CATASTROPHE, REMNANT AND COVENANT: AN INTERTEXTUAL COMPARISON OF THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL AND THE GENESIS FLOOD NARRATIVE

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CONTENTS

Introduction

The first nine chapters of Genesis contain nearly all of the ideas that are present in the rest of the books of the Bible. These beginning chapters set the stage for the three-part thematic structure of catastrophe, remnant and covenant that repeats itself throughout most of Genesis and many other biblical stories. The first mention in the biblical text of the word ברית (covenant) is found in Genesis 6:18:

וְהֵקִמֹתִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתָּךְ וּבָאתָ אֶל-הַתֵּבָה אַתָּה וּבָנֶיךָ וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּנְשֵׁי-בָנֶיךָ אִתָּךְ׃

> But with you will I establish my covenant; and you shall come into the ark, you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. *Genesis 6:18.*[1]

Immediately preceding the establishment of God's covenant with Noah, God warns him of the imminent catastrophe that will be sent down upon the earth. It will take the form of a flood and everything that is on the earth will perish. Noah is instructed to build an ark that will preserve him, his family members and two of every living thing (Gen. 6:19). Genesis 6:17-19 includes the whole of this three-part structure of catastrophe, covenant and remnant.

[1]All Hebrew translations in this thesis are from: The Holy Scriptures (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, [1992]).

There are other characters in the Bible, and other stories which contain elements of the Flood narrative. In fact, characters in the Torah who survive major catastrophic events are likened to Noah and may be called "Noah figures." Among them are Abraham, Lot and Moses. (These figures will be discussed in the following section).

Outside of the Torah, there is one prophetic figure who appears to personify Noah and the experiences he went through. Through a careful study of the two texts, it is clear that the Book of Ezekiel contains a parallel thematic structure and similar language to that of the Flood narrative. In short, the prophet Ezekiel survives a major catastrophic event in his generation: the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the exiles to Babylon. According to the text, Ezekiel is chosen by God to save the righteous remnant in his midst. Finally, Ezekiel conveys to the people that God will establish an everlasting covenant with them (Ezek.16:60).

In an attempt to understand how these themes were transmitted to the biblical text, it is necessary to compare the Flood narrative and the Book of Ezekiel with ancient Near Eastern texts which contain similar themes and language. The creation stories and scenes which portray various throne visions (as in

Ezekiel 1:11-28) which come from other ancient Near Eastern sources, have been useful in identifying parts of the biblical text that were borrowed and integrated into various biblical texts. Furthermore, comparing the texts allows one to highlight motifs and ideas that are strictly Israelite in nature.

After analyzing the extra-biblical counter texts, it is possible to see an emerging pattern between the Genesis Flood narrative and the Book of Ezekiel. Among the thirty-one thematic and linguistic and parallels between the two biblical texts, (which are discussed in Chapter Three), three motifs stand out as fundamental symbols which tie the Flood narrative to the Book of Ezekiel. They are: the sign of the rainbow (Gen. 9:13; Ezek. 1:28), the everlasting covenant (Gen. 9:16; Ezek. 16:60), and the overarching theme of righteousness (Gen. 6:9, 7:1; Ezek. 3:20ff). These will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Finally, the Book of Ezekiel and the Genesis Flood narrative incorporate ideas and themes which have become the foundation for Israelite culture and the Jewish people: surviving destruction, re-creating covenants with God, and regenerating a broken world out of the depths of an enduring remnant.

Major Themes in Genesis:
Divine Creation and Divine Destruction

The stories of Genesis have provided both ancient and modern readers alike with a framework of how the world and humanity were created. The ancient narratives set in mythic places such as the Garden of Eden and the mountains of Ararat set the stage for ongoing dialogue between God and human beings. Although the stories of Genesis are presented as folkloric in nature, they appear to explain many real events that occurred long before the storyteller began telling stories. Stories that try to explain the creation of the world are part of every culture's tradition. In fact, many religions and cultures share their creation stories as a result of borrowing, and proximity. In the Bible especially, events in the distant past such as natural disasters, are injected with a sense of morality and responsibility on the part of human beings, rather than attributing them to random acts of nature. The attempt by the Biblical authors and editors to grant human beings with the power to either bring on God's wrath or conversely, God's blessing, is a further technique the biblical writer uses to draw human beings into a relationship with the divine. The fundamental doctrine of "reward and punishment" is

exhibited in the stories of Genesis, thereby setting the overall tone for the rest of the books of the Bible.

The story of Adam and Eve and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the first time the text explains natural phenomena as a cause of human behavior:

> To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply the pain of your child bearing; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it; cursed is the ground for your sake; in sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return to the ground; for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust shall you return. *Genesis* 3:16-19

The biblical author explains the loss of the paradisiac human environment in terms of human irresponsibility and wrongdoing. Moreover, the same theme is carried over into the story of Adam and Eve's sons, Cain and Abel. Each successive generation is in some way exposed to the iniquities of prior generations. The continuous emphasis on this three-part theme of creation and destruction followed by re-creation is ubiquitous throughout the Bible.

One example that demonstrates this most clearly is the story

of Noah (Gen 6:8-9:29). The Flood narrative recounted in Genesis corresponds to another ancient Near Eastern story from Mesopotamia called *The Gilgamesh Epic.*

The biblical account of the Flood that has made its way into the Hebrew Bible is beyond reasonable doubt a compound narrative, that is made up of many sources. One of the sources goes back to the Priestly Texts, and is easy enough to identify except for a clause or two. But the strands other than P, are more difficult to identify . It should not be too hazardous to accept J as the only other author involved.[2] Modern scholars are in agreement with the fact that the Flood narrative in the Bible originally stems from Mesopotamian sources. But the actual ties are more complex than is generally assumed.

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[2]E. A. Speiser, *The Anchor Bible: Genesis.* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 54.

Counter Texts to Noah

The primeval Flood is echoed in a variety of cuneiform sources; The Sumerian Deluge Story[3] and The Atrahasis Epic Tablet III.[4] The most extensive example, however, and the one that scholars are most familiar with, is found in tablet XI of the Gilgamesh Epic. The Biblical account of the Flood and the flood described in the Gilgamesh Epic share the most in common. In both narratives there is a surviving Flood hero who has been chosen from among many to survive the inescapable destructive forces of nature. Each is told to construct a boat according to detailed specifications. There follow related descriptions of the elemental cataclysm, the annihilation of all life outside the boat, and the eventual grounding of the strange vessel on top of a tall mountain. Both Noah and Utnapishtim, his Babylonian counterpart, release a series of birds at appropriate intervals to test the subsidence of the waters; each account mentions a dove and a raven. Lastly, when dry land has reappeared in the now desolate world, each character gives expression to his boundless relief through a sacrifice of humble thanksgiving. So

[3]James B. Pritchard, ed., *ANET*, 42-44; 1969.

[4]David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. IV, (New York:Doubleday, 1992), 1127.

much correspondence in overall content is inescapable proof of basic interrelationship.[5]

The most complete extant narrative is that found in the eleventh tablet of the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic. However, the Flood episode in that version is a late addition to the story. Its parent version was the Atrahasis Epic, a history of the human race from creation to the flood and its aftermath. The Mesopotamian story even survived into Hellenistic times.

In the Bible, the Flood is the climactic turning point in a larger history of humankind rather than with the history of the world. Although the identical situation is present in the Sumerian and Atrahasis stories, and reflected in the Sumerian King List, one significant difference that is apparent from the biblical text is that God deliberately plans to save the hero of the Flood narrative. Moreover, God's decision is directly conveyed to Noah. Closely related is the Gilgamesh Epic XI, in which Ea warns Utnapishtim in a dream. In the Mesopotamian stories, a complete annihilation of humanity was to occur, and the fact that the hero was spared occurred as a result of only one god's interaction without the

[5]Ibid., 1127.

knowledge of the rest of the Pantheon. In Genesis, the Flood is God's response to the pollution of the earth by the moral corruption of the human race, and there is not the slightest doubt that it is Noah's integrity that determines his fate.[6]

It is clear that the biblical account of the Flood narrative is comprised of an independent Israelite version that is nevertheless closely related to the Mesopotamian traditions. It is probable that the foundation of the present prose narrative was an earlier poetic composition. This would explain the occurrence of so many unique or rare words, such as גפר,קנים,צהר,מבול,יקום, and קשת . It would also resolve poetic sentences such as 7:11 and 8:22, and explain the sevenfold repetition of so many key words. When Isaiah 54:9 refers to 'the waters of Noah' rather than to 'the Flood,' for instance, there may be a citation from some ancient popular source not otherwise preserved.[7]

The strong moral tenor of the Genesis Flood story has influenced its literary artistry. Because humanly wrought evil is perceived to be the undoing of God's creativity, numerous elements

[6]Nahum Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis.* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 49.

[7]Ibid., 49.

in the story are artful echoes of the Creation narrative. The Deluge itself is brought about by the release and virtual reuniting of the two halves of the primordial waters that had been separated in the beginning (7:11; cf. 1:1,6-7).[8] Furthermore, the same classification system that is used in the first two chapters of the Genesis narrative (1:11-12,21,24-5) is used in the Flood narrative as well (6:20 and 7:14). The provisioning of food in 6:21 is directly related to the list in 1:29-30. Noah is the first man to be born after the death of Adam, according to the chronology of 5:2-29, and he becomes a second Adam, the second father of humanity.

As noted above, there are substantial differences which set apart the biblical Flood narrative from its Mesopotamian counterpart. The motivation for the biblical Flood is described in moral terms, whereas the cuneiform version-at least the one that is incorporated in the Gilgamesh Epic-is depicted as having occurred because of whim. There are, furthermore, dissimilarities with the respect to the occupants of the two arks (the Mesopotamian personnel includes "all the craftsmen", while the Biblical account includes only Noah and his family) and the order of the test flights

[8]Ibid., 49.

(raven-swallow-dove in Gilg., raven-dove in Genesis). Moreover, there is the immediately apparent difference in names: Noah as against Utnapishtim; the mountains of Ararat as opposed to Mount Nisir. In Gen. 7:16, The opening to the ark is closed by God, and Noah and his family are shut in. Conversely, Atrahasis and Utnapishtim shut the hatch to their boats themselves.[9] Here the text is careful to note that the salvation of Noah is solely due to divine will, not to any independent measures of his own. It is clear then, that Hebrew tradition must have received its material from some intermediate, and evidently northwesterly, source, and that it proceeded to adjust the data to its own needs and concepts.[10]

The idea that Noah is a truly blameless biblical figure seems indisputable. Compared with the first Adam, Noah's potential to exonerate God's confidence in humanity seems assured. Because Noah arrives on the scene after Adam, he is seen as a second Adam in that he, alone, is the chosen remnant to regenerate humanity. Moreover, his name assures us that he is to provide humanity with some 'rest' (נח) from their cursed situation (5:29), a predicament

[9]Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis,* 55.

