

The Visions of Ezekiel

Lesson 2

Places in the Book

II. Places in the Book – In Order of Appearance

A. Vision One – (Eze 1:1 – 7:27)

1. Chebar (1:1)

During the Assyrian Empire, exiles were taken from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and settled in today's Turkey, Syria and Iraq. Syria was a nation to the north of the Promised Land for more than fifteen hundred years by the time of Ezekiel, but the border lines of the country moved by hundreds of miles quite often depending on the tribal wars going on. During the last days of the Northern Kingdom, especially under King Hoshea, the Assyrian king moved the remnant of Israelite exiles from the north and settled them between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The record in the Kings and Chronicles tells that Assyria settled the exiles in the villages of Halah and Habor on the Gozan River, which is modern-day Syria. That same passage indicates that exiles were also settled further east in villages in Mede or modern-day Iran. These exiles were from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh (2 Kings 17:6, I Chronicles 5:26). These tribal exiles were removed by Tiglath-pilneser which meant they had been out of the Promised Land for more than 130 years by the time of Ezekiel's vision. In 2nd Kings 18:11 we learn that Habor was a village, but it was also the name of the river it sat near. That river carried the name *Khabur* in the Assyrian language and translated into English as *Chebar*, *Chabar*, *Chaboras*, or *Chabur*, depending on the translator. Where the *Chebar* ran through the land of *Gozan*, its name changed to the *Gozan River*. This river empties into the Euphrates at the site of *Circesium*. Many years later, *Circesium* would become one of the strongest Roman fortresses in the Syrian area. But in Ezekiel's day Nebuchadnezzar was using the *Chebar River* for a different purpose. Under the direction of Nebuchadnezzar, the exiles of the Northern Kingdom were extending the *Chebar River* to make it a canal connecting the Euphrates and the Tigris Rivers. The project was enormous and for that reason, Nebuchadnezzar, in his second extraction in 597 BC, settled many from the Southern Kingdom in the region to complete the project. Therefore, Ezekiel was new to the region and he would be the LORD's prophet to the northern Israelites who had lived in the area for more than 130 years. Nebuchadnezzar's canal did not stand the test of time. It is now completely full of silt.

2. Tel-abib (3:15)

The word *Tel* means a *hill on which a village is built*.⁹ The word *Abib* means *the month of newly-ripened grain*. It also means *an ear of corn*;¹⁰ however, the reference to the month was most likely intended in the name. All we know about the location of this city is that it was on the *Chebar River*.

⁹ Easton's Illustrated Dictionary

¹⁰ Ibid

3. The Plain (3:23)

Although the plain is mentioned in connection with the *Chebar River*, the exact location can never be determined. The land surrounding the *Chebar River* had a slight slope allowing for water to drain off for miles on either side of the *Chebar River*. However, from the Euphrates to the Tigris, the land is relatively flat and would be considered a *plain*.

4. Jerusalem (4:1)

Jerusalem is the well-known city, the capital of the kingdom of David and Solomon and then, when the kingdom divided, it became the capital of the Southern Kingdom. It was the place of the crucifixion of the LORD. Today, it is once again the capital of Israel.

5. Mountains of Israel (6:3)

The northern and central areas of the Promised Land are somewhat mountainous. Although they are not tall mountains in comparison to the Rocky Mountains of North America or the Swiss Alps, the Hebrews still called the hills mountains, such as the Mount of Olives, Mount Zion, Mount Moriah and Mount Carmel. When the LORD tells Ezekiel to look to the *Mountains of Israel* and prophesy, the message is directed to the sinful state of the existing *Southern Kingdom*.

6. Diblah (6:14)

On the east side of the Jordan River the vast desert begins and runs for almost 600 miles to the Euphrates River. It extends from just south of the Fertile Crescent, down through Arabia and on to the Indian Ocean. *Diblah* is located on the eastern boundary of the Promised Land at the edge of the desert. Most scholars, for many solid reasons, have determined that *Diblah* is a mistranslation of *Riblah*, another village mentioned in 2nd Kings 23:31-33 concerning Zedekiah's rebellion but not found in Ezekiel.¹¹

B. Vision Two – (Eze 8:1 – 19:14)

1. My House (8:1)

When we come across the term *my house* in Ezekiel, it is always a reference to Ezekiel's own home in Tel-Abib. Ezekiel is always the speaker when *my house* is mentioned.

