

THE QINAH CONCERNING THE KING OF TYRE
IN EZEKIEL 28:11-19

by

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The enigmatic qinah concerning the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:11-19 presents a multifarious challenge to the interpreter. Historically, exegetes have employed a variety of approaches in attempting to understand its significance. Manifold interpretations of the passage bear witness to the present obscurity of this difficult text.

These many and diverse interpretations may be categorized according to their basic premises and other common features. The myth and primal man views approach the passage in terms of ANE mythology and creation traditions, respectively. These fail for lack of conclusive evidence, and because they arbitrarily limit the range of the prophet's resources. The same is true of the Tyrian religion view, which approaches the passage in terms of certain aspects of Tyrian religious belief and practice. The Satan view, which discovers in the passage a description of Satan and/or the Antichrist, is unacceptable for hermeneutical reasons, not the least of which are (1) a "deeper meaning" exegesis, and (2) the assumption of analogy between the ruler of Tyre and Satan.

An eclectic approach, one that discovers in Ezekiel 28:11-19 allusions stemming from a variety of sources, best accounts for all factors, including context, Sitz im Leben, and apparent ANE parallels. The prophet employs a wide range of concepts familiar to his contemporary audience.

So approached, the passage is descriptive of the personal perfections of Tyre's king, his glorious surroundings, and his high estate. Hubris, however, brings about his destruction as described in a series of indictments and corresponding judgments.

Significant conclusions from this study include the rejection of the view that perceives Satan's description as the underlying central theme of the passage. Additionally, it is clear that the Word of God makes legitimate use of pagan myth and tradition. Finally, the hubris and fall of Tyre as personified in her king should serve as an object lesson to present-day individuals and nations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	<u>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</u>
BDB	<u>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,</u> ed. Brown, Driver, and Briggs
CQR	<u>Church Quarterly Review</u>
CTM	<u>Concordia Theological Monthly</u>
JBL	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
JNES	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</u>
JTS	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NIDNTT	<u>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</u>
OT	Old Testament
TWOT	<u>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</u>

INTRODUCTION

The oracles of Ezekiel against the nations (Ezek 25-32) include an enigmatic qinah concerning the king of Tyre (28:11-19). The diversity of interpretations which have been proposed bears witness to the passage's obscurity. Examination of these various approaches reveals the need for further study.

It is the purpose of the present study to appraise proposed interpretations of Ezekiel 28:11-19, and to set forth what may be termed an eclectic approach. This approach will then be applied in an exegetical survey of the passage.

CHAPTER I

INTERPRETATION OF EZEKIEL 28:11-19

The qinah concerning the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:11-19) is very difficult to exegete. Consequently, interpretations vary widely; concerning detail, no two scholars fully agree. However, the broad spectrum of interpretations may be generally categorized according to their basic premises and common features. Several preliminary observations call for attention before these categories are considered.

Preliminary Observations

Major factors which have a part in the interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 include context, several complicating issues, and the degree of care exercised by the interpreter. Each of these factors directly affect the exegesis of the passage.

Context

Biblical context

The qinah concerning the king of Tyre appears last in a series of oracles addressing Tyre, all within the larger context of Ezekiel's oracles against foreign nations and rulers. The Tyrian oracles, with those against Egypt,

comprise a major portion of this larger grouping of messages, for Egypt and Tyre were major political forces of the time.¹

The qinah is closely related to the other Tyrian oracles. While their style and imagery vary, the messages share a common theme centered about the power, prosperity, hubris, and consequent destruction of Tyre. Together, these oracles against the Phoenicians paint a graphic picture of the city, its sin, and its judgment.

The oracle of judgment which immediately precedes the qinah (28:1-10) evinces great affinity with the latter, so much so that not infrequently the passages are considered essentially as a unit. However, several factors argue for their separate consideration. First, the introductory formula of the qinah (verses 11-12a) plainly marks a division. This division of judgment and qinah parallels that of chapters 26 (judgment) and 27 (qinah), which, though related, are distinct messages.

Furthermore, certain aspects of their contents are convincingly dissimilar. While the two passages address royalty and share, with the other Tyrian oracles, a common theme, "the orientation of the sections is radically different."² The first describes a mortal who, achieving great heights, has become proud and will certainly fall; the second

¹Walther Eichrodt, Ezekiel: A Commentary, trans. Caslett Quin (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970), p. 367.

²Norman C. Habel, "Ezekiel 28 and the Fall of the First Man," CTM 38 (September 1967), p. 516.

describes its subject in terms of an extraordinary being who has fallen from an exalted original state.¹

The prince is thus dealt with: "Thou hast said, I am a god . . . yet thou art man, and not God. . . . Wilt thou yet say before him that slayest thee, I am God? but thou art man, and not God, in the hand of him that woundeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised." The king is told: "Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God. . . . Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth. . . . Thou wast blameless in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee. . . . I will destroy thee, O covering cherub. . . . Thou hast profaned thy sanctuaries; therefore will I bring forth fire from thy midst."²

Finally, textual and stylistic considerations argue for the distinction of these oracles. The text of 28:1-10, it is generally agreed, has been better preserved than that of 28:11-19. The corruption apparent in the second passage is much more extensive than that of the first.

Stylistically, the passages differ, this to some degree because of the stated genre of the second, viz., qinah.³ Because of the aforementioned textual difficulties, authorities do not agree as to whether either or both of the passages are strictly poetic; but, in general they agree that there are differences in style. Therefore, in light of the introductory formula of the qinah, their differing orientation, and textual and stylistic considerations, the

¹Ibid., pp. 516-17.

²Cameron MacKay, "The King of Tyre," CQR 117 (1934), pp. 239-40.

³For a description of qinah, see below, pp. 28-29.

judgment oracle (28:1-10) and qinah (28:11-19), though related, call for separate consideration.

Historical context

The LORD commanded the prophet to raise up the qinah sometime prior to the thirteen-year seige of Tyre, which the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar initiated in 585 B.C.¹ If this oracle is roughly contemporaneous with the first-appearing oracle in the Tyre group (26:1-21), it may be dated about 586 B.C., the eleventh year after the exile of Jehoiachin, just prior to the seige.²

It is unknown whether Ithobaal II³ or his people ever received the message of Ezekiel.⁴ The physical difficulties involved in communicating the message from an exile in Babylonia to the Phoenician city before and during the seige would likely have prevented their receipt. Most importantly, however, the basic purpose of such oracles does not demand that they be heard by those addressed. Ellison writes:

¹H. Jacob Katzenstein, The History of Tyre (Jerusalem: The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1973), p. 328.

²John B. Taylor, Ezekiel, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1969), p. 36.

³Ithobaal II is considered by most authorities to have been ruler of Tyre at the time of Ezekiel's oracles. Katzenstein, however, has Ethbaal [Ithobaal] III. Katzenstein, History of Tyre, p. 349.

⁴H. L. Ellison, Ezekiel: The Man and His Message (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 99.

The prophets' ministry was almost always to Israel, and if they spoke to Israel's neighbors, it was to enforce and explain their message to Israel.