[10]Ibid., 54-55.

first devised by Adam and subsequently intensified by Cain and others. According to the biblical text, unlike those who came before him, Noah is the picture of biblical uprightness: he is 'righteous, blameless and [one who] walk[s] with God'. [11]

As someone who is described as "walking with God", Noah is less likely to destroy his 'way' (דרך) on the earth (i.e., go against God's instruction), as opposed to those who are described as having corruption destroy their way ("for all flesh had corrupted its *way* upon the earth" Gen. 6:12). Noah is not the passive figure of simple piety he might appear; instead, he actively does what is right and is found 'blameless in his generation'. He complies with the divine will which is apparent in his immediate fulfillment of the divine

[11] Robert W. E. Forrest, "Paradise Lost Again: Violence and Obedience in the Flood Narrative," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 62 (1994): 10.

Noah is evidently unlike his classical counterpart, Utnapishtim, despite the many other correspondences of that Flood narrative and the biblical version. Unlike Noah, Utnapishtim has a steersman, Puzur-Amurri, but Noah's ark is implicitly directed by God himself. In the construction of his craft, Noah is merely the instrument of the divine will, whereas in the Gilgamesh account Utnapishtim shows considerable initiative of his own. It is only when the flood waters have subsided and Noah is returned to earth that Noah shows some initiative in planting a vineyard. Until that point he is the epitome of acquiescence and obedience).

directives in the construction of the ark: 'Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him' (6:22). Throughout, Noah remains, like his later counterparts Abraham and Job, steadfastly determined to carry out the divine will without question. In spite of the mysterious nature of the divine commands, Noah's own feelings are suppressed such that he appears to lack a will of his own. Not even a hint of autonomy is present until disembarkation when he spontaneously offers a sacrifice and plants a vineyard.[12] Furthermore, although he is characterized as "righteous" Noah, unlike Abraham and Ezekiel, does nothing to try and save the others in his midst. He is, as the text suggests, righteous in *his* generation; that is, only more righteous than the horribly wicked people around him.

Because the Flood Narrative portrays yet another significant development of the theme of creation, order and chaos must again dominate the Primeval History. At the center of the chaos, stands a character like Noah who acts as a buffer between the divine will, on the one hand, and the forces of nature on the other. The issue remains, however, whether Noah's righteousness will be sufficient enough to maintain the creation which has been jeopardized by the

[12]Ibid., 10-11.

shortcomings of Adam and Eve, the original *adamic* pair. The biblical text reminds us that Noah was righteous "in his generation" (Gen 6:9), and once he leaves the confines of the ark, his actions are called into question.

Therefore, the so-called Fall was caused by more complicated issues than humanity's failure to obey God absolutely (Gen. 3). In this scenario, the narrator argues that "since humans are creatures of the earth, which is pictured as the personified and active protagonist of chaos, even Noah's remarkable fidelity, so noticeably lacking in the first Adamic pair, will not prevail; indeed, violence (חמס) will invariably arise to thwart the creative enterprise."[13]

Robert Forrest in his article, "Paradise Lost Again: Violence and Obedience in the Flood Narrative," highlights the connection that exists between the cursed condition of the earth (אדמה) and humanity's (אדם) relationship to it. This ongoing relationship, Forrest claims, causes continuing problems in the cosmos. As the text indicates, violence is something that is not only attributed to human beings, but to the land as well (Gen. 6:11). In order to ensure that a new creation will prevail absolutely, certain standards must

[13]Ibid., 4.

be introduced to safeguard creation, namely covenant followed by the Law/Torah.

> The first covenant not only ensures a more harmonious divine-human relationship, but also provides a means for the release of that violence which threatens the divine order. The focus of that violence is the animals earlier thought suitable companions for humanity. However, even the covenant proves insufficient protection against violence and a greater protection, namely Torah, is needed.[14]

As mentioned above, the Flood Narrative contains evidence of duplications and inconsistencies which makes it difficult to assess the original intent and framework of the text. It is apparent that someone combined these sources in their present form confirming Alter's observation that "folkloric traditions may very well be behind the text."[15] The fate of Adam and Eve raises the question of whether perfect human compliance with the divine will in creation would in fact ensure its survival. The conclusion of the Flood Narrative is that it would not, for even Noah's exemplary behavior demonstrably proves insufficient to ward off earth's violence. In short, obedience in and of itself affords insufficient protection against violence.[16]

[14]Ibid., 4.

[15]Ibid., 5.

[16]Ibid., 5.

In the Genesis account, the deluge is seen as the divine reaction to the universal 'violence' (חמס) in creation. This 'violence' is explained as the result of the wickedness of humanity and evil inclination (6:5-6). As discussed above, the sources of this 'violence' are 'in the earth' (בארץ), suggesting 'earth' and אדמה 'ground' or 'soil', are actively involved in the process of degeneration offering alternative 'ways' to those provided by God. Gen. 6:9-11 makes abundantly clear the devastating impact of this 'earthly' violence and raises the question whether the cosmos can survive its impact. Evidently the curse on the ground in Genesis 3, and the limitations imposed on Adam and Cain, have proved insufficient to control that violence. God realizes that new measures will have to be introduced to repress violence, as the Flood Narrative indicates.

Implicitly, if the flood is successful at wiping out the wickedness and the violence that have caused God to repent for making them (Gen. 6:7), then consequently, the earth will be cleansed of that universal evil and violence opposed the divine order.

However, the divine violence is mitigated by God's preservation of Noah and family together with selected animals.

Hence the covenant might also be considered a contract between *both* parties to limit violence when and where possible. Containment, rather than eradication, of violence and its effects appears then to be the divine consideration here.[17]

As noted above, there exists an interconnectedness between humanity and the earth. The actions of humanity greatly impact the earth, and as we see in the Flood narrative, by ridding the earth of the wickedness of humanity, a new order can be established. In Genesis 2 humanity (אדם) is made from 'the dust of the earth' (עפר מהאדמה), whereas Noah is described as an איש האדמה or 'man of the ground'. This is the world of Noah whose compliance stands out in marked contrast to that ubiquitous violence that results when corruption rules humanity's way (דרך) upon the earth.

Is it possible for a perfectly obedient person (Noah) to protect creation? The gist of the Flood Narrative, is that since obedience will always be perverted by violence, external constraints of some kind, namely covenant and Law, are essential. God's method of dealing with human violence is a counterattack. Human violence must be met with divine violence. Until this occurs, only then will a

[17]Ibid., 7.

new creation emerge undefiled by perversion. The preservation of God's intended 'way' (דרך) now requires that the world be returned to its primordial state and that creation be begun anew. In this new scenario, 'obedience' (Noah) will confront 'violence', represented by the 'earth' and its protagonists, which may include God himself through the actions of his sons.[18]

The story of Noah and the Flood utilizes themes that emerge in other biblical stories. The three-part thematic structure of catastrophe, remnant and covenant that is found in the biblical Flood narrative, is also found in the character of Abraham and the Sodom and Gemorrah story (Gen. 19). Abraham, therefore, is seen as a Noah figure who is singled out by God, and enters into a covenant with God. Moses, too, is regarded as a Noah figure. The beginning of the book of Exodus describes a catastrophic situation for the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. The Pharaoh decrees "Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile!" (Exod. 1:22). This is the Flood in miniature: Moses is then put into an ark of reeds, so that his life will be spared. Just as in the story of Noah, the word תבה, the Hebrew word used exclusively for Noah's ark, is used to describe the

[18]Ibid., 9.

life-saving vessel, (Gen. 6:14; Exod. 2:3).[19] Even Lot, who survives the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:15ff) is a Noah figure, for he is singled out to survive the destruction of his city, as well as the fact that his daughters get him to drink wine and take advantage of him sexually (Gen. 19:31). This is compared with the story of Noah, who under the influence of wine, is taken advantage of sexually by his son Ham, after surviving the destruction of the Flood. (Gen. 9:20-23). The Flood Narrative and the Lot episode are both attempts to explain the preservation of the seed of humanity after a major catastrophic event.

As mentioned in the Introduction, one character in the Bible, however, that stands out even more sharply as a Noah figure is Ezekiel. Although there has not been a large number of scholarly works which compare the intertextual similarities between the Flood narrative and the Book of Ezekiel, this thesis will attempt to highlight a number of the thematic and syntactic similarities found in Genesis 6:9-9:29 and the Book of Ezekiel.

When God speaks to Ezekiel (Ezek. 14:12-20) about the

[19]Noel David Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. IV, (New York:Doubleday, 1992),1127.

destruction he will cause upon the land, Noah, Daniel (Danel), and Job are singled out as exemplary men of righteousness in sinful ages. Ezekiel sees the three men as having survived extraordinary ordeals by their own righteousness.[20]

The fact that Noah is mentioned at all in the Book of Ezekiel reflects the notion that the two biblical figures share much in common. Noah, as the hero of the epoch-dividing Flood, may be hidden at the end of Ezekiel's first vision. Ezekiel hears seven voices. One of the seven voices is that of many waters (Ezek. 1:14). The many waters that Ezekiel may be referring to are the waters of the Genesis Flood narrative. The six voices are clustered in two verses (Ezek. 1:24, 25).

> As the seventh voice is about to be heard, Ezekiel makes a flashing allusion to Noah's Flood by "the bow in the cloud on the day of rain" (Ezek. 1:28). The seventh voice, climactically introduced, is none other than the voice of the Lord, and it is heard throughout the rest of the book. Here, Ezekiel is apparently invoking primeval authority for contemporary speech, as did the poet of Psalm 29. In the psalm, we find the lone reference to the Flood, מבול (Psalm 29:10), outside of the Noah story (Gen. 6-9).[21]

Just as Noah receives the command to build an ark and carry

[20]Ibid., 1127.

[21]Ibid., 1127.

out the divine will Ezekiel too, seems to be totally devoid of free will while he is acting out his prophetic mission. Like Noah, he does not act unless God (through the spirit in Ezekiel's case) causes him to act. "The overall effect is to portray Ezekiel as an automaton, an individual who has no human personality but who is totally under the control of the divine will."[22]

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[22]Robert Wilson, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," *Interpretation*, 38 (April 1984): 126.

Themes in Ezekiel

The Book of Ezekiel poses many challenges to modern commentators. The language of the book lacks the direct style of earlier oracular forms, and often involves convoluted and elaborated metaphors and even allegories, as well as, extensive motivational sections that are unique to this prophet.[23] There are similarities in Ezekiel that match the Priestly concerns found in the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17-26.[24] Some of the passages in Ezekiel which show strong priestly concerns are: when Ezekiel accuses Israel above all of defiling the sanctuary (5:11), following after other gods (8:7-9), and worshipping idols (14:3-5). And, that the people have made themselves unclean (20:30-31; 22:26; 36:18). This same message underlies the allegories of the two sisters in chaps. 16 and 23. The text also has a strong cultic vision of the land. While sins against the rights of others are occasionally cited, by far the largest number of offenses are against laws of purity or cultic fidelity to God.[25] As previously mentioned, there is a particularly close connection

[23]Walter Matthews, "Ezekiel, Book of" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. II, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 715.