2. Judah (8:1)

The reference to *Judah* will always be connected to or directed to the people of the Southern Kingdom. In this passage, Ezekiel is addressing the elders from Judah who are with him in exile.

3. North of Altar Gate (8:5)

The entrance to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem faced directly east. From east to west, the main part of the Temple was 90 feet long. From north to south, the main part of the Temple was 30 feet wide. The front porch on the east side was 15 feet deep and as wide as the whole front of the Temple – 30 feet. The Brazen Altar sat a short distance to the east in front of the porch. Around the whole complex a wall was built that included gates. The gate in front of the Temple to the east of the Altar was called the *Beautiful Gate or the Eastern Gate*. But, beyond that, we truly do not know the names or locations of the other gates around the Temple. Any definite description would just be speculation. Nevertheless, it is probably safe to assume that the *Altar Gate* was on the north side of the complex and almost directly north of the Brazen Altar. In the

¹¹ Holman Dictionary

second Temple that was standing during the time of Jesus, the gate directly north of the Brazen Altar was called the Hearth Gate which would seem reasonable because of the hearth around the Brazen Altar, but that too is speculation. When the LORD points Ezekiel toward the north of the altar gate, He is telling Ezekiel to look outside the Temple complex to the north.

4. My Sanctuary (8:6)

My Sanctuary in Ezekiel always refers to Solomon's Temple standing in Jerusalem in the days of the LORD's delivery of the thirteen visions. The LORD is always the speaker when this term is used.

5. Entrance of the Court (8:7)

The *entrance of the Court* was also called the *outer court* or *the great court* (2 Chronicles 4:9 and 1 Kings 7:9-10). It was to the east of the Brazen Altar. All Israelites could enter into this court.

6. Inner Court of the LORD's house (8:16)

The *inner court* was also called the *court of the priests* (2 Chronicles 4:9; 1 Kings 6:36). Only the priests could enter this court.

7. Temple (8:16)

When the LORD addresses the *Temple*, it is Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.

8. Threshold of the Temple (10:18)

The *threshold of the Temple* was the door connected to the front porch that led directly into the Holy Place of the Temple.

9. Entrance of the Gate (11:1)

The *entrance of the Gate* is a reference to the all-important *Eastern Gate* of the Temple complex.

10. Babylon (12:13)

Babylon is always a reference to Nebuchadnezzar's home country of Babylon, established by his father. It is not a reference to his entire Babylonian Empire. (See next, *Land of the Chaldeans*.)

11. Land of the Chaldeans (12:13)

Land of the Chaldeans is always a reference to the Babylonian Empire. The empire controlled the countries of Persia, Medes, Babylon, Assyria, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Arabia, Edom, Median, Put, Libya, Lebanon and several other smaller countries. However, the word *Chaldeans* represented only the Babylonians. When speaking of the *land of the Chaldeans*, the LORD meant all the land controlled by the root Babylonian people under Nebuchadnezzar.

12. Land of the Merchants (16:29)

The LORD considered the entire Babylonian Empire the *land of the Merchants*. With the success of Nebuchadnezzar, the economy of the Babylonian Empire was good for everyone. Anyone in the world who wanted a buyer could always find one in the empire when Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel were in charge. All the merchants of the empire were ready to buy product for the people in their towns and villages.

13. Samaria (16:46)

Samaria is a reference to the old capital city of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

14. Sodom (16:46)

Sodom is a reference to the city destroyed by the LORD because of the unnatural sexual sins of the people.

15. Edom (16:57)

Edom represents the descendants of Esau who lived south of the Dead Sea until they abandoned their dwelling and moved to the land controlled by the Philistines. There the Edomites began to intermarry with their new neighbors.

16. Philistine (16:57)

The Philistines were a Canaanite offshoot tribe of the Phoenicians from the Tyre and Sidon area north of the Promised Land. The Edomites moved into the land of the Philistines and began to intermarry with them. Later, Claudius Caesar accidentally called them Palestinians and the name has remained attached to them to this day.

17. Lebanon (17:1)

Lebanon is the country north of the Promised Land. Tyre and Sidon were cities in this country. During the days of King Hiram and King Solomon, an agreement was made between the two and Hiram provided laborers, stone and timber for the Temple construction.