There is no reason at all for thinking that Ezekiel's messages in these chapters were ever carried to the countries mentioned, and it is most improbable that they could have been. Their very position . . . points to their real purpose. The true Biblical teaching on the sovereignty of God is the mean between two extremes. We are so apt to stress the universal sovereignty of God and His judgments on the nations that do not know Him, that we are tempted to feel that there is room for some area of favouritism where His own people are concerned, that He can somewhat relax His requirements from them. . . . The opposite error is so to stress God's activities among His people, that we think of the nations as left to their own devices, and so we are tempted to despair when faced by their hostile forces. None of the exiles who had grasped and accepted Ezekiel's message were in danger of thinking that Jerusalem had fallen by accident, or because Jehovah was weaker than the gods of Babylon, but they were in very real danger of losing heart as they faced the gross darkness of heathendom around them. So to them was given this group of prophecies showing God's rule over and judgment on certain of the nations with whom they had been brought into contact.¹

Therefore, it is unnecessary to assume that Tyre received Ezekiel's message. His audience was probably Hebrew.

A number of proposals have been made as to the occasion of Tyre's condemnation. Political relations between Israel and Tyre, having been, on the whole, peaceful, offer little basis for the issuance of these oracles.² An alternate explanation is that the rejoicing of Tyre over the fall of commercial rival Jerusalem occasioned Ezekiel's oracles.³

¹Ibid.

²The relationship between Tyre and Israel was, however damaged by Phoenician trading of Israelite slaves (see Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:9-10).

³J. H. Kroeze, "The Tyre Passages in the Book of Ezekiel," in *Studies in the Book of Ezekiel*, Die Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1961), p. 14.

References in these chapters to the vast commercial interests of Tyre and a possible direct reference to a commercial motivation for her rejoicing (26:2) are offered in evidence of this view. Ellison, however, disagrees:

Such an interpretation is doubly unacceptable. Even if we take Jerusalem as a personification of the kingdom of Judah, which is far from certain, it is very doubtful whether at any time after Solomon the southern kingdom had exercised any influence on the trade routes that were Tyre's concern. . . . What is far more important is that Tyre's trade would be far more seriously threatened by Jerusalem's fall than by her continued existence.¹

Eissfeldt represents those who argue that Ezekiel's condemnation of Tyre had its basis in her part in encouraging Judah to oppose the Babylonians.² Why, however, is there no reference to this matter in Ezekiel's indictment of the Phoenicians? Oracles against nations and their rulers may be expected to include at least a clue to the crimes of the accused.³

Meadors suggests that there were religious-cultural grounds for the oracles against Tyre.⁴ Indeed, the constant battle for religious and cultural purity on the part of

¹Ellison, Ezekiel, p. 105.

²Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament: An Introduction, trans. Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1965), pp. 96-97.

³Ellison suggests that the oracles against Tyre, while truly addressed to the Phoenicians, were possibly veiled references to the eventual fall of commercially powerful Babylon. Ellison, Ezekiel, pp. 100-01.

⁴Gary T. Meadors, "Is There a Theology of Satan in Ezekiel 28?" Paper presented in Seminar on Old Testament Theology (Grace Theological Seminary, 1976), pp. 1-2.

Israel involved in no small measure the challenge presented by neighboring Phoenicia.¹ While, however, there are apparent references to Tyrian religion and culture in the oracles, this motif does not enter directly into the indictments, nor does it permeate the passage to the same extent as the hubris motif.

The content of the oracles themselves, as well as their comparison with other oracles, favor the view that hubris is the greatest single reason for Tyre's condemnation. Margulis notes that the charge of hubris is very prominent in Ezekiel's oracles against the nations, and that it constitutes "the definitive Berunding motif" in oracles to foreign rulers such as are found in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.² The oracles are permeated with this hubris idea, which is present also in specific indictments. Therefore, the hubris of Tyre furnishes the most convincing reason for the issuance of the oracles.

Were the oracles of Tyre's destruction fulfilled? History and subsequent references in the Scriptures argue that they may not have been fulfilled in every detail.³

¹The clash at Carmel between Elijah and the prophets of (Tyrian) Baal (1 Kings 18) graphically illustrates this tension.

²Barry Baruch Margulis, "Studies in the Oracles Against the Nations" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1967), p. 267.

³See David Thompson, "The Problem of Unfulfilled Prophecy in Ezekiel: The Destruction of Tyre," Wesleyan Theological Journal 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 93-106.

Rather than performing semantic and logical gymnastics, as many do in seeking to align every detail of Ezekiel's prophecy with the historical data, Ellison argues, on the basis of Jeremiah 18:7-10, that all such national prophecy is conditional.¹ As in the case of Jonah and Nineveh, the words of the prophet were not in their every detail fulfilled.² However, many of the major features of Ezekiel's prophecy eventually came to pass.

Cultural context

The cultural context of the Tyrian oracles is complex. Ezekiel, a Jerusalem priest exiled in Babylon, prophesies concerning a cosmopolitan seaport in gentile Phoenicia. This conglomeration of cultural currents surely affects the nature of the message of God through the prophet. It should also warn against arbitrary assumption of any one particular cultural milieu as the exclusive framework within which to approach the passage.

Complicating Issues

The hermeneutical issue

The multifarious issue of hermeneutics contributes to the complexities surrounding the interpretation of the passage. The diversity of opinion as to the meaning of Ezekiel 28:11-19 is indicative of the diversity, as well, of

¹ Ellison, Ezekiel, p. 103.

² The 40 days prophesied until Nineveh's destruction extended a number of years.

hermeneutical approaches involved, and, of the inconsistency with which they sometimes are applied.

A significant component of the hermeneutical issue as it relates to this passage is the power of presupposition. Theological presuppositions often inordinately prejudice interpreters as they approach the text.

Another important part of this issue concerns the nature per se of the selected hermeneutical system. Interpreters have employed a variety of hermeneutical methods, including several versions of the higher-critical method, the allegorizing approach, the grammatico-historical method, and combinations of the same. Resultant exegeses directly reflect the sort of approach employed.

A third component of the hermeneutical issue involves the necessity of consistent conformity to the hermeneutical approach to which the interpreter subscribes. In several cases, upon approaching this passage interpreters apparently depart from the hermeneutic to which they normally adhere.

The textual issue

The text of the passage is not altogether certain. "The text of Ezekiel has been poorly preserved, due partly to the fact that obscurities in the language, as well as technical expressions and hapax legomena, have led copyists into frequent error."¹ Ezekiel 28:11-19 is particularly

¹R. K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 854.

difficult, according to one writer notoriously so.¹ While authorities differ as to the type and extent of corruption the text has suffered in transmission, most agree that the text evidences at least some degree of textual obscuration. Arbitrary textual choices at some points are almost inescapable.

The language issue

Closely related to the two preceding issues, the language issue involves the unique, striking terms in which the qinah is presented. Interpreters are divided as to whether the language is primarily figurative in its application to the king of Tyre, or is to be understood as literally descriptive of one whom the historical king of Tyre merely represents. The latter view is that of those who understand the passage as a primary reference to Satan and/or the Antichrist.² The majority of interpreters, however, subscribe to the first view, understanding the prophet's language here as figurative, as it is in the surrounding context.

The parallels issue

Further complicating the interpretation of the passage is the lack of clear parallels to be found either in the Scriptures or other data from the Ancient Near East.

¹G. A. Cooke, "The Paradise Story of Ezekiel 28," in Old Testament Essays, ed. D. C. Simpson (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1927), p. 37.

²See below, pp. 18-22, for further discussion of this view.

Altogether too often, interpreters strain possible, but uncertain parallels in attempting to position Ezekiel 28:11-19 within a preferred framework. For example, because of conceivable parallels between the temples and certain aspects of the cults of Tyre and Jerusalem, it has been concluded by some that Ezekiel 28:11-19 is best interpreted in terms of the Tyrian temple and cult.¹ However, to subscribe to such a position, the interpreter must make several assumptions in order to fill gaps in the data, basing his argument almost exclusively upon potential, but inconclusive parallels.