[24]Nosson Scherman, and Meir Zlotowitz, ed., *The Book of Ezekiel* (New York: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1994), 770.

[25]Matthews, "Ezekiel, Book of," 715.

between the concerns of Leviticus 17-26, the so-called "Holiness Code." The Book of the Ezekiel is generally understood to have originated in the late pre-exilic period among Priestly circles. Because of this, it is possible that Ezekiel was familiar with its general outline, although specific differences suggest that Leviticus 17-26 received its final form only after the time of Ezekiel. Both the Book of Ezekiel and Levitucus share a similar vision of God with a strong emphasis on creating a clear distinction between the realms of the profane and the holy. The most significant comparisons are between Leviticus 26 and Ezekiel 4-7 and 34-27. Yet, even on specific laws, the two books differ frequently. The Talmud records that this so bothered the early rabbis that Hanina ben Hezekiah stayed up and burned three hundred jars of oil in his lamp at night until he could reconcile Ezekiel with the Pentateuch (Talmud: Sabb.13b).[26]

Furthermore, the shortened date formula used by the Holiness School in Ezekiel also appears in the editorial stratum of the Flood narrative, which is the only pericope combining Priestly and non-Priestly traditions; moreover, there exists a link between

[26]Ibid., 717.

this date formula and the Septuagint version of Ezek. 4:4-9.[27]

Many scholars who believe that the Book of Ezekiel is filled with corruptions in the text, have pointed to the use of apocalyptic imagery in Ezekiel 38-39 as evidence that these must be later insertions in to the text. However, most of the language is tied to the ancient imagery of the cosmic battle of the gods in creation which was seen in early Israelite traditions of God as the divine warrior.

Just as in the Genesis Flood narrative, God will tolerate no defilement or infidelity in the people's midst. Too many transgressions have been committed in the prior and present generations and have now brought disaster to Ezekiel's own age. As in the Flood narrative, there will be those who survive the disaster and those who will not.

The two overarching themes that Ezekiel struggles with relate to "responsibility". The theme of the watchman in chapters three and thirty-three, relates to the period of judgement and hope. It addresses the frustration of preaching to people who will not listen.

[27]Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 102.

His answer is that God has given him the duty to what he is commanded; the people must assume responsibility for their own actions. Just as God will demand that the prophet act responsibly, so God will treat this generation.[28]

The book's second theme plays upon Israel's past, explaining why this generation must pay for the sins of its ancestors. In an attempt to rally those in his midst who may have a chance to rehabilitate themselves, Ezekiel alerts them that if they, as a generation, obey God's commands, "then they will not suffer for the sins of its ancestors, nor will future generations be spared punishment for their sins because of the goodness of a previous age. God will judge each generation on its own."[29]

Despite the optimistic overtones of Ezekiel's message, the house of Israel is made up not only of incorrigibly wicked men on whom his message of doom can have no effect; there are others of a more impressionable nature for whom it may mean the difference between life and death. The righteous man, who, at the climactic moment of decision upon a career of sin, hears the alarm,

[28]Matthews, "Ezekiel, Book of," 720.

[29]Ibid., 720.

reevaluates his choice, and saves himself from disaster, is someone who will engage the sympathy of the prophet.[30]

In this setting, there is a striking resemblance to the Genesis Flood narrative, and Noah as the righteous remnant. The true doctrine of retribution is that even those who are righteous (the likes of whom do not exist in the depraved city or among the exiles) could only save themselves in a catastrophic situation; the exiles do not follow God's instruction and therefore cling to a vain hope. Yet, the Book of Ezekiel speaks of survivors, as Ezekiel several times proclaims (6:8; 7:16; 12:16). Ezekiel forecasts that a remnant will be saved alongside his announcement of total destruction. "The prophetic message of the age of the fall is ridden by a momentous arch-inconsistency: the assurance of the final dissolution of Judah owing to its breech of covenant, opposed to God's promise of an eternal bond with his people."[31]

The Book of Ezekiel presents a God who is awesome; a God who rightly exercises divine judgement and divine compassion. As with the character of Noah in the Flood narrative, who may only save

[30]Moshe Greenberg, *The Anchor Bible: Ezekiel 1-20,* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), 89.

[31]Ibid., 261.

himself and his family, the exiles in Ezekiel's midst must only save themselves. The God in the Book of Ezekiel does not just destroy prior covenants made, but renews them, making them everlasting.

Counter Texts to Ezekiel

The opening of Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1:1ff immediately brings the reader to a certain time and place. The author of the Book of Ezekiel places him "by the river Chebar" in the land of the Chaldeans. Of Aramean descent, the Chaldeans (the affiliation of כשד Gen. 22:22) were a group who entered southern Babylonia in the early part of the first millennium and succeeded in winning independence from Assyria in 625 with the founding of the neo-Babylonian dynasty by Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. Chaldean interchanges with Babylonian in Ezekiel12:13; 23:15, 23.[32]

In Ezekiel's vision the figures that are seen as surrounding God are portrayed as a combination of "the attributes of the lords" of animate creation in their faces, the dominant shape of their bodies being human. The following midrash to Exod. 15:1 gives a similar interpretation:

> Four kinds of proud beings were created in the world: the proudest of all-man; of birds-the eagle; of domestic animals-the ox; of wild animals-the lion; and all of them are stationed beneath the chariot of the Holy One. *Exodus Rabba 23:13.*[33]

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[32] Wilson, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," 41.

[33] Ibid., 56.

Within the vision, there are two concepts which seem to be fused in the apparition: that of a deity transported by mythological beings and that of a throne chariot.

For the two-level image of a deity enthroned and riding on an animal or a mythological being good Mesopotamian and west-Asiatic representations exist to help us envisage the general aspect of this apparition. A goddess enthroned and borne by a lion is commonplace; particularly suited for comparison is the depiction in the Maltaï procession scene, which portrays a god carried by lions.[34] The second divine figure from the left is a goddess seated on a throne, resting on a high pedestal, whose side shows a griffin, a scorpion man with upraised wings, and a (worshipping?) human figure. Between the pedestal and the seat of the throne appear three views of a king, between which are two composite creatures (upper half human, lower animal) whose upraised hands support the seat of the throne.. The whole rides on the back of a walking lion.[35]

In Ezekiel's vision there are wheels which seem to be attached to the throne in the apparition that separate the biblical

[34]Ibid., 56.

[35]Ibid., 56.

account from the above description.

> Four wheels belong to a cart (cf. the bases of the temple lavers, I Kings 7:27-37, with four wheels and decorated by figures of cherubs, lions and cattle!); comparable is the early dik-wheeled divine chariot with a god standing in it. Now YHWH is said to ride in a chariot too (Hab 3:8; Isa 66:15), and it appears that Ezekiel's vision combined the two modes of locomotion.[36]

The first chapter of Ezekiel is embedded in a mythological coupling of Yahweh with a vehicle, comparable to the vehicular imagery associated with such deities as Baal and Marduk among Israel's cultural neighbors. The storm-cloud imagery portrayed in Ezekiel 1 is reminiscent of the mythology of weather deities, commonly envisioned as an animal or wheeled conveyance (a cart or chariot drawn by an animal) upon which the deity rode into battle with his cosmic enemies. The "living creatures," who are part of the throne vision, carrying the deity enveloped in a cloud, are another variation on this theme.[37]

One of the most puzzling features of the vision, however, is the imagery of the creatures in motion, yet at the same time,

[36]Ibid., 56.

[37]Boyd W. Barrick, "The Staight-Legged Cherubim of Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision (Ezekiel 1:7a)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (October 1982): 546.

stationary. "This very paradox was achieved by the sculptors who combined both conventions to create the five-legged winged colossi to guard the royal residences in Assyria and Persia. Viewed from the side these creatures are striding forward, but viewed from the front they are standing still."[38]

The repetition of the number four in the apparition must be associated with the sectioning of the world into four parts (Isa. 11:12, "the four corners [כנפות] of the earth") or the circle of the horizon into four directions ("seaward [west] and forward [east] and north and south." Gen. 13:14; 28:14).[39] The number four is also symbolic of God's omnipresence and immeasurable control God has over all. These traditional ideas can only have been enforced by contact with the Babylonians, whose literature also made references to 'the four regions of the world' (*kirbat arba'i* or *erbetti*) and "the four winds (*sar erbetti*). This belief is carried over into the Bible from the Babylonian period onward (Jer. 49:36; Ezek. 37:9, etc.).[40]

Much attention has been focused on the language and gender inconsistency that is used in the Book of Ezekiel, specifically the

[38]Ibid., 549.

[39]Wilson, "Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel," 57.

[40]Ibid., 57.

throne vision. Yet, many studies have been done on the intention of the vision itself. The emphasis placed on mobility at the conclusion of each of what has been called throne theophany sections, in chapter 1 vv. 12, 17-21, 24b and 25b. So rigorous is the desire to conclude with this element that it appears rather disjointed after mention of the platform firmament in v. 22, deliberately interrupting the logical conclusion in v. 26. The dominance of this element will require explanation in relation to the overall intention of the vision account. As to what that intention is, scholarship is fairly united in claiming a beneficent purpose. It is a view that goes back at least to C. H. Toy who wrote in 1899: "The vision is intended to declare that the God of Israel was come, in all his glory, to dwell with the exiles."[41] Taking a holistic view of the vision allows one to concentrate on the meaning of the apparition to Ezekiel and to the exiles, rather than focus on grammar and syntax alone. Clearly, the mobility simply unifies the exiles to the God who dwells in Jerusalem, once again.

> The prophet and the vision are sent to announce that Yahweh is

[41]Leslie C. Allen, "The Structure and Intention of Ezekiel 1" *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (April 1993): 151.

present even with his exiled people. Similarly, 'the כבוד appears to the prophet, in order to reassure him of the nearness and power of his God despite the exile into an unclean, heathen land, and despite the defilement and destruction of the Temple which is to follow.[42]

In analyzing Ezekiel's inaugural vision by comparing it to earlier Israelite tradition a pattern is seen: Ezekiel encountered God as the Lord who revealed himself to his people Israel in storm and light (Ex 19:1ff;24:9-11). Ezek. 1:1-3:15, then, recounts an event which actualizes the story of God's faithfulness to his people Israel under new and different circumstances. God reveals the transcendent freedom of his appearing, when and where he chooses, even in an unclean land.[43]

Therefore, the vision in all of its majesty, intends to assure the grieving prophet, and through him his fellow exiles, that Yahweh's presence does not dwell only in Jerusalem.