18. Egypt (19:4)

Egypt needs little introduction. It is basically the same land mass today as it was in all the centuries past. During the days of Jacob, his family moved to Egypt because of the famine. There, Jacob's son, Joseph, cared for them. Four hundred and thirty years later, Moses brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt. Even though Israel left Egypt, Egypt's influence never really left Israel. One of the main problems in the days of Ezekiel was that the king of the Southern Kingdom was seeking help from Egypt instead of God. Therefore, the LORD was sending Nebuchadnezzar to bring an end to Israel's dependence on Egypt.

C. Vision Three – (Eze 20:1 – 23:49)

1. Bamah (20:29)

Bamah means *back, or high place*¹². It was a place where the worship of Yahweh occurred but mixed with disgusting Canaanite elements. It was false worship. We will see that the LORD will use a word play on the *Bamah* name to mock the worship of false gods on high places.

2. Teman (20:46)

The village of *Teman* sat fifty miles south of the Dead Sea and east of Petra. It was the capital city of the Edomites.

3. Land of the Negev (20:26)

The name means *dry*.¹³ It was principally the land of the Amalekites during Abraham's life. Abraham sent Hagar into the Negev to get rid of her. After Nebuchadnezzar took over the

¹² Easton's Illustrated Dictionary

¹³ Easton's Illustrated Dictionary

Southern Kingdom in 586 BC, the Philistine/Edomite descendants took the land for themselves. In the New Testament, the area is called *Nabatea*.

4. Rabbah (21:20)

Rabbah means *greatness*¹⁴ and it is a town near Jerusalem in the tribal area of Judah but was evidently incorporated into the territory of Benjamin. That was not a problem because the Southern Kingdom consisted of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the town sometime between 590 – 580 BC. It was not rebuilt for several hundred years. We know the site today by the name of *Amman, Jordan*.

5. Assyria (23:7)

Assyria was the empire in control of the world before Nebuchadnezzar conquered it for his father in 612 BC. However, *Assyria* did not lose its name when the Babylonians conquered it. The country would still be called *Assyria* until the influx of Islamic influence during the Ottoman Empire. That is not to say that the *Assyrians* are gone; they are not! The *Assyrians* may be living in Iraq, Iran, Turkey or Syria today, but their culture is still alive and well.

6. Pekod (23:23)

Pekod means *punishment or judgment*.¹⁵ It was an *Aramean* tribe, the old name for a *Syrian* tribe, that had moved from Syria and established a home area southeast of the mouth of the Tigris River.

7. Shoa (23:23)

Shoa means *help*.¹⁶ We also know it as the *Sutu* tribe. In this passage God uses this tribe to punish his people.

8. Koa (23:23)

We do not know the meaning of this name; however, we do know that God will use this tribe to bring the LORD's judgment on His people.

D. Vision Four– (Eze 24:1 – 25:17)

1. Moab (25:9)

Moab was the son of Lot conceived by one of his daughters after the destruction of Sodom and the formation of the Dead Sea area. His descendants were known as the Moabites and they lived in the land of Moab, east of the Dead Sea.

2. Beth-jeshimoth (25:9)

The name means *House of wastes*.¹⁷ It was a town east of the Jordan River in the desert of Moab. Moses stopped with the *nation of Israel* at this site on the way to the Promised Land. It sat in the territory controlled by the Amorite king, Sihon. The Israelites killed this king.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Ibid

3. Baal-meon (25:9)

Baal-meon means the *LORD of dwelling*.¹⁸ It was a town in the tribal area of Reuben and it was the birthplace of Elisha. It was three miles from Heshbon.

4. Dedan (25:13)

Dedan means *low ground*.¹⁹ The town was named after Abraham's son. Keturah was his mother. His descendants settled east of the Edomites.

5. Cherethites (25:16)

The *Cherethites* were a tribe of the Philistines. They were known as the *executioners*.²⁰ During his life, King David hired some of these *Cherethites* to be his personal bodyguards (2 Samuel 8:18).

E. Vision Five – (Eze 26:1 – 28:26)

1. Tyre (26:2)

Tyre means *rock*.²¹ It is thought that the city was established as a seaport as early as 2700 BC, more than 700 years before the time of Abraham. It was a Canaanite city filled with idolatry and wickedness. What the world knows about *Tyre* comes mainly from the Old Testament because of its friendly relationship with Israel. But the LORD had a great deal of disgust for *Tyre* and He spells it out through Ezekiel Chapters 26 – 28. In this vision, *Tyre's* destruction is predicted. Nebuchadