commandments. In practical experience, this happens because, once a person is no longer responding to YaHoVeH's values, someone or something else has to be put in His place. Man will worship, that is, give his devotion to something; and that something is more often than not himself and his own wants ([Isaiah 58:13-14](#)).



Nehemiah's Return

economically before directing their efforts to rebuilding the Temple - placing their own desires ahead of constructing the Temple ([Haggai 1:5-6, 9-11](#)). Thus, we see a fallow period between the laying of the foundation of the temple and construction resuming - a time lag of about 7 years. It was Israel's continued idol worship of their own needs that deprived them from realizing the fullness of Ezekiel's unique temple vision - not being "ashamed of their iniquities".

Ezekiel also prophesies that David would be their shepherd and king. Now, David was long dead when they returned from their exile. So, this prophecy could not have been fulfilled then if Ezekiel was referring to the David in Israel's history. He would have to be referring to another David who would yet come. Who then was that David and had he come when that restoration from exile took place?

Ezekiel's message was delivered before and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. He spoke to all Israel, but locally to the exiles as people who continued to listen to false prophets and practice idolatry. The contents of Ezekiel indicate that little had changed in the attitude of the Hebrew people since being removed to Babylon ([Ezekiel 16:15-59](#)). Elie Assis of Bar Ilan-University in Ramat Gan, Israel, makes a compelling observation in his book, ***THE TEMPLE IN THE BOOK OF HAGGAI***, that it was due to the economic malaise confronting the returning Hebrews to the land of Israel that the temple according to Ezekiel was never fully built. According to Haggai the people, who were suffering economic hardship because of famine and drought, decided to establish themselves

"I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. I will be their Elohim and my servant David will be prince among them. I, YaHoVeH, have spoken." Ezekiel 34:23-24

***"My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever and **David my servant**, will be their prince forever."* Ezekiel 37:24**

This David could only be referring to the Messiah who would yet come and not to the historical David who had already died. David was a type of the Messiah who would come in the future. When the people of Israel came back to their homeland under Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel, the Messiah had not yet come, but He would come to their descendants while that Temple still stood. "Forever" does not mean a line of unbroken succession, however. Certainly there was a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecies at that restoration. The Hebrews came back to their homeland and rebuilt the temple. It was this same temple to which the Messiah would come. Two passages point out the significance of this second temple and its relation to the coming of the Messiah. The first is [Haggai 2:6-9](#) with the second being [Malachi 3:1](#) which also points to the Messiah. The Messiah did come to this temple when Yeshua came, fulfilling all of these prophecies - not putting them "on hold" until some future time. He visited the temple, He taught in the temple, He cleansed the temple, He prophesied concerning the temple and spoke judgment on the temple which occurred in 70 CE. This return of the exiles prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah by the rebuilding of the temple and it would be their descendants such as Zechariah, Simeon, Anna, and others who welcomed Him as the Messiah of Israel. Though David had died long before, yet His descendant was there in Yeshua haMashiach. It was this descendant of David who was recognized and welcomed as the Messiah. On *Yom Shavu'ot* (Day of Pentecost) in [Acts 2:29-36](#), Peter declared that Yeshua was indeed the descendant of David who would come, that it was this Yeshua who was the Messiah of Israel.

***"My tabernacle will be with them; **I will be their Elohim**, and they will be my people."* Ezekiel 37:27**

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???Questions???

Please feel free to email me at harold@hethathasanear.com. While not claiming to have all the answers, it would be an honor to partake with you of what Spirit is uncovering.

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