The explanations of the meaning of the vision account illustrated above all analyze the account of the vision that Ezekiel "received" as a representative of the Judean exiles, and that his

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

mission from God was to proclaim the vision to his fellow exiles. However, Moshe Greenberg has interpreted the vision as a private experience, a manifestation of divine favor to Ezekiel alone:

> Disturbed by his people's fate, convinced of impending doom, Ezekiel is cast out by his community, which clung to the hopeful oracles of the prophets promising the exiles a speedy restoration. . . The heavens opened and the Majesty of God appeared, vindicating the nonconformist and proving that right and divine favor were with him, not with the many.[44]

Because the traditional form of a theophany is often received by an individual, Greenberg places Ezekiel's theophany in line with those found in Genesis 12 and Judges 6:12-13, in which God is revealed to the individual alone, and that the blessing remains with that individual.

Although Ezekiel may have experienced the vision while he was alone, as a prophet, Ezekiel's direction by God is to inform those around him of the vision's message (Ezek. 2:3), in order that the righteous be spared. William H. Brownlee explains the vision in broader terms than Greenberg does. He states:

> We see this same manifestation later in chaps. 8-10, which is explained as God's coming in judgement upon Jerusalem (43:3). This warns us against taking this appearance in vision as one of comfort to the prophet... The import of the vision,

[44]Ibid., 152.

therefore, is that the cosmic Lord of the universe is intervening in history to judge Israel and to warn them through one man, Ezekiel.[45]

The emphasis laid on the mobility of the apparition may be connected with the message of unyielding judgement delivered by Amos, that wherever Yahweh's people fled, whether to Sheol or to heaven they could not escape from his clutches (Amos ix 1-4). Within Ezekiel's own oracles, there is a parallel in v. 12 (cf. xii 14): in the course of the illustration of the sign of Ezekiel's division of his cut hair for methodical disposal, the last third of the people of Jerusalem was to be carried off by Yahweh's chasing them with unsheathed sword in foreign lands. Here the mobile throne of judgement has the ominous potential to travel from heaven to earth and, by means of its wheels, throughout the earth.[46]

This is reminiscent of the mobile nature of Noah's ark in the Genesis Flood narrative. In order to escape the total destruction set down by God, Noah, his family "and of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort" (Gen. 6:19) were sealed in the ark which carried them far from the locus of destruction. In the Genesis Flood

[45]Ibid., 153.

[46]Ibid., 157.

narrative, God is portrayed as dwelling with Noah and his family even when the flood ceased, and they disembarked the once mobile ark.

Walter Zimmerli in his article, ""The Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel's Prophecy," writes of the impact the vision must have had on Ezekiel. Because of the introductory words, ויהי דבר יהוה אלי, Zimmerli states:

> this recalls the fact that the prophetic word does not express a timeless knowledge of Yahweh but is in fact an event, an intrusion of divine reality into the prophet's life. . . Ezekiel subordinates everything else to the intrusion of the divine word and vision. And in light of this, everything recedes into the background. . . We discover first a clear line which leads back from Ezekiel to the manner of expression and the world of ideas of pre-classical prophecy. This is best shown in the visions. All five are introduced by the stereo-typed expression: "the hand of Yahweh came היה or fell נפל over me.[47]

The only other places in the bible where this phrase "the hand of Yahweh" appears is in Isaiah (8:11) and Jeremiah (25:17). But the most common place for it is in the stories of the earlier pre-classical prophets. In 2 Kings 3:15 the expression is used when, after music had been played, the hand of Yahweh came over the

[47]W. Zimmerli, "The Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel's Prophecy,"*Vetus Testamentum* 15 (October 1965): 516-7.

prophet Elisha so that he could deliver an oracle. According to 1 Kings 28:46, the hand of Yahweh came over Elijah after the divine judgement on Mount Carmel, so that he could run to Jezreel alongside the chariot of Ahab, an inconceivable feat of strength. This resembles the expression the "spirit of Yahweh" in which the prophet is seized and translocated into some different state, even translocated from one place to another. The classical prophets before Ezekiel went so far as to avoid the expression of the prophetic רוח.[48] Therefore, it would appear that these prophets rejected the "spirit" character of the older prophets which led them to experience extreme manifestations. In addition, there are references in Hosea 9:7 which proclaim: "The man of the spirit is mad." But in Ezekiel there is no attempt to use רוח in a derogatory sense. He stands unconditionally in the old prophetic tradition when he says at the end of his call vision that "the spirit" lifted him up (also in Gen. 7:17) and took him away, or when in 8:3 he says concerning his translocation to Jerusalem that a figure seized him by the hand, and "the spirit" lifted him up between heaven and earth and brought him in a divine apparition to Jerusalem. This tendency

[48]Ibid., 517.

toward dramatic animation which recalls the רוח theology of the older prophets represents an essential characteristic of Ezekiel.[49]

[49]Ibid., 520.

Translation and Commentary

1. Ezekiel 1:1 נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶרְאֶה מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים

Genesis 7:11 הַשָּׁמַיִם נִפְתְּחוּ

Ezek. 1:1 that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God

Gen. 7:11 and the windows of heaven were opened[50]

The opening of the heavens in Ezekiel 1:1 is found in later visionary and apocalyptic texts. It sounds like a standard introduction to the description of a heavenly scene or the descent of a heavenly figure. Here, however, it primarily belongs to the storm theophany tradition and the Priestly tradition which use the same dating system found in both texts. The windows or floodgates of heaven were opened to permit the sending down of either blessing (2 Kings vii 2; Mal. iii 10) or judgement (Gen. vii 11; Isa. xxiv 18). The fact that both accounts, In the Book of Ezekiel and in Genesis, are preceded by a specific date, emphasizes the magnitude of the divine force on the individuals which experienced the heavens opening. In the Book of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1) the date preceding the event of the heavens opening is: ". . .in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on

[50]All translations in this section are from: Harold Fisch, ed., *The Jerusalem Bible* (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers, 1992).

the fifth day of the month." While in the Genesis account (Gen. 7:11) the dating is as follows: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month. . ."[51]

2. Ezekiel 1:5 וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דְּמוּת אַרְבָּע חַיּוֹת

Genesis 6:19 תָּבִיא אֶל-הַתֵּבָה לְהַחֲיֹת אִתָּךְ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה

Ezek. 1:5 Out of the midst of it came four living creatures

Gen. 6:19 two of every living thing shalt you bring into the ark with you; they shall be male and female.

In his commentary to Ezekiel, Rashi states that "it surprising (that they had the likeness of a man) because they also had the likeness of an ox, a lion and an eagle. Apparently, since this being is the patron of all of them, [all living beings], the prophet praises the chariot with it. [Their human face] had the countenance of our father Jacob."[52] This description of the throne chariot is similar to Noah's ark, in that Noah was the designated human being. Furthermore, the animals are significant in each text, symbolizing the regeneration of creation.

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[51]Allen, "The Structure and Intention of Ezekiel 1," 155.

[52]Rashi, *Torat Chaim* (Jerusalem: Hamakor Press, 1986).

3. Ezekiel 1:6 וְאַרְבַּע לְאַחַת לָהֶם׃

Genesis 7:14 כֹּל צִפּוֹר כָּל-כָּנָף׃

Ezek. 1:6 and every one had four wings.

Gen. 7:14 every bird of every sort.

In Ezekiel 1:6, the usage of כְּנָפַיִם is meant to symbolize the wings of the cherubim (Exodus 25:20 and Ezek. 10:5). The use of כָּנָף in the Flood narrative is repetitive, in that it is the only time the verse further specifies the description "after its kind": They, and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. (Gen. 7:14). Rashi defines "every bird of every kind" as including locusts. Or, as in Leviticus 1:17, "He shall tear it by the wings thereof, for even its feathers were offered for sacrifice. Finally, Rashi says that it could also mean "birds with any kind of semblance of wing."[53]

4. Ezekiel 1:7 וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רֶגֶל יְשָׁרָה וְכַף רַגְלֵיהֶם כְּכַף רֶגֶל עֵגֶל

Genesis 8:9 וְלֹא-מָצְאָה הַיּוֹנָה מָנוֹחַ לְכַף-רַגְלָהּ

[53]Ibid.

Ezek. 1:7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot.

Gen. 8:9 but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot

It is possible that Ezekiel's description of the "calf's foot" is meant to remind us of the cherubim (especially since their color is defined as "burnished bronze" (Ezek. 1:7). The mention of the dove finding "no rest for the sole of her foot" is the same language found in Deuteronomy 28:65: "And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest; but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind." In the Genesis text, there is a play on the word מָנוֹחַ with the hero of the Flood narrative, Noah. Once the dove finds a resting place (a dry place) for the sole of her foot, then God will be able to begin the process of creation once again.

5. Ezekiel 1:9 חֹבֶרֶת אִשָּׁה אֶל-אֲחוֹתָהּ

Genesis 7:2 אִישׁ וְאִשְׁתּוֹ

Genesis 9:5 וּמִיַּד הָאָדָם מִיַּד אִישׁ אָחִיו

Ezek. 1:9 their wings were joined one to another

Gen. 7:2 male and female

Gen. 9:5 at the hand of every man's brother

The same language that expresses co-joining of species is used in both texts. This emphasizes the divine-human partnership that is actively involved in creation. In the Ezekiel text, the wings of the living beings are joined to one another, just as the species in the Flood narrative are coupled together. Once more, this language reflects creation and a regenerated world.

6. Ezekiel 1:11 לְאִישׁ שְׁתַּיִם חוֹבְרוֹת אִישׁ וּשְׁתַּיִם

Genesis 7:9 שְׁנַיִם שְׁנַיִם בָּאוּ אֶל-נֹחַ

Ezek. 1:11 two wings of everyone were joined to one another.

Gen. 7:9 There went in two and two to Noah

The number two here, again suggests the divine ideal of "coupling." The significance of this number, Rashi states, is that two is an equal number,[54] and that the least number was two in order to re-populate the earth after the flood. The language in Ezekiel merely parallels the language used in the Flood narrative.

7. Ezekiel 1:13 מִתְהַלֶּכֶת בֵּין הַחַיּוֹת

[54]Ibid.

Genesis 6:9 אֶת-הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלָּךְ-נֹחַ׃

Ezek. 1:13 it flashed up and down among the living creatures

Gen. 6:9 and Noah walked with God

Genesis 17:1 is the closest parallel to Genesis 6:9. Both verses also use the word תמים to describe both the behavior of Abraham and Noah. Walking with God, therefore expresses perfection, or purity. Oftentimes, when the התפעל form of the verb הלך is used, the meaning is interpreted as "walking with God." The Ezekiel passage is likened to the verse in Psalm 56:14: "For you have saved my soul from death, indeed my feet from falling, that I may walk (להתהלך) before God in the light of the living."