Approaches more apparently affected by what may be termed "pan-Ugariticism" utilize possible parallels in tradition and literature of the Ancient Near East to bolster a mythological-traditional framework within which the passage is interpreted.² However, as in the aforementioned example, certain assumptions are necessary in order to fill gaps in the data, in this case, far more. Until clearer parallels are discovered, the interpreter must exercise discretion in the use of apparent, but presently inconclusive parallels.

A Note of Caution

In light of its enigmatic nature, as well as the several issues which complicate its exegesis, the qinah

¹See below, pp. 22-25, for proponents and further discussion of this view.

²See below, pp. 13-17, for proponents and further discussion of these views.

concerning the king of Tyre demands the utmost caution in its interpretation. The overzealous promotion of an apparently well-founded exegesis is not, at the present state of knowledge, well-advised. Therefore, a measure of uncertainty surrounds any proposed interpretation of the passage, including this writer's own.

Proposed Interpretations

The many and diverse proposed interpretations of Ezekiel 28:11-19 may be categorized according to their basic premises and other common features. Allowing for variety within groups and minor overlapping between, the categories to follow represent major approaches to the interpretation of the qinah concerning the king of Tyre.¹

The Myth View

The myth view is the major interpretive approach to Ezekiel 28:11-19 which discovers therein clear allusions to mythological traditions of the writer's time. Through the study and comparison of alleged parallels in Ancient Near Eastern materials,² proponents of this approach, who include

¹The present writer is indebted to Gary T. Meadors for this basic format. Gary T. Meadors, "Theology of Satan."

²Today, Ugaritic materials have supplanted once-popular Babylonian sources as evidence.

Cooke, Gaster, and Pope,¹ seek to reconstruct an original myth from which they believe the passage is derived. This reconstructed myth then provides the framework within which the passage is interpreted. Most such interpreters perceive an independent mythological Fall tradition behind Ezekiel's qinah, whether it be a very distant relative of the Genesis account² or an unrelated theomacy or Titanomachy.³

A basic weakness in this view is that it arbitrarily limits the range of the prophet's resources.⁴ The complex cultural context surrounding the passage prevents the easy assumption of one simple, self-contained tradition as the source of the oracle's imagery.

But perhaps the most serious weakness in the myth view lies in the nature of the evidence from which the mythological tradition is reconstructed. Neither present information concerning myth in the Ancient Near East nor

¹Representative works include G. A. Cooke, "The Paradise Story"; Theodor H. Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1969); Marvin H. Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, Vetus Testamentum Supplement 2, ed. G. W. Anderson et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955).

²G. A. Cooke, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel, vol. 1. ICC, ed. C. A. Briggs et al. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 313.

³Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 103.

⁴This is not to say that the terms of the qinah did not proceed from the LORD Himself. Here, and in subsequent statements of similar tenor, it is assumed (with the text) that the LORD speaks through the prophet. However, He speaks in language compatible with the mind and prophetic imagination of Ezekiel.

so-designated mythological strains in the Scriptures offer adequate, clear parallels. McKenzie writes:

A number of authors, both older and contemporary, have asserted that Ezekiel here either recounts a foreign myth or alludes to one. This consensus is remarkable when one observes that no myth is cited upon which the allusions are based. . . . The existence of mythological allusions in the OT cannot be denied; all the same, very few of them were correctly recognized before the comparative material was discovered, and experience shows that it is rarely possible, if ever, to reconstruct these myths from biblical allusions alone with any degree of accuracy.¹

Therefore, the myth view is not altogether acceptable as an approach to the interpretation of the passage.

Primal Man View

The primal man view is the major interpretive approach to Ezekiel 28:11-19 which discovers therein an account of the original state and subsequent fall of the primal man. Proponents of this view, who include Eichrodt, May, McKenzie, and Zimmerli,² generally understand the passage as a variant of the Genesis 2-3 account. This primal man tradition then provides the framework within which the passage is interpreted.

¹John L. McKenzie, "Mythological Allusions in Ezekiel 28:12-18," JBL 75 (December 1956), pp. 322-23.

²Representative works include Eichrodt, Ezekiel; Herbert G. May, "King in the Garden of Eden: A Study in Ezekiel 28:12-19," in Israel's Prophetic Heritage, ed. B. W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1962); McKenzie, "Mythological Allusions"; Walther Zimmerli, Ezechiel, 2 vols., Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament, ed. Martin Noth and Hans Walter Wolff (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag Des Erziehungsvereins, 1969).

The relation of this view to the myth view is apparent. Parallels, here specifically with regard to the first man, are used in the discovery of the basic primal man tradition upon which Ezekiel's oracle is based. In some cases, where the interpreter reconstructs an account which is almost unrelated to the Genesis account, an overlap with the myth view occurs.¹

The major weaknesses of the primal man view are largely the same as those of the closely related myth view. Again, the complex cultural context surrounding the passage discounts the assumption of a single tradition as the basis of the oracle's imagery.

Its greatest weakness, as in the case of the myth view, lies in the nature of the evidence. The assumed parallels, both in the Scriptures and in other Ancient Near Eastern materials are, at present, insufficient. While in certain respects the Ezekiel passage resembles the Genesis account, differences between the two outweigh similarities. Ezekiel's description of the king of Tyre shares with the Genesis account reference to a creator-God, Eden and its pristine dweller, the entrance of iniquity, and a fall. However, Ezekiel makes no reference to a woman, a tree, or a

¹See, e.g., Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, p. 392. See also May, who alleges a Royal First Man Tradition, in "The King in the Garden of Eden," pp. 168-69.

serpent,¹ all key features in the Genesis account. Furthermore, the prophet's character is clothed and full of wisdom; he is on the holy mountain of God, walking amidst the stones of fire; his dwelling-place is Eden, the garden of God;² his fall is occasioned in pride; his punishment bears little resemblance to that of Adam.³ Certainly, if Ezekiel relies on a tradition related to the Genesis account, it is most distant.

Extrabiblical parallels offer even less. No Canaanite Eden or First Man myth has yet been discovered.⁴ The differences between the Ezekiel passage and the Genesis account have already been noted. Yet, McKenzie writes, "It appears that Ezekiel 28:11-19 has more points of contact with the Paradise story than with any other biblical passage or with any known mythological pattern [italics mine]."⁵ A primal man tradition reconstructed on this sort of evidence is at best tenuous. Therefore, the primal man view remains a rather questionable approach to the interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19.

¹Van Dijk, however, translates hotem toknit after emendation (hawwat-m taknit), "serpent." For his argument, see H. J. Van Dijk, Ezekiel's Prophecy on Tyre: A New Approach (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1968), pp. 113-15.

²In Genesis, the garden is in Eden.

³For a graphical comparison of the two accounts, see Habel, "Ezekiel 28 and the Fall," p. 522.

⁴May, "The King in the Garden," p. 167.

⁵McKenzie, "Mythological Allusions," p. 327.

Satan View

The Satan view is the major interpretive approach to Ezekiel 28:11-19 which (1) discovers therein a description of Satan and/or the Antichrist and (2) uses the passage as a major source in the formulation of doctrine. Proponents of this view include Pember, Jennings, Chafer, Pentecost, and Feinburg.¹ Several church fathers held this view as well.² Through the circulation of the Scotfield Reference Bible and the later New Scotfield Reference Bible this approach to Ezekiel 28 has been widely popularized in conservative Christian circles. However, in the context of the broader Christian community, it remains a minority view.³

Adherents of this view argue that the language of the passage cannot have reference to a mere human being. In many cases, this assumption is based upon the denial of a figurative sense in the context. Pember writes: "Now to adopt the all too common plan of explaining these [expressions not applicable to mortal man] away as mere figures of

¹Representative works include G. H. Pember, Earth's Earliest Ages (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.); F. C. Jennings, Satan: His Person, Work, Place, and Destiny (New York: Publication Office "Our Hope," n.d.); Lewis S. Chafer, Systematic Theology, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary Press, 1964); Dwight Pentecost, Your Adversary the Devil (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969); Charles Lee Feinburg, The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of the Lord (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969).

²See, e.g., Origin, "De Principiis, bk. 1, ch. 5, para. 4, ANF, 4, pp. 258-59; Tertullian, "Against Marcion," bk. 2, ch. 10, ANF, 3, pp. 305-06.

³Ellison, Ezekiel, p. 108.

speech is to trifle with the Word of God."¹ Others acknowledge that Ezekiel draws upon contemporary imagery, but deny that such lofty imagery may apply to a man.²

Therefore, those who subscribe to this approach do not find the primary significance of the passage in terms of its more apparent sense. According to Chafer, "[The passage] yields its message to those only who pursue its deeper meaning with worthy attention."³

This "deeper meaning" exegesis draws out for those who practice it a variety of interpretations. In general, however, they agree that the person and fall of Satan comprise the primary focus of the passage. Once the analogy between the king of Tyre and Satan is assumed, it furnishes the framework within which numerous details concerning the Devil are discovered.

There are several weaknesses in this view. Perhaps most serious is the hermeneutical problem inherent in the use of what has been termed a "flashback hermeneutic."⁴ This hybrid hermeneutic, comprising aspects of double reference, typology, and the unique reversal of the forward-looking nature of these approaches, is conspicuous by its absence from standard hermeneutical works. Tan alludes to

¹Pember, Earth's Earliest Ages, p. 54.

²Chafer, Systematic Theology, vol. 2, pp. 40-41.

³Ibid., p. 40.

⁴Meadors, "Theology of Satan," p. 15.

it, but fails to deal with it at any length, possibly because of the difficulty in reconciling it with standard hermeneutical practices.¹ Forward-looking double references or types such as may be found in, e.g., the Messianic Psalms are admitted by most hermeneuticians, and not without reason. However, this reverse technique is applied only to Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14, and by those only who a priori assume an analogy between the main character of each of these prophetic passages and Satan.

This a priori assumption of analogy² also forms the basis for the harmonization of Ezekiel 28 with Isaiah 14,³

¹Paul Lee Tan, The Interpretation of Prophecy (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), pp. 178-79. Meadors further discusses Tan in "Theology of Satan," pp. 15-16.

²Meadors further discusses this assumption of analogy in "The Identity of Helel Ben Shachar in Isaiah 14:12" (Master of Divinity Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1976), pp. 60-62.

³A discussion of this passage is beyond the scope of this paper. Although Isaiah 14 is similar to Ezekiel 28, the relationship of the two passages is not so close as sometimes believed. McKenzie writes:

"The passage may be compared to Isaiah 14:12-14, but the allusions, if present, are much less explicit, and do not pertain to the pattern of Ezekiel 28:12-18.

. . . A story of an unsuccessful attempt to ascend to the seat of divinity and a story of an expulsion from Eden cannot be the same story, even if the holy mountain appears in both stories. Mythological patterns are more precise than this" (McKenzie, "Mythological Allusions," p. 326).

For a careful analysis of the passage and refutation of its application to Satan, see Meadors, "Identity of Helel."

and usually with the so-called gap theory as well.¹ In turn, this harmonization is applied in arguing in favor of the assumed analogy. Thus, through a circular process, proponents of the Satan view argue their case.

The "deeper meaning" exegesis smacks of the sensus plenior hermeneutic, an approach normally shunned by these interpreters. This sort of approach to discovering the significance of the text is inconsistent with the grammatico-historical method to which most of them subscribe. Of course, at this point the church fathers are excused, for, in general, those who held the Satan view were notable as allegorizers.

This approach lacks sufficient controls. It opens the way for every sort of interpretation. Meadors notes that "[this danger] demands that it [the "deeper meaning" hermeneutic] be tightly controlled and never assumed without clear evidence by way of contextual exegesis."² The lack of this type of exegesis marks, almost without exception, the

¹ Chafer says concerning the gap theory and its alleged relationship to Ezekiel 28:

"It may be observed that revelation concerning Satan begins with the dateless period between the creation of the heavens and the earth in that perfect form in which they first appeared (Gen. 1:1) and the desolating judgments which ended that period, when the earth became waste and empty (Gen. 1:2; Isa. 24:1; Jer. 4:23-26). This extended passage from Ezekiel, it will be seen, is a delineation of the mightiest of the angels . . . of the age of earth's primal glory, and of the initial angelic sin" (Chafer, Systematic Theology, 2:39).

For a careful critique of this theory see Weston W. Fields, Unformed and Unfilled (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1978).

² Meadors, "Identity of Helel," p. 59.

work of those who hold the Satan view. Therefore, the danger of gross misinterpretation is very real.

Another unacceptable feature of the Satan view is its usual suppression or ignorance of context. Little or no reference is made to the Sitz im Leben of the passage.

Any such interpretation detaches vv. 11-19 from their setting. A striking feature of the book is its very real unity, but here we are asked to believe that without giving any warning Ezekiel's gaze wanders first back to a period before man, and then on almost to the end of time, though apparently speaking of the contemporary scene.¹

Neither does biblical context favor this position. The qinah is appropriately situated among Ezekiel's oracles against the nations and their rulers. The context is plainly historical. The context also shows that other nations and rulers are addressed in highly metaphorical terms.

Finally, the use of this difficult, enigmatic passage as a major source of doctrine is questionable, especially in light of the sort of hermeneutic used to discern its significance. Isolated types or analogies, even if legitimate, are inadequate sources from which to draw doctrinal detail. Therefore, the Satan view, because of its numerous problems, is rejected.

Tyrian Religion View

The Tyrian religion view is the major interpretive approach to Ezekiel 28:11-19 which discovers therein clear references to aspects of contemporary Tyrian religion,

¹Ellison, Ezekiel, p. 109.

especially with regard to either or both the city-god Melqart or the temple cult. Adherents of this view include Bevan, MacKay, Meadors, Barnett, and Rosenvasser.¹ Ugaritic materials and other historical sources evidence that Tyrian kings were directly involved in the temple cult. This information, coupled with evidence concerning physical features of the temple itself, has led several to conclude with Meadors that Ezekiel 28 is best interpreted "from a reconstructed historical standpoint, understanding Ezekiel's dirge against the Tyrian king to be directly related to the temple motif."² The function of the sacral kingship of Tyre within the temple cult thus becomes the framework within which the passage is approached.

Cameron MacKay, rather than viewing the subject of the qinah as the king of Tyre described in terms of his cultic function, concludes that the god Melqart himself is described by the prophet.³ He, like those who interpret the passage in terms of a temple motif, presents attractive historical evidence for his position.⁴ He further contends

¹Representative works include A. A. Bevan, "The King of Tyre in Ezekiel 28," *JTS* 4 (1903):500-05; MacKay, "King of Tyre"; Meadors, "Theology of Satan"; R. D. Barnett, "Ezekiel and Tyre," in *W. F. Albright Volume*, Eretz Israel, vol. 9, ed. A. Malamat (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969); Abraham Rosenvasser, *Kerub and Sphinx: More on the Phoenician Paradise (Ezekiel 28)* (Buenos Aires: Publicaciones del Instituto De Historia Antigua Oriental, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1973).

²Meadors, "Theology of Satan," p. 14.

³MacKay, "King of Tyre," passim. ⁴*Ibid.*

that the reason Ezekiel employs מלך צור in the identification of the subject rather than the corresponding appellation נגד צור, is that the writer has in mind מלקרת (=מלך קרת), Melqart, "King of the City."¹

Each of the preceding Tyrian religion positions have much to commend them. They are based upon careful consideration of the text and its Sitz im Leben. The evidence is persuasive. The Tyrian religion view also depends less upon assumption than do the other major views.

However, the historical evidence, though persuasive, is far from conclusive, and certain assumptions (however few and judicious they may be) are necessary to fill gaps in the data. And, as with the preceding views, the Tyrian religion approach arbitrarily limits the purview of Ezekiel's prophetic thought. Finally, this view assumes that the hearers of the oracle are familiar with the temple cult at Tyre. If the prophet's audience consisted of Hebrew exiles, their knowledge of the precise details and setting of the Tyrian cult in its local setting may have been limited. This is not to say that the exiles were ignorant of neighboring religion and culture. The religious syncretism which resulted from Solomon's sin late in his life (1 Kgs 11:1-8) probably retained its effects even as late as the generation of Ezekiel. Additionally, those of the southern kingdom were well aware of the northern kingdom's idolatry, which included

¹Ibid., p. 241.

the worship of Phoenician Baal (1 Kgs 16:31-32; 18:18-40). However, the knowledge of the cult, in its Tyrian setting, which this view demands of Ezekiel's audience, may place the apprehension of the qinah beyond many of the exiles. Therefore, the Tyrian religion view is not entirely satisfactory as a framework within which to grasp the passage.

An Eclectic Approach

The preceding appraisal of four major categories of interpretations proposed for Ezekiel 28:11-19 reveals that, at present, there is need for a more satisfactory approach. Across-the-board application of any one of the traditional approaches risks straining meaning for the sake of maintaining the framework provided by the approach. However, each view, with the possible exception of the Satan view,¹ has something to offer the interpreter. Therefore, an eclectic approach, one that selectively draws upon the resources of each of these views, best answers the present need.

What shall be designated the eclectic approach refers to an interpretive method which discovers, in Ezekiel 28:11-19, allusions stemming from a variety of sources. Each allusion is employed to describe, in terms understandable to the contemporary audience, the hubris and subsequent fall of Tyre and her king. This approach differs from the aforementioned views in that it does not arbitrarily limit the

¹This view, lacking as it is in careful analysis of the passage in light of the context, offers little or nothing in the way of useful data.

scope of the resources at the writer's disposal. The complex cultural context surrounding Ezekiel favors such a view.

Moreover, it would seem that, unless the ginah is intentionally cryptic,¹ the terms of the passage represent traditions familiar to Ezekiel's audience. Remembering that its hearers are primarily Hebrew exiles, it is doubtful that the passage includes minute details which would be unfamiliar to the Jew of the time. However, the audience would be familiar with at least the basic features of neighboring religions and cultures, and in some cases may have had a degree of contact with them. Comparing, for example, the metaphorical features of Ezekiel's oracles concerning Egypt and Assyria, it is apparent that the prophet does not draw minor detail into the imagery, but uses the most rudimentary of allusions. Therefore, in interpreting Ezekiel 28:11-19, it may be best to see what, for the contemporary audience, would have been the plainest sense of each figure. The more simple explanation of a given allusion in the oracle is preferred.

In applying this principle, the components of the passage are interpreted (1) according to their most apparent sense in terms of Ezekiel's audience and (2) as they relate to the major emphasis of the passage. Due consideration is given to the several issues which complicate interpretation.

¹This would be most exceptional in an oracle of Ezekiel against a foreign nation or ruler.

The following chapter illustrates the application of this approach in an exegetical survey of the passage.

CHAPTER II

EXEGETICAL SURVEY OF EZEKIEL 28:11-19

28:11-12a

Here appears the introduction of the qinah concerning the king of Tyre. The introductory formula closely resembles those of the preceding oracles (26:1-2; 27:1-2; 28:1-2). The passage is so marked as a unique entity.

The prophet is commanded to raise up a קִינָה. This term, often translated "dirge" or "lamentation," refers to a poetic chant of mourning. Coppes writes:

The lamentation was sung during the mourning rites or prophetically of impending death and/or destruction (Jer. 7:19; Ezk. 2:10). It constituted the chief funeral ceremony.¹

However, the nature and intent of this genre is not uniform, as Von Rad writes: "The latter prophets actually turned it [the dirge] upside down and parodied it."² He also notes that Ezekiel developed this form to "almost baroque proportions."³ Therefore, care must be taken to avoid the

¹Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT), s.v. "קִינָה," by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:798.

²Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 2:38.

³Ibid., p. 222.

assumption that this passage ought to conform to a predetermined standard.

A major issue involves the metrical characteristics of קִינָה. A limping, asymmetrical meter is often associated with this sort of lamentation; the characteristic 3:2 pattern has earned the label "qinah meter." Authorities, however, disagree as to the consistency with which this metrical pattern is found in these dirges. BDB cites several instances where alternate metrical arrangements are found.¹ The significance of this matter to the present discussion is that an occasional commentator brings metrical considerations to bear in the textual criticism of Ezekiel 28:11-19. However, in light of the present difference of opinion concerning meter in the קִינָה genre, especially as it relates to this passage, such metrically motivated and directed textual criticism is at best inconclusive.

The subject of the qinah is מֶלֶךְ צוּר, who is usually said to epitomize or personify his nation. This appellation, particularly in relation to נִגַד צוּר (28:2), has been the source of much discussion and debate. Some interpreters, especially those who hold the Satan view,² see the change of address in 28:12 as an indication that a being far more exalted than נִגַד צוּר is the focus of the message. Others, such as MacKay, view מֶלֶךְ צוּר as a somewhat veiled reference

¹BDB, p. 884.

²See above, pp. 18-22.

to the city-god Melqart, whose name means literally "King of the City."¹

However, there is little reason to assume that the change of title in the qinah is an intentional ploy to draw attention to the nature of the central figure of the passage. The terms are often interchanged in their Old Testament (OT) usage (cf. 1 Sam 9:16; 10:1; 15:17; 2 Sam 7:8).² In addition, the Septuagint (LXX) has ἀρχων in both 28:2 and 28:12; the Targum, מלכא in both instances.³ The observation that in the OT נגד is used in reference to rulers of Israel only, with the single exception of Ezekiel 28:2, does not significantly affect the present argument. Therefore, the change of appellation from נגד in 28:2 to מלך in 28:12 is by no means exceptional, and may not be assumed to have special exegetical significance.

28:12b

The qinah proper opens with a description of the excellencies of the subject. He is described first as

¹MacKay, "King of Tyre," p. 241.

²Ralph Alexander, Ezekiel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 88.

³The value of these versions, particularly the Targum, in demonstrating the interchangeability of these titles may be debated because of harmonistic tendencies. Churgin notes that "the targumist made it a rule to render sentences which resemble one another, but differ in some small particulars occurring in different parts, in one and the same way" (Pinkhos Churgin, Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, Yale Oriental Series Researches [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1907; reprint ed., New York: AMS, 1980], pp. 53-54).

חֹרֵם תְּכֻנִית. This unusual predication, which has long challenged interpreters, is rendered by BDB, "Thou wast one sealing proportion, i.e., perfection."¹ This rendering, one of the most common, is enigmatic. There is no clear clue as to its specific significance. However, the present lack of explanatory data per se is inadequate reason to reject the translation. One thing is certain: the subject of the passage is described in aggrandizing terms. If, with Driver, חֹרֵם תְּכֻנִית is taken as "perfection,"² the picture may be of one who epitomizes the highest of standards, who represents the highest human perfection.

Other writers, dissatisfied with this rendering have proposed alternative renderings too numerous and diverse to treat in detail here. Many are based upon an emended text. However, the emendation of the Masoretic Text (MT) of this phrase almost entirely depends upon the presuppositions of the interpreter as to what ought to have been its original significance. The variety of proposed readings reveals the poverty of clear suggestion from text or context as to its correct emendation. Therefore, textual emendation of 28:12b enters the realm of educated speculation, and ought to be regarded as such. It is chiefly for this reason that the several proposed readings based upon such emendation will not here be discussed further.

¹BDB, p. 368.

²G. R. Driver, "Ezekiel: Linguistic and Textual Problems," Biblica 35 (1954):158-59.

Two alternate translations based upon the MT bear examination. Keil, noting the use of חֲכֹנִיָּה in Ezekiel 43:10 in reference to Ezekiel's temple, has "Thou seal of a well-measured building [emphasis mine]."¹ Meadors, who views the passage in terms of a temple-motif, prefers this reading, although Keil does not understand its significance in terms of the temple. Keil continues concerning the use of חֲכֹנִיָּה in this passage:

But just as in ch. xliiii. 10, the only other passage in which it occurs, it denotes the measured and well-arranged building of the temple, so here it signifies a well-measured and artistically arranged building, namely the Tyrian state in its artistic combination of well-measured institutions (Kliefoth). This building is sealed by the prince, inasmuch as he imparts to the state firmness, stability, and long duration, when he possesses the qualities requisite for a ruler.²

This view, however, is weakened by at least two considerations. First, the context of 43:10 is clearly temple-oriented; here, it is not plainly so. The supplying of "building" is not well-attested by the context. Secondly, Keil's leap from his already questionable description of the king as protector of a physical edifice to the king as protector of the state is without foundation. This smacks of the "deeper meaning" exegesis noted elsewhere.³

¹C. F. Keil, "Ezekiel," trans. James Martin, in Commentary on the Old Testament, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), pp. 409-10.

²Ibid., p. 410.

³See earlier discussion concerning the "Satan View."

Most scholars are said to believe that the king of Tyre is here compared with a signet ring or seal.¹ חותם is understood in construct, resulting in a rendering something like "You [were] the seal [or 'signet'] of perfection."² This view is partially based upon, and harmonizes well with, Jeremiah 22:24 and Haggai 2:23, where signet ring imagery has reference to rulers of Israel. Those who hold this view are divided as to whether Ezekiel has in view a signet ring, or rather an elaborate seal or signet representative of Tyre.³ Regardless of which alternative is selected, the statement's particular significance in relation to the main character of the passage is uncertain. Generally stated, the phrase emphasizes the subject's excellency.

The king is further described as חכמה וכליל יפי חכמה (Ezekiel uses חכמה ("wisdom") and יפי ("beauty") several times in describing Tyre and her ruler.⁴ The references in this context are not accidental. Wisdom and beauty are ideal virtues of Ancient Near Eastern kingship.⁵ The

¹Kalmon Yaron, "The Dirge over the King of Tyre," in Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute, vol. 3, ed. Hans Kosmala (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), p. 35.

²See Driver, "Ezekiel: Linguistic," pp. 158-59.

³For an imaginative description of such a signet, see William A. Irwin, The Problem of Ezekiel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), pp. 219-21.

⁴חכמה (28:4, 5, 7, 12, 17); יפי (28:7, 12).

⁵Yaron, "Dirge," p. 47; Othmar Keel, The Symbolism of the Biblical World, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), p. 280.

terms may also apply directly to Tyre, as personified in the king. Margulis writes: "The Begrundung motifs of 'beauty,' 'wisdom,' and 'commerce' evidence the poet's sensitivity to the cultural and historical traditions of his subject."¹ Tyre's vast commercial interests, beautiful art and craftsmanship, and probable reputation for wisdom and wisdom literature comprise the background out of which this particular usage of the "beauty" and "wisdom" grew.² Surely Ezekiel's audience would have been familiar with the significance of these descriptive terms in either application.

28:13

The phrase בַּעֲדָן גַּן-אֱלֹהִים הִיא is perhaps the greatest single reason that this passage is understood by some in terms of the Genesis 2-3 narrative. However, not all agree that the primary reference is to a paradisiacal garden per se. Barnes and Yaron represent those who find the phrase descriptive of the Tyrian temple. Barnes writes:

The connexion between temple and garden is quite obvious to the Eastern mind. A "temple" in the ancient East was not a building but a sacred enclosure round a (small) shrine. . . . The Solomonic temple preserved the memory of Eden the garden-sanctuary, for its walls were adorned with figures of guardian Cherubim (cf. Gen. iii. 24), palm-trees, and flowers (1 Kings vi. 29, 32).³

¹Margulis, "Studies," p. 312.

²Ibid.

³W. Emery Barnes, "Ezekiel's Denunciation of Tyre (Ezekiel 26-28)," JTS 35 (1934):51.

Yaron further comments:

We can say that the conception of the temple as a Paradise has its "Sitz im Leben" in actual cultic practice. . . . Such a connexion was prevalent in the whole of the Near East. . . .¹

The major weakness of this view is that a presupposed temple motif is imposed upon the terminology. While it may be granted that certain Edenic features are found in Ancient Near Eastern temples, there is no precedent for identifying a sanctuary as Eden. Ezekiel's elsewhere usage of "Eden" and "the garden of God" (31:9, 16, 18; 36:35) has no reference to a temple or sanctuary. Rather, these passages point to a fertile, paradisiacal garden, as might be expected. For this reason, and because the more apparent sense of the imagery speaks of the garden itself, it is probable that the prophet here alludes to the Paradise of Genesis 2-3 or an alternate, popular Paradise tradition of the time.

Parallel features between 28:13 and 14b have led interpreters to conclude that since the king is said to dwell "in Eden, the garden of God," and also "on the holy mountain of God," Eden must be located on that mountain.² This conclusion is admissible. However, it is possible that the prophet has made a complete shift in imagery, drawing upon an entirely different tradition. Therefore "Eden" need not have been on the mountain.

¹Yaron, "Dirge," p. 43.

²See, e.g., Ellison, Ezekiel, p. 111; McKenzie, "Mythological Allusions," p. 326.

This Edenic description of the king's dwelling place serves to further accentuate his ideal estate before his fall. His paradisiacal environment appropriately complements the personal excellencies described in verse 12.

The catalog of precious stones presents yet another challenge to interpreters, who are divided (1) as to whether מסכתך has reference to an article of clothing or to the subject's surroundings, and (2) as to the extent of the list of precious stones.

The range of meaning for the root כסך allows for either major proposal as to the meaning of מסכתך . Therefore, most evidence contributing to the settlement of this issue is drawn from the surrounding context and other biblical passages. The major evidence favoring the view that an article of clothing is here described is the correspondence of the precious stones with those associated with another article of clothing, viz., the breastplate of the high priest of Israel. Ezekiel's background as a priest lends additional credence. According to this view, the king of Tyre is clothed in some sort of garb which perhaps speaks of a priestly function.