It is clear from the description of Ezekiel's vision that the divine is somehow manifest in and existing or "flashing" among the living creatures.

8. Ezekiel 1:16-7 לְאַרְבַּעְתָּן...אַרְבַּעַת

Genesis 7:4 אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לָיְלָה

Ezek. 1:16-7 and they four had one likeness. . . went toward their four sides.

Gen. 7:4 forty days and forty nights

Rashi suggests that the period of forty days corresponds to the period of a child's formation. This is in accordance with the theme of re-creation and re-population. Also, the commentator חזקוני adds that forty days and forty nights is in reference to how many days passed when the Torah was given to Moses.[55]

9. Ezekiel 1:20 כִּי רוּחַ הַחַיָּה בָּאוֹפַנִּים׃

Genesis 6:17 רוּחַ חַיִּים מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמָיִם

Ezek. 1:20 for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

Gen. 6:17 in which is the breath of life, from under heaven

Job 7:7 uses the phrase רוח חיי to refer to the breath of life, which is further described as mortality. The expression is used to mean the same thing in Genesis, for God intends to destroy all flesh "wherein is the spirit of life." (Gen. 6:17). The fact that the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels, is reminiscent of Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living

[55]Ibid.

soul." Once again, the phrase reunites the two texts with the Creation narrative.

10. Ezekiel 1:21 וּבְהִנָּשְׂאָם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ

Genesis 8:13 חָרְבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ

Ezek. 1:21 and when those were lifted from the earth.

Gen. 8:13 the waters were dried up from off the earth.

Rashi states that מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ in the Ezekiel passage refers to being "lifted off the high heavens" meaning when they lifted themselves off from the depths to the heights. This parallels the Flood narrative, in that the Flood waters that came from the heavens were then lifted off from the earth so that the earth could dry up.

11. Ezekiel 1:23 שְׁתַּיִם מְכַסּוֹת לָהַנָּה

Genesis 7:20 הַמַּיִם וַיְכַסּוּ הֶהָרִים

Ezek. 1:23 everyone had two, which covered them

Gen. 7:20 did the waters prevail and the mountains were covered

The only comparison here, is the usage of the verb "to cover." In each text, the meaning is the same, yet the reference is made to

two different objects. The Ezekiel passage focuses on the positioning of the wings of the living creatures, while the Genesis text describes how high the Flood waters grew.

12. Ezekiel 1:24 בְּקוֹל מַיִם רַבִּים

Genesis 7:19 וְהַמַּיִם גָּבְרוּ מְאֹד מְאֹד

Ezek. 1:24 like the noise of great waters

Gen. 7:19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly

The comment Metzudat David makes on Ezekiel 1:24 is that the "great waters" here refers to torrential waters.[56] This could also hearken back to the Flood narrative, in that so many other symbols, such as the rainbow, and rain are used in the first chapter of Ezekiel. The reason Ezekiel may use the metaphor of "great waters" (i.e., the Flood) is to establish a intertextual reference point for his audience. A great catastrophe has happened, and destruction is what the exiles lived through. Therefore, using language from the Flood narrative would be understood by the exiles as a parallel to their new situation, as would later readers of the biblical text.

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[56]Scherman and Zlotowitz, *The Book of Ezekiel* , 87.

13. Ezekiel 1:26 וּמִמַּעַל לָרָקִיעַ

Genesis 1:7 מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ

Ezek. 1:26 And above the firmament

Gen. 1:7 above the firmament

Much of the language of Ezekiel's inaugural vision is reminiscent of the first chapter of Genesis. The animals, the living creatures, the firmament, the light, and the waters. Ezekiel 1:26 is an extension of this parallel. Once again, God must re-create a world for the exiles who were taken away from their destroyed home. The symbol of the throne chariot against the backdrop of the firmament creates a striking impression of God who has come to dwell with the exiles and re-establish a sense of order out of chaos.

14. Ezekiel 1:26 מִלְמָעְלָה

Genesis 6:16, 7:20 מִלְמַעְלָה

Ezek. 1:26 above

Gen. 6:16 above

Here is merely another example of parallel language.

15. Ezekiel 1:28 כְּמַרְאֵה הַקֶּשֶׁת

Genesis 9:13,14,16 אֶת-קַשְׁתִּי: הַקֶּשֶׁת בֶּעָנָן: הַקֶּשֶׁת

Ezek. 1:28 As the appearance of the bow

Gen. 9:14 that the bow shall be seen

In *Talmud Kethuboth* 77b it says:

> The rainbow being a token of the covenant (Gen. IX, 12) that, though the people deserved destruction, the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh (Ibid., 15), should not appear in the lifetime of a saint whose merit alone is sufficient to save the world from destruction (v. Rashi).

As is seen in chapter 3b, the rainbow is a symbol for God's covenant with human beings and the earth. In both the Genesis and the Ezekiel texts, Noah and Ezekiel are singled out among the people in their midst to carry out God's will. The rainbow in Ezekiel 1:28 suggests that God has come to dwell with the exiles and establish a new covenant, just as in Genesis 9:14. In both instances, rain is also a factor in the appearance of the rainbow. For a further discussion see Chapter Four.

16. Ezekiel 1:28 הַגֶּשֶׁם

Genesis 7:12 וַיְהִי הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל-הָאָרֶץ

Ezek. 1:28 in the day of rain

Gen. 7:12 And the rain was upon the earth

See above comments to number 16.

17. Ezekiel 1:28 בָּעָנָן

Genesis 9:14 וְהָיָה בְּעַנְנִי עָנָן עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְנִרְאֲתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת בֶּעָנָן׃

Ezek. 1:28 that is in the cloud in the day of rain

Gen. 9:14 when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud

See comments to number 16.

18. Ezekiel 3:21 וְאַתָּה כִּי הִזְהַרְתּוֹ צַדִּיק לְבִלְתִּי חֲטֹא

Genesis 6:9 נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק

Ezek. 3:21 *If thou warn the righteous man that the righteous sin not*

Gen. 6:9 Noah was a just man

The theme of righteousness plays a major role in Ezekiel and the Flood narrative. Throughout the Book of Ezekiel, it is written that his task is to warn the righteous (Ezek. 21:9; 33, etc.). If these righteous people remain righteous, then they will be spared from

God's destruction. This is parallel to the Flood narrative in which Noah was found righteous in his generation (Gen. 6:9). For a further discussion see Chapter Four.

19. Ezekiel 4:6 אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם יוֹם לַשָּׁנָה יוֹם לַשָּׁנָה נְתַתִּיו לָךְ

Genesis 7:4 אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לָיְלָה

Ezek. 4:6 I have appointed thee forty days, each day for a year

Gen. 7:4 forty days and forty nights

See above comment on number 8.

20. Ezekiel 7:2 קֵץ בָּא הַקֵּץ עַל-אַרְבַּעַת [אַרְבַּע] כַּנְפוֹת הָאָרֶץ

Genesis 6:13 קֵץ כָּל-בָּשָׂר בָּא לְפָנַי

Ezek. 7:2 An end, the end has come upon the four corners of the land.

Gen. 6:13 The end of all flesh is come before me

Comes the end. A standard announcement of doom, cf. Gen. 6:13 (of the flood).[57]

21. Ezekiel 7:16 וּפָלְטוּ פְלִיטֵיהֶם וְהָיוּ אֶל-הָהָרִים כְּיוֹנֵי הַגֵּאָיוֹת

[57]Greenberg, *The Anchor Bible: Ezekiel 1-20,* 147.

Genesis 8:11 וַתָּבֹא אֵלָיו הַיּוֹנָה לְעֵת עֶרֶב

Ezek. 7:16 And those fugitives that escape, shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys

Gen. 8:11 And the dove came in to him in the evening

In the Flood narrative, Noah, his family and the animals are remnants that were spared from the destruction of the Flood. The dove which Noah sent out was a representative for the remnant which existed inside the ark. There is a connection with the Ezekiel text, in that the doves are likened to "fugitives" or "remnants" as the Hebrew root suggests. Malbim, in his commentary on Ezekiel 7:16 writes: "Like doves of the valleys" who are not usually found in the mountains, and moan because they are homeless."[58] The theme of the "remnant" is prevalent in both Ezekiel and the Genesis Flood narrative, in that God is once again going to establish a new, everlasting covenant with those who survived both the Flood and the exile to Babylonia.

22. Ezekiel 7:23, 8:17, 28:16 וְהָעִיר מָלְאָה חָמָס

Genesis 6:11 נִתְמַלֵּא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס

[58]Scherman and Zlotowitz, *The Book of Ezekiel* , 148.

Ezek 7:23 for the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence

Gen. 6:11 and the earth was filled with violence

The term חָמָס is equivalent to "no justice" in Job 19:7 and is elsewhere the synonym of "falsehood," "deceit" or "bloodshed." It means, in general, the flagrant subversion of the ordered process of law. From the divine enactments for the regulation of society after the Flood, detailed in chapter 9, it may be deduced that חמס here refers predominantly to the arrogant disregard for the sanctity and inviolability of human life.[59]

23. Ezekiel 11:13 עֹשֶׂה אֵת שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

Genesis 7:23 וַיִּשָּׁאֶר אַךְ-נֹחַ וַאֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּבָה

Ezek. 11:13 Wilt Thou make a full end to the remnant of Israel

Gen. 7:23 And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

See comment to number 21.

24. Ezekiel 12:3 וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם עֲשֵׂה לְךָ כְּלֵי גוֹלָה

[59]Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis,* 51.

Genesis 6:14 עֲשֵׂה לְךָ תֵּבַת עֲצֵי-גֹפֶר

Ezek. 12:3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee the gear for exile

Gen. 6:14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood

Interestingly, Rashi suggests that the reason God commanded Noah to make an ark was "so the men of the generation of the Flood might see him employed on it for 120 years and might ask him, 'What do you need this for?' So that he would answer them, 'The Holy One Blessed be He is about to bring a flood upon the world.' Perhaps they might repent." This is the same reason why God commands Ezekiel to perform all of the ritual actions. In Ezekiel 12:9, following his instruction to "prepare his gear for exile," God asks him: "has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, What are you doing?" Apparently, the commands to both Ezekiel and Noah may be interpreted as having an effect on the larger population in order that they might repent and therefore, be spared.

25. Ezekiel 16:3 מֵאֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי

Genesis 9:22 חָם אֲבִי כְנַעַן

Ezek. 16:3 Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan;

Gen. 9:22 Ham, the father of Canaan

In both texts, the mention of Canaan is derogatory. The parable of the girl infant whose birthplace is Canaan is meant to portray Israel without God; a neglected child. Ham's character in the Flood narrative is cursed in Genesis 9:25: "And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers." Ham is likened to one has not followed in God's way, and therefore, does not receive the same blessing that Noah and his other two sons receive.

26. Ezekiel 16:8 וָאֲכַסֶּה עֶרְוָתֵךְ

Genesis 9:23 וַיְכַסּוּ אֵת עֶרְוַת אֲבִיהֶם

Ezek. 16:8 And I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness.

Gen. 9:23 And Shem and Japeth took the garment. . .and covered the nakedness of their father.

Ezekiel 16:8 uses the same language that Genesis 9:23 uses, except both texts have opposite meanings. The full Ezekiel verse states: And when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness; yes, I swore to you, and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine." Though

the same expression is used in Genesis 9:23, (covered. . .nakedness), the Genesis text refers to an illicit sexual, perhaps homosexual act, whereas the Ezekiel passage talks of covenant, love and nurturing. In *Torat Chaim*, Radak comments on this verse saying, "that by teaching Israel the right way, and by showing them wonders and signs, God turned them to true faith, and removed the shame of 'nakedness' from them

27. Ezekiel 16:60 וַהֲקִמוֹתִי לָךְ בְּרִית עוֹלָם

Genesis 9:16 לִזְכֹּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם

Ezek 16:60 I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant

Gen. 9:16 that I may remember the everlasting covenant

See chapter three.

28. Ezekiel 28:15 תָּמִים אַתָּה בִּדְרָכֶיךָ מִיּוֹם הִבָּרְאָךְ

Genesis 6:9 נֹחַ אִישׁ צַדִּיק תָּמִים הָיָה בְּדֹרֹתָיו

Ezek. 28:15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was created

Gen. 6:9 Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations

See comments to number 18.

29. Ezekiel 34:29 וַהֲקִמֹתִי לָהֶם מַטָּע לְשֵׁם וְלֹא-יִהְיוּ עוֹד אֲסֻפִי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ

Genesis 9:11, 17 וַהֲקִמֹתִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם וְלֹא-יִכָּרֵת כָּל-בָּשָׂר עוֹד

Ezek. 34:29 and I will raise up for them a plantation for renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land

Gen. 9:11 And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood

See chapter three.

30. Ezekiel 38:20 וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְחַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאֲדָמָה

Genesis 6:7 מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד-בְּהֵמָה עַד-רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד-עוֹף הַשָּׁמָיִם

Ezek. 38:20 and the birds of the sky, and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep upon the earth (followed by destruction)

Gen. 6:7 (I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth): both man, and beast, and creeping things, and the birds of the air

Almost the identical list of the living beings God created in Genesis 1 are found in both the Ezekiel text and the Flood narrative. In fact, both reoccur in these texts in the opposite manner than

Genesis 1. Here, God mentions the animals in order to describe the full-blown destruction that he will bring to humanity and the other living beings. Genesis 1 lists these creatures, announcing their creation. Furthermore, in Ezekiel 38:22, two verses after Ezekiel 38:20, God includes man in those things that will be destroyed: "And I will contend with him by pestilence and by blood; and I will rain down upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, a torrential rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone." The torrential rain in this passage may also be a reference back to the Flood Narrative. Hosea 2:20 lists the same living things as well as mentions a covenant and a bow: And in that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them lie down safely."

31. Ezekiel 45:23 ..וְשִׁבְעַת יְמֵי-הֶחָג יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹלָה לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת פָּרִים וְשִׁבְעַת

Genesis 7:3 שִׁבְעָה שִׁבְעָה זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה לְחַיּוֹת

Genesis 7:4 כִּי לְיָמִים עוֹד שִׁבְעָה

Ezek. 45:23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a

burnt offering to the Lord, seven bullocks and seven rams

Gen. 7:3 also by seven, the male and the female

Gen. 7:4 For in another seven days

The number seven is used in the Genesis 1 to represent creation.

The "Everlasting Covenant":

Ancient Near Eastern Counterparts

The Phrase "Covenant of Peace" is found three times in the Bible: Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26. The prophets did not create the notion of an eschatological covenant of peace in isolation. Rather, this "covenant of peace" reflected an older biblical and ancient Near Eastern motif associated with the primeval era. The primeval myth's primary function was to express an end of hostility toward humankind by the gods after the former rebelled against the gods at creation. The gods then, ended their attempt to destroy humankind by binding themselves under oath to maintain peace and harmony with humankind and with all of creation. This oath, which in the Bible often is called a covenant, was then guaranteed by some permanent visible sign, symbolic of the everlasting character of this new alliance of peace.[60]

In Ezekiel 34:25, a new future "covenant of peace" which God will make (כרת) with Israel is made; the second time this "covenant of peace" is repeated in the text in 37:26, it is further defined as an

[60]Bernard Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Motif," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987): 187.

eternal covenant. Critics have suggested that the word כרת alone is employed for making a covenant (17:3) within the text of Ezekiel; combining this with the preceding data, they have surmised that Ezekiel's concept of the eschatological covenant between YHWH and Israel regarded it as a new beginning, not a continuation of the old covenant, and that his term for making it was כרת, not הקים. It follows that our passage is not from Ezekiel. The supposed discourse vanishes however, when the covenant of 34:25 is correctly understood not as the grand bond between God and people, but as a specific assurance of everlasting physical security in the land: "I will make with them a covenant of peace, and I will rid the land of viscous beasts, so that they can dwell secure [even] in the wilderness, and sleep [even] in forests" (Ezek. 34:25). That is indeed a new covenant, never before made (כרת). "Its subsequent qualification as eternal, if not a borrowing from our passage, is no more significant than the identical qualification of several such specific covenants in the priestly writings."[61]

Batto asserts, the core primeval myth is demonstrated in two separate but overlapping patterns, here designated as Pattern A and

[61]Greenberg, *The Anchor Bible: Ezekiel 1-20,* 303.

Pattern B. The first type of motif, Pattern A, portrays an account in which a flood is sent in an attempt to blot out humankind. By comparison, Pattern B tells instead of a single goddess's bloody attempt to slay humankind with her sword, yet a flood sequence is eliminated from the narrative. "A submotif in Pattern B concerns the "planting of peace" as an image of the harmony achieved in the universe. It will be argued that this covenant of peace was originally a primeval motif which the biblical prophets have projected secondarily into the eschatological era."[62]

All three biblical passages which mention the covenant of peace, Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26, share the fact that their setting is within an exilic salvation oracle, wherein the prophets announce an end to exile and the advent of idyllic conditions associated with the restoration of their homeland.[63] Because the theme of exile is central to the Book of Ezekiel and Ezekiel's vision, it is no surprise that the verses in Ezekiel 34:25-30 speak about Yahweh as the "shepherd of Israel" to gather his torn and scattered flock and restore them to their land:

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[62]Batto, "The Covenant of Peace: A Neglected Motif," 187-8.

[63]Ibid., 188.

> I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish evil beasts from the land, that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forest. And I will make them. . . A blessing and cause rain to fall in the proper time: they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall give their fruit, and the earth shall give its produce. . . And they shall dwell securely and none shall make them afraid. And I shall cause a (plantation of renown) plantation of peace to spring up for them.

The removal of hostility between men and beasts in the context of a covenant is reminiscent of the covenant "with all flesh" in the days of Noah (Gen. 9:8-17). That the text of Ezekiel hearkens back to primeval motifs is confirmed by 36:35: "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; the waste and the desolate and ruined cities are now inhabited and fortified."

The second time the covenant of peace is mentioned, (Ezekiel 37:26), adds that the covenant of peace is an everlasting covenant:

וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם בְּרִית עוֹלָם יִהְיֶה אוֹתָם וּנְתַתִּים וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אוֹתָם וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-
מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם׃

"And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." *Ezekiel 37:26*

As in Genesis 9:16:

וְהָיְתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת בֶּעָנָן וּרְאִיתִיהָ לִזְכֹּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכָל-בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל-הָאָרֶץ׃

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. *Genesis 9:16*

More instructive for our study is Isaiah 54:9-10. In this passage the connection between the covenant of peace and the Noachide covenant becomes explicit. And once again the reversal of prior divine anger. In vv 7-8 immediately preceding, under the metaphor of a deserted wife, Israel is informed that her exile was due to momentary anger on the part of God. That anger has now abated, however, and God henceforth will love Israel with everlasting fidelity. Then comes this illuminating statement:

> For this is like the waters of Noah to me; for just as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you.[64]

Here the divine oath never again to flood the earth as in the time of Noah is distinctly analogous to the everlasting covenant with all flesh in Gen. 9:8-17 (a Priestly text), in which God promised never

[64]Ibid., 190.

again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

An equivalent divine oath is found also in the Yahwistic version (Gen. 8:21-22), as well as in the Mesopotamian version of the deluge (Atrahasis III.vi.2-4; Gilgamesh XI.163-69). This oath was a standard feature of the flood story itself.[65]

In Isaiah 54:10, the mention of Noah and God's anger (קצף) against his people here suggests that the poet understood the primeval deluge also to have been occasioned by divine anger against humankind. This understanding is consonant with the Flood narrative itself. Second, both in biblical and extra-biblical accounts of the flood, the divine oath/covenant never again to destroy all living beings with a deluge is always accompanied by some kind of sign which guarantees the divine oath, despite the fact that the sign is hardly ever the same in the different versions: a fly-necklace in *Atrahasis* (III.v.46-vi.4, and its derivative *Gilgamesh* XI.163-165), the (rain)bow in P (Gen. 9:12-17), and the duration of the earth and its seasons in J (Gen. 8:21-22).[66]

Primeval Pattern A, as noted above, describes an attempt to

[65]Ibid., 191.