Proponents of the view that here described are the surroundings of the subject may argue that "to clothe" is a more remote sense of כסך .¹ Furthermore, the authenticity of a "precious stones" motif in a garden setting is attested

¹Note lexical entries, e.g. BDB, p. 697.

in Ancient Near Eastern materials.¹ The major problem with this view is accounting for the correspondence of these stones with those of the breastplate. By the same token, the opposing view is forced to explain the MT's omission of the entire third row of breastplate stones.

The solution of this issue may be discovered in considering the prophet's audience. It is more probable that the Hebrew exiles would have more readily identified the association with the breastplate of the high priest.² The king, exalted in his personal excellencies and dwelling, is further distinguished by his garb.

The issue of the extent of the list centers chiefly about the observation that the LXX supplies the three stones of the breastplate which are omitted by Ezekiel. Because of distinct similarities between the LXX Ezekiel list and that of Exodus 28, and the exclusive mention of seven of the nine (MT) stones only in these two passages, commentators argue that the LXX reading is preferable.³ On the other hand, the identical nomenclature and sequence of the Exodus and Ezekiel lists in LXX may indicate that the translator harmonized the texts.⁴ The present-day interpreter is thus

¹Margulis, "Studies," p. 315.

²It is possible that the exiles identified the bejeweled garment with the jewel-studded robes occasionally placed upon Babylonian idols. Cooke, Ezekiel, p. 316.

³Yaron, "Dirge," pp. 35-38.

⁴Margulis, "Studies," pp. 314-15.

without conclusive evidence for either position. His textual choice necessarily depends a great deal upon his own presuppositions.

The final portion of 28:13 is no less difficult. Its meaning, even after careful study, remains uncertain. תפיק ונקהיך is generally translated either "tambourines and pipes," or "settings and sockets."¹ The context seems to favor the second version. However, it assumes a not widely-attested translation for תפיק.

Another difficulty in this portion of verse 13 is found in הבראך. The subject of ברא as used in the OT is invariably God.² This verb of creation emphasizes the initiation of that which is created.³ Therefore, it is often argued that God directly created the main character of the passage. However, ברא may also have reference to the enthronement or birth of the king of Tyre, or even the founding of Tyre itself.⁴ Occasionally, ברא is so used to describe the "historical continuation of [God's] creative activity" (Ps 104 [103]:30; Eccl 12:1; Ps 51:10).⁵ Therefore,

¹BDB, p. 666, cf. p. 1074.

²New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT), s.v. "Creation," by H. H. Esser, 1:379.

³TWOT, s.v. "ברא," by Thomas E. McComiskey, 1:127.

⁴Charles R. Smith, Christian Theology: God and the World, syllabus (Winona Lake, IN: Grace Theological Seminary, 1981), p. 50.

⁵NIDNTT, s.v. "Creation," by H. H. Esser, 1:379.

in Ezekiel 28:13 God's sovereignty is emphasized, but it is unnecessary to conclude that the personage here spoken of is an extraordinary sort of directly-created being.

28:14

The major issue surrounding this verse, the matter which is often considered the crux interpretum of the passage, concerns the meaning of אֶת־כִּרֹּב מִמֶּלֶךְ. If the MT is accepted, אֵל is a second-person, feminine pronoun lacking a clear antecedent, or one of three rare OT occurrences of the feminine form where the masculine would be expected (Num 11:15; Deut 5:24; Ezek 28:14).¹ The LXX, on the other hand, has μετ᾽. Back-translated to Hebrew, it matches MT except for the vocalization. If the MT is accepted, the subject himself is the כִּרֹּב; if the LXX, the king is with the כִּרֹּב.

Yaron cites several reasons for preferring the LXX reading, including (1) its "clear and fluent" style, (2) its appropriateness in the context, (3) the very small difference between its apparent Hebrew original and the MT, and (4) the observation that Ezekiel never uses the preposition עִם, but rather אֵל.² He and the many others who hold this position, however, must harmonize verse 16 with the revised verse 14. This is done generally by emending the MT of verse 16 to read also with the LXX, a more extensive alteration than

¹William Gesenius, Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, ed. E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910, reprint ed.), p. 106.

²Yaron, "Dirge," p. 31.

necessary in the case of verse 14. Where the MT of verse 16 has God as subject, and כרוב as object, the LXX has χερουβ as subject and the king as object. Thus the כרוב is seen as the instrument of God's judgment.

Rosenvasser, representing the opposing view, writes:

I do not feel that this interpretation is sound. Yaron asserts that the meaning he prescribes for verse 16 agrees with the Eden story in Genesis "in which--he says--it was the kerub's task to punish man for his sin." But, what is said there is different. The kerubim were acting only as guardians. Man had already been punished by Yahveh himself.¹

Van Dijk, who himself freely emends the MT, notes another reason for which he rejects the LXX reading of verse 14:

"The stylistic and idiomatic similarity of vss. 12-13 and vs. 14 suggests strongly the vocalization of 'attā instead of 'et, 'with,' favored by many modern scholars."²

In each of verses 17 and 18, an indictment is followed by a description of judgment which is comprised of two parallel statements. In each of these statements, God is the subject. It follows that verse 16, paralleling, as it does, verses 17 and 18, should reflect the same pattern. Therefore, such emendation as Yaron and others propose is unacceptable. Since, then, the king of Tyre is in verse 16 described as a כרוב, verse 14 may also be understood to address him in such a fashion.

¹Rosenvasser, Kerub, p. 9.

²H. J. Van Dijk, Ezekiel's Prophecy on Tyre: A New Approach, Biblica et Orientalia (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1968), p. 119.

The significance of *מַמְשָׁח* in this context is difficult to determine. In the OT *כְּרוּבִים* appear both as cultic objects and servants of Yahweh.¹ Although their individual features vary, the creatures are consistently described as having both faces and wings. As cultic objects they functioned as guardians of sacred places and objects, and in Israel's temple "[provided] with their outstretched wings, a visible pedestal for the invisible throne of Yahweh."² As servants of Yahweh, they served a variety of functions, including their part as mobile bearers of His throne.

The figure described in 28:14 is *מַמְשָׁח*, "anointed," or "of expansion."³ The Vulgate "extensus" ("wing-spread") is supported by Ugaritic and Akkadian etymology,⁴ and fits well in the context. However, it is unnecessary to emend the MT as this rendering demands. "Anointed" is the sense of the MT, and reflects well the meaning of the supposed root *מָשַׁח*. This thought is acceptable in the context, and probably speaks of the special *כַּנָּד* of this particular *כְּרוּב*.⁵

¹Yaron, "Dirge," p. 30. The same article, *passim*, has much useful information on *כְּרוּבִים*.

²*New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Cherubim," by R. K. Harrison, p. 208.

³BDB, p. 603.

⁴Dijk, *Ezekiel's Prophecy*, p. 119.

⁵*NIDNTT*, s.v. "Anoint," by D. Muller, 1:122.

The כרוֹב is said to "cover" (הסוכך). סכך describes also the position of the כרוֹבִים overshadowing the mercy seat (Exod 25:20). However, the association of a pagan king with the כרוֹבִים of the ark of the covenant is unlikely in light of the priestly background of Ezekiel, who probably would have considered the practice blasphemous.

The verb also designates protection. The imagery of Ezekiel probably speaks of a guardian כרוֹב of a high order. Whether here the king is pictured as the exalted guardian of the Tyrian state, or a special cultic figure (or a combination of both) is unknown. וְנַחֲחִיךְ, which follows this description, serves as a reminder that the sovereign God exalts whom He will.

The dwelling of the king is described as קִדְשׁ אֱלֹהִים בְּהַר. In the Ancient Near East, paradise was sometimes thought to have been on a mountain. However, the correspondence of this reference and the reference to Eden in verse 12b need not be pushed to its limit.¹ Mountains were also considered the dwelling places of the gods.² It may be that Ezekiel shifts his imagery from "Eden" to the "holy mountain of God" in order to further heighten the impression of hubris on the part of the king, or he may have been referring to the island-city of Tyre itself, or more particularly the possibly elevated sanctuary of Melqart. The

¹See above, p. 35.

²Pope, E1 in the Ugaritic Texts, p. 102.

mountain is said to be holy, for in the Ancient Near East such sacred sites were usually "holy 'by nature.'"¹

The אֲבִנֵי-אֵשׁ amidst which the king "swaggered about"² are often associated with the precious stones of verse 13. The structure of the passage may favor this assertion. However, it is unusual that the precious stones are described as his "covering," and yet he moves about in their midst.

An alternate explanation is based in part upon Ezekiel 1:13-14 and 10:2, where "coals of fire" are present among the cherubim, sending forth lightning.³ This explanation has much to favor it, in spite of differences in the terminology of the passages (אֲבִנֵי-אֵשׁ vs. גַּחְלֵי-אֵשׁ). Not only is there evidence in the writings of Ezekiel, but other Ancient Near Eastern materials contain references to like phenomena.⁴ The description of a glorious being parading about amidst stones of fire on the holy mountain of god again emphasizes the privilege and glory of the Tyrian ruler.

28:15

Verse 15 is structurally parallel with the final portion of verse 13, as well as transitional to the second main

¹Keel, Symbolism, p. 113.

²Driver, "Ezekiel: Linguistics," p. 159.

³Yaron, "Dirge," pp. 38-39.

⁴F. Charles Fensham, "Thunderstones in Ugarit," JNES 18 (1959):273-74.

division of the oracle. The king of Tyre is described as מִן הַיּוֹם from his creation.¹ He was not incapable of sin,² but was upright and ethically sound,³ i.e., until עוֹלָהּ ("unrighteousness") was found in him. The mention of unrighteousness is the hinge upon which the passage turns from describing the king in his glory, to indicting him on account of his sin and describing his judgment.

28:16-18

This portion of the passage comprises specific indictments addressed to the king, and corresponding judgments of God. Each verse is bipartite: one segment describes, in parallel expressions, his sin; the other, in similar fashion, his punishment.

Being filled with "violence" (סַחַח) by "the abundance of his commerce," the king is violently removed from the estate described in 14b. Verse 17 accentuates the hubris motif, where his wisdom and beauty have become his downfall. His judgment is, appropriately, humiliation. The indictment-judgment cycle begun at verse 16 climaxes in verse 18, where he is blasted for the profanation of his sanctuaries, and meets a fiery end. Each verse in this section draws upon imagery set forth previously, therefore demonstrating the unity of the passage.

¹ See above, pp. 38-39.

² TWOT, s.v. " מַחַח ," by J. Barton Payne, 2:974.

³ BDB, p. 1070.

28:19

This summary statement of the effect of the demise of Tyre's ruler is practically identical with the horrifying conclusions of two earlier Tyrian oracles (26:21; 27:36). The judgment of God must surely come to pass.

CONCLUSION

The qinah concerning the king of Tyre describes the hubris and fall of the Tyrian state as personified in its ruler. The message of the LORD through Ezekiel reflects first upon the king's once lofty estate. However, being filled with pride, the king is judged, as described in the latter half of the oracle.

Four traditional categories of interpretive approaches to Ezekiel 28:11-19, when appraised, prove insufficient per se as means of understanding the passage. The "myth view" and the "primal man view" lack convincing evidential support. The "Satan view," for several reasons, not the least of which is its dependence upon a "flashback" hermeneutic and "deeper meaning" exegesis, is entirely unsatisfactory. The "Tyrian religion view" has much to commend it. It rests upon fewer assumptions, and a greater, although inconclusive, evidential base than do the other views. However, it shares with the other approaches the tendency to limit the purview of Ezekiel's prophetic thought, occasionally straining the meaning of an allusion to fit this one particular frame of reference.

This enigmatic passage is best interpreted through the use of what may be termed an "eclectic" approach, an approach which draws upon the other views, but without

arbitrarily limiting the language and allusions to any one source. The major limitation which this view places upon the text has its basis in the Sitz im Leben of the oracle. The prophet's primary audience comprised the Hebrew exiles, who were undoubtedly familiar with a wide range of mythology and traditions belonging to surrounding peoples and cultures. Unless the qinah is intentionally obscure, the various terms of the passage represent concepts readily apprehended by these hearers. In light of these observations, the arbitrary assumption and imposition of any single source, mythological or otherwise, for the language of the passage, is untenable.

An exegetical survey reveals that Ezekiel's imagery stems from a variety of sources, including creation tradition, mythology, and features of Tyre's religion and culture with which the Hebrews would have been familiar. Every aspect of the oracle contributes to the overall picture of the hubris and fall of the Phoenicians. Such a survey also reveals the essential integrity of the MT, as well as the careful structure of the oracle.

Significant conclusions from this study include the rejection of the view that perceives Satan's description as the underlying central theme of the passage. Additionally, it is clear that the Word of God makes legitimate use of pagan myth and tradition. Finally, the hubris and fall of Tyre should serve as an object lesson to present-day individuals and nations.

APPENDIX

GENERAL STRUCTURE OF EZEKIEL 28:11-19

- I. Introduction 11-12a ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי לאמר
בן־אדם שלא קיננה על־מלך צור ואמרח לו כה אמר אדני יהוה
- II. Exaltation 12b-15
- A. Predication
1. 12b אחת חרותם תכנית מלא חכמה וכליל יפי
2. 14a אח־כרוב ממשח הסוכך ונתתיך
- B. Habitation
1. 13a בעדן גן־אלהים היית
2. 14b בהר קדש אלהים היית
- C. Association of Stones
1. 13b כלא־בן יקרה מסכתך אדם פטדה ויהלם תרשיש ושהם
וישפה ספיר נפך וברקח וזהב
2. 14c בתוך אבני־אש התהלכת
- D. Creation
1. 13c מלאכת תפוך ונקביך בכ ביום הבראך כוננו
2. 15 חמים אחת בדרכיך מיום הבראך עד־נמצא עולתה בכ
(15b is transitional)
- III. Destruction
- A. First Statement
1. Indictment 16a ברב רכלתך מלו תוכך חמס וחחטא
2. Judgment 16b ואחללך מהר אלהים ואבדך כרות הסכך
מתוך אבני־אש

B. Second Statement

1. Indictment 17a

גבה לבך ביפויך שחת חכמתך על-יפעחך

2. Judgment 17b

על-ארץ השלכתך לפני מלכים נחתך
לראוה בך

C. Third Statement

1. Indictment 18a

מרב עוניך בעול רכלתך חללת מקדשיך

2. Judgment 18b

ואוצא-אש מתוכך היא אכלתך ואתנך
לאפר על-הארץ לעיני כל-ראיך

D. Summary Statement 19

כל-יודעך בעמים שמו עליך
בלהות היית ואינך עד-עולם

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