[66] Ibid.,191.

annihilate humankind by means of a flood. The example, if not the archetype for this type is the Mesopotamian myth of *Atrahasis*. Although the flood myth attested in other versions across the face of the ancient Near East, including the two biblical sources in Gen. 6-9 (J and P), *Atrahasis* seems to represent most accurately the original shape of the myth. Just as Noah offered a sacrifice to God when he disembarked from the ark, Atrahasis also offered a sacrifice to the gods. By this act, Atrahasis exhibited the qualities of a pious and faithful servant of the gods, unlike his fellow humans, who perished in the punishing deluge.[67]

Some scholars maintain that the manifestation of the bow in Genesis 9 should be interpreted as God refraining from an act of hostility against humankind. It has been common to point out that Hebrew קשת denotes the warbow. There are various parallels for the notion that the rainbow was the warbow of one or other of the gods. Especially illuminating is the similarity with Marduk's bow in the *Enuma Elish*. After his victory over Tiamat and her allies, Marduk literally "hung up" his bow. The bow, undrawn, is placed in the heavens to shine as the bowstar. There is every reason to

[67]Ibid., 193.

believe that the Genesis author understood the rainbow to function in a similar manner.[68]

Through human violence, (חמס Gen 6:11-13), chaos (תהום) had reentered the cosmos and threatened to undo God's initial victory over chaos (cf. Gen. 1:2 and 7:11). Therefore, "we are justified in appealing to the parallel in the *Enuma Elish* and in interpreting the rainbow as a sign that God's victory is total and that God has indeed hung up his bow used to subdue the enemy."[69]

As God reestablishes divine rule over the chaotic forces of nature, a new and more perfect order has been realized. Noah, who represents humankind after the Flood, acknowledges the proper attitude before God. God makes an everlasting covenant of peace with all creation, which he is bound to fulfill. As a sign of this new, everlasting covenant, the rainbow appears as an eternal indication that from now on, a new era of peace and harmony between God and the cosmos will exist. The Yahwistic account included a similar sign:

> I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will

[68]Ibid., 195-6.

[69]Ibid., 195-96.

> I again destroy every living thing, as I have done. While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." *Genesis* 8:21-22.

Although no clear symbol emerges in the heavens in the Yahwistic account, God's promise of the duration of the earth with its regularity of seasons is more than a metaphor for the stability of Yahweh's determination.[70]

As described above, Primeval Pattern B includes an attempt by a goddess to slay humankind because of its rebellion against the gods. After the initial bloodshed, the goddess is prohibited from carrying out further killing through the intervention of the head god. The ending of the myth is not well preserved, but in Batto's reconstruction, there is a planting of peace on the earth and the attainment of cosmic harmony resulting from the establishment of divine rule. Just as in the Priestly account, a special sign is created to signal the arrival of this new age of peace. The primary witnesses to this primeval pattern are an Egyptian text known as Ugaritic text which is part of the Baal cycle in CTA 3, and "Deliverence of Mankind from Destruction". The beginning of the

[70]Ibid., 196.

Ugaritic text is badly damaged; and so the reason for Anat's bloody rampage in the plain, "Smiting the people of the West, smashing the folk of the East" is uncertain. From the Egyptian account, however, we learn that Hathor's attack upon humankind was explicitly commissioned by the creator Re, in counsel with the other gods, because humankind had rebelled against the creator. Hathor's initial massacre resulted in the annihilation of all humans who had fled into the desert. However, when Hathor returned to report this initial success to Re, the creator god experienced a change of heart and requested Hathor to refrain from further human destruction, apparently because he now believed that he could rule the remnant.[71]

Understanding the motives of Egyptian and Mesopotamian tales, helps us to identify more clearly the specific signs and covenants found within the structure of the Genesis Flood narrative. Comparitively, If Anat's carnage was generated by human rebellion and was executed by a divine decision to castigate humankind, then Baal's desire to plant peace and love in the earth should reflect the fact that a new age and understanding of reconciliation was to come. However, this reconciliation was not intended only for humankind,

[71]Ibid., 197.

but was to be implemented with the earth as well, which had become defiled by association with the wickedness of man-the same situation as in Genesis 6:5-7 and 6:11-13.[72]

The planting of peace which Batto sees as a sign of the new covenant is not the only recognizable symbol in Anat's account. Lightning plays a role in heaven parallel to Anat's actions on earth. In other words, it too, functions as a sign. Therefore, another comparison can be made to the function of Nintu's fly-necklace in Atrahasis, and in Genesis to God's bow in the Priestly account and to the duration of the earth with its seasons in the Yahwistic account. Consequently, lightning serves as the sign which reminds both gods and humans that hostility between them has ceased and that a new era of peace has begun. Lightning, the rain(bow), the fly-necklace and the constant reminder that the seasons function in an fixed manner, all symbolize the new, everlasting covenant made post-destruction.[73]

In Genesis 6:18; 9:11 and 9:17, the verb preceding the mention of "covenant" is והקמותי. Arguably, the planting of peace was a

[72] Ibid., 199.

[73] Ibid., 201.

known, operative motif in the ancient Near East. Batto describes Ezekiel 34:25-30 as one of the principal witnesses for the covenant of peace. 'Within the context of the removal of every form of hostility from the land (or earth) and the corresponding advent of paradisiac conditions, there is reference to a planting of peace- although it has not been previously recognized. Ezekiel 34:29 in the MT reads וַהֲקִמֹתִי לָהֶם מַטָּע לְשֵׁם i.e., "and I will raise up for them a famous plantation," or the like.[74] Because both texts, Ezekiel and Genesis, share a certain amount of similarity with regard to covenantal language, it is important to recognize the function of the "new" covenant as one which seeks to establish control over humanity and the earth simultaneously. Also, both the Ezekiel text and the Flood narrative describe divine-human covenants which came on the heels of major catastrophic events.

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[74]Ibid., 202.

The Sign of the Rainbow:

Other Ancient Near Eastern Parallels

Among the many compelling similarities that exist between the Genesis Flood narrative and the Book of Ezekiel (most notably Ezek. 1:1-28), the vision of the (rain)bow in the heavens is particularly striking. As noted above in the chapter entitled, "Translation and Commentary," Ezek. 1:28 and Genesis 9:13, 14 and 16, all refer to a "bow in the cloud" as a divine symbol. One of the few connections made between the Genesis text and the Ezekiel text comes from the *Zohar*. Although the *Zohar* is in no way comparable to rabbinic commentary or to ancient Near Eastern texts, etc., in order to find an intertextual association between the two texts, it was necessary to study many different sources. The first *Zohar* text to link the two texts together is *Zohar vol. I 71b*::

> AND GOD SAID TO NOAH... THIS IS THE TOKEN OF THE COVENANT WHICH I MAKE BETWEEN ME AND YOU... I HAVE SET MY RAINBOW IN THE CLOUD. The past tense "I have set" shows that the bow had already been there. In connection with this passage R. Simeon commented on the verse: And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone (Ezek. I:26). 'Before this verse,' he said, 'we find the words, "And when they went I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty" (Ibid., 24). These are the four sacred and mighty beings called Hayyoth (animals), by whom the

> firmament is upheld, and whose wings are usually joined together to cover their bodies. When, however, they spread out their wings, a volume of sound swells forth, and they break out into songs of praise, "as the voice of the Almighty", which never becomes silent, as it is written, "so that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent" (Ps. XXX, 13).

The author's of the *Zohar* also saw a connection between the sign of the rainbow and human righteousness. In Genesis 49:24 it states: "But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; from there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel." The covenant of Joseph is also likened to a bow. Just as critical commentators find parallels between the rainbow in the Genesis Flood narrative as well as in Ezekiel 1:28, the rabbis see a militaristic meaning in the sign of the covenant found in both texts:

> The same is referred to in the text I HAVE SET MY BOW IN THE CLOUD. The bow here has a parallel in the text, "But his bow abode firm" (Gen. XLIX, 24), i.e. the covenant of Joseph, because he was a righteous man, had for its symbol the bow, since the bow is linked with the covenant, and the covenant and the righteous are integral in one another. And because Noah was righteous, the sign of his covenant was the bow. And the rainbow is therefore called " covenant" because they embrace one another. *Zohar vol. 171b*

As the rabbis in the *Zohar* recognized, the vision of the chariot in the sky, with the "great waters" (Ezek. 1:24), "the awesome ice" (Ezek.

1:22), "the sound from above the expanse" (Ezek. 11:24), and the colors of the different stones, resembles a storm vision. Ezekiel's vision itself supports this understanding, in that a rainbow appears in the clouds after a rain storm. The closest a rabbinic commentator comes to defining the vision of the bow as something atmospheric is Malbim who states that:

> Ezekiel expressed his simile in these terms because, just as the colors of the rainbow are but the effect of the sunlight refracting through the atmosphere, so too, the Likeness of God's Glory which Ezekiel perceived is but the *effect* of His intellectual Light [as distinguished from a physical light like that of the sun] the essence of which is indescribable in human terms.[75]

The tradition of storm theophany is present in Ezekiel's vision. Studies done earlier of the structure of Ezekiel have shown the significant role played by the storm theophany tradition: "at the outset, the middle and, explicitly combined with the heavenly throne tradition by transforming what was static into something mobile. The basic use of the storm theophany in the Old Testament is to portray Yahweh's coming as a warrior to conquer his human enemies who are also foes of his people."[76] Lightning in storm theophany

[75]Scherman and Zlotowitz, *The Book of Ezekiel* , 87.

[76]Allen, "The Structure and Intention of Ezekiel 1," 153.

texts refers to the arrows of the divine warrior, for example in II Samuel xxii (Ps. xviii 15); Ps. cxliv 18-19) . In Hab. 3:9 in a theophonic vision, the bow is associated with arrows: it is meant to depict a weapon of war. This interpretation could also be at work in Ezekiel 1:28. Yet for some commentators the rainbow is reminiscent of the harmonious meaning it has in Gen. 9:12-17. The scene of Yahweh as a warrior God is not without its ancient Near Eastern counterparts. Ezekiel 1: 27-8 has compared with a 9th century colored ceramic portraying the winged god Asshur set in the flaming, yellow disc of the sun, drawing his bow and floating among the rain clouds. In the Ezekiel text, the bow is not held in Yahweh's hands, but his bright aura is compared to it. Nevertheless, such a depiction of the battling storm god may lie in the background of Ezekiel's vision, in which case the bow does have an ominous purpose.[77]

The Hebrew word קשת does double duty for both "war bow" and "rainbow", while the majority of exegetes understand the bow in the clouds to maintain its military connotations and thus to represent, in one way or another, God's war bow. While Julius Wellhausen is

[77]Ibid., 153.

usually credited with making the connection between the rainbow and the war bow, its primary details actually go back much further. Some rabbinic commentators saw the rainbow turned upwards so that the arrows would be shot away from, rather than towards, the earth.[78] As such, the rainbow functions as a symbol of peace. Many have found corroborating evidence for this view in *Enuma Elish*, where Marduk's bow is hung among the stars after his defeat of Tiamat and her allies, and Gen. ch. 9 is taken to reflect this same tradition."[79] Because of the significant evidence in other ancient Near Eastern stories, most biblical scholars identify the rainbow as representing God's (undrawn) war bow set to one side after the defeat of his enemies, as a token of peace and reconciliation.[80]

As compelling as the evidence is to suggest the military overtones of the rainbow, there may be a more probable explanation for the use of the rainbow as a sign of the covenant. The answer is found not in the suggestions outlined above, but in the Genesis

[78]Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah: Genesis* (New York, 1971), 136-7.

[79]Laurence Turner, "The Rainbow as the Sign of the Covenant in Genesis IX 11-13" *Vetus Testamentum* 43 (Ja 1993): 119-120. (119-124)

[80]Ibid., 120.

cosmology itself, set out in some detail in ch.1: Gen. 1:6-8 recounts God's creation of the "firmament" (רקיע), to act as a barrier between the "waters above" and the "waters below". There is scholarly consensus that the firmament was created in order to serve as a solid dome-like structure stretched over the earth, into which the heavenly bodies were set, and which restrained the heavenly ocean.[81] The Flood initiated by God in 7:11f., while not clearly stating the break down of the firmament, certainly demonstrates that it was an inadequate barrier against the "waters above". As further indication that the rainbow does not embody any militaristic significance, the precise wording of the establishment of the covenant in 9:11 should be noted: "I establish my covenant with you, that never again will all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood (המבול) and there will never again be a flood (מבול) to destroy the earth." Since the landmark study by Joachim Begrich it has generally been recognized that מבול refers not merely to a general inundation, but more specifically to "cosmic waters"—i.e. those being restrained by the firmament.[82]

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[81]Ibid., 121.

[82]Ibid., 121.

> Once this episode in the Flood narrative is read against the background of the creation of the firmament (Gen. i 6ff.), this promise must mean that the firmament's original function—separating waters above and below—will be maintained. Such is the content of the covenant. Thus, one can readily see why the. The rainbow does not signify God's war bow set to one side (a notion for which there is o contextual support nor any strong ancient near eastern parallels), but rather it provides a pictorial representation of the firmament.[83]

Just as the firmament holds back the מבול , so the arched rainbow stands as a guarantee of the permanence of this cosmological structure, "my bow shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When the bow is seen in the clouds I will remember my covenant and the waters shall never again become a מבול to destroy all flesh (Gen. 9:13-15). Therefore, when the rainbow appears in the sky, God looks upon it and remembers neither his wrath against the wicked, nor his supposed battle against the waters; he remembers his covenant that the מבול will ever again destroy the earth—i.e. the firmament will restrain the waters. Thus the rainbow acts here in a similar fashion to the other two covenantal signs mentioned in the Bible: circumcision (Gen. 17:4, 11) and the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13-17).[84]

[83]Ibid., 121.

[84]Ibid., 121.

Because the texts of the Genesis Flood narrative and chapter 1:28 of Ezekiel have many themes in common, support for this understanding of the rainbow in Genesis ch. 9 is provided by Ezekiel 1:22ff. The theophany described by Ezekiel describes in detail how over the heads of the creatures "was something like a *dome* (רקיע)". Whereas the רקיע of Genesis ch. 1 separated the waters above from the waters below, here, it separates the creatures below from God's throne above (Ezek. 1:22-23; cf. *vv.* 25-6). Ezekiel's vision can thus be seen as:

> ...a miniature representation of the cosmos in relation to God... It is significant that apart from Gen. ix the only biblical reference to קשת as rainbow occurs in a context where רקיע is explicitly mentioned. And above the *dome* (רקיע) over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire ... Like the *bow* (קשת) in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord (Ezek. i 26a, 28).[85]

Both the Ezekiel text and the Genesis Flood narrative seek to describe the covenantal language and the divine glory of God in the same way, reuniting the reader, once again, with Genesis Creation narratives. This "creation" metaphor highlights the main theme of both the Book of Ezekiel and the Flood narrative: re-creating a new order, and establishing a new covenant.

[85]Ibid., 122.

Righteousness; Noah, Daniel and Job

In his commentary on Ezekiel 14:14, Radak writes that the reason these three men, Noah, Daniel (*Dan'el*) and Job are mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel is because their righteousness stood out in the midst of overwhelming pressures. Noah remained pure, while surrounded on all sides by a thoroughly corrupt society. Daniel remained allegiant even in the loin's den, and against the adulations of the royal court of Babylon and finally, Job did not break under the terrible pressure of his suffering, nor, says Harav Breuer, did Job lose his purity in a generation which, according to the Sages was drowning in immorality. In a further attempt to explain why Noah, Daniel and Job are mentioned in the Book of Ezekiel, Radak explains that "each of them witnessed a collapse of the matrix of the society within which they had lived." More specifically, Abarbanel writes, "Noah, of a whole world, Daniel, of his country, and Job of his family." [86]

The biblical Noah and Job are, according to the text, the epitome of virtue (Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1) of extra-Israelite antiquity; The

[86]Scherman and Zlotowitz, *The Book of Ezekiel* , 96

biblical Daniel, a hero of Jewish loyalty and a wise man contemporary with Ezekiel (according to Dan 1:1-6) appears strangely between them. It is a plausible conclusion then, that this *dn'l* (the biblical character is spelled *dny'l*) was also an ancient gentile, which is enforced by the occurrence of a Danel as the uncle and father-in-law of Enoch in Jub 4:20. This comparison received support from the discovery of the Epic of Aqhat among the literature of Ugarit.[87] The father of the tragic hero Aqhat is a king, Dan'el (*dn'il*), who is described as the ideally righteous ruler "who judges the cause of the widow and adjudicates the case of the fatherless."[88] It is supposed that this ancient character survived in various personifications among the Canaanites and Israelites; in Ezekiel's time he combined the righteousness of Ugaritic form with the wisdom of his later Jewish form.

Noah is clearly the primeval hero of the flood alluded to in Gen. 6-10 and Job is simply the righteous sufferer of the Old Testament book of that name, the framework of which suggests patriarchal times. What is certain is that the stories of both Noah and Job have

[87]Greenberg, *The Anchor Bible: Ezekiel 1-20,* 257.

[88] *ANET*[3], 151a.

the common pattern of the righteous hero passing through the midst of disaster to deliverance.[89] Therefore, it may be claimed as probable that the text described a process of Daniel's passing through the midst of disaster—the loss of his son, and famine—to ultimate deliverance, and that the restoration of his son was part of this deliverance. Accordingly, we have here exactly the same motif as is found in the stories of Noah and Job. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Daniel is depicted as righteous (Dan. 6:23), cf. Noah (Gen. 6:9) and Job (Job 1:1)—and that it was because of his righteousness that he was delivered from the lion's den. This too, suggests a connection with Ezekiel's Daniel who, it may be implied, had saved his life by his righteousness (cf. Ezek. 14:14, 20).

In the Book of Ezekiel, the series of laws which are set before the people carry a distinct priestly tone and bear an unmistakable resemblance to the formulation of the Holiness Code. Thus the bloody city of Jerusalem in 22:6 ff. is characterized by an recounting of the commandments which it has transgressed. In 28:5-9 and 14-17 the pattern of the righteous and in 10-13, that of the wicked

[89]John Day, "The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the Hero of the Book of Daniel," *Vetus Testamentum* 30 (April 1980):180. (174-184)

are marked by a series of lists which give the impression of formulas. A fragment of such a series can be found in 33:15. 33:5-9 allows us to go a step further, for here the righteous is characterized by a series of sentences which are then concluded with a completely superfluous צדיק חיה. One can recognize here, a "declaratory formula" which is particularly characteristic in Priestly terminology. It probably has its setting in the Priestly declaration at the temple gate. By means of this formula, the priest expresses his decision at the threshold of the temple whether a temple visitor will be allowed to enter the sanctuary or not.[90]

Whether or not the Danel mentioned in Ezek. 14:14 is an extra-biblical character or the Daniel of the Book of Daniel, it is evident that the theme of righteousness binds all four books together. Moreover, the theme of righteousness is what actually holds the three-part thematic structure of catastrophe, covenant and remnant together. Those who are considered righteous will be spared as the remnant. They are the example to those around them of one who will demonstrate and carry out God's will.

[90]Zimmerli, "The Special Form- and Traditio-Historical Character of Ezekiel's Prophecy," 523.

Conclusion

The Genesis Flood narrative and the Book of Ezekiel both emphasize God's role in creating new worlds. In the Flood narrative, God is manifest through a storm, a flood that carries Noah, his family and two kinds of every living thing far from God's destructive path. In the Book of Ezekiel, an amazing vision of the divine throne brought by a stormy wind appears to Ezekiel by the river Chebar. Genesis 8:1 and Ezekiel 1:4 speak of a "wind" that is either caused by God, or that translocates God's presence in a time of great upheaval. As the waters represent the symbol of chaos, the undoing of Creation, so the motion of the wind, רוח, heralds the reimposition of order.[91]

In both the Genesis text and the Book of Ezekiel, God singles out individuals who will carry out the function of transforming an otherwise hopeless situation. In the case of Noah, God carries him and the rest of the contents of the ark far from the locus of destruction of the Flood. In Ezekiel's case, God translocates him from the center of the Baylonian exile, to Jerusalem and back,

[91]Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis,* 56.

(among other tasks) in order to warn those in his midst of impending doom. It is fair to conclude that these texts utilize an old mythological pattern of chaos and creation. Therefore, the decree of Gen. 8:20-22 is the clearest expression of a concern which arises at many points, namely, that God should guarantee a context of שלום in which man's resources and energies can be realized in keeping with God's will.[92]

This focus on the exilic period, as compared with the Genesis Flood narrative, illuminates the meaning of the exile for biblical faith. Exile suggests that weariness (the opposite of 'rest' נח) is an experience of the collapse of everything secure and precious, the endangering of one's historical identity, submission to forces and powers which are hostile and the absence of any support or assurance of rescue. Conversely, "rest" utilized in so many texts which foresee the end of the exile, is an experience of order, wholeness, security, joy, "all those factors which contribute to peace (שלום). Weariness, then refers to a time of misery and trouble of drastic proportions, and *rest* means a context of security and

[92]Walter Brueggemann, "Weariness, Exile and Chaos (A Motif in Royal Theology)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (Ja 1972): 32.

well-being."[93]

Exile was not simply banishment from the land but it was as if the end of creation had come. Along with this loss, the exiles experienced the demise of king, temple, city, land, and all those benefits which gave structure and meaning to life. "The moment of exile is an experience of chaos."[94]

In looking at the text of Gen. 8:20-22 there is an indication that it has the form of a royal decree concerning the re-establishment of the kingship of God and the restoration of his ordering of creation. The oppesite of this is the conquest of the powers of chaos embodied in the flood. Therefore, the flood and the concluding royal decree are an historical-mythological tradition about the waxing and waning of God's kingship in his rule over chaos.[95]

The thematic structure discussed above that ties the Flood narrative together with the Book of Ezekiel can be found throughout the Bible. Rising above catastrophe and displacement, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, until a new generation emerged who

[93]Ibid.

[94]Ibid., 34

[95]Ibid., 19

would be able to enter the land of Israel. The Flood narrative, the exile motif, and the wilderness episode, all are examples of the one universal theme in the Bible: renewing creation. The history of a people who constantly redefined their situation and their surroundings and who still placed God at the center of their universe.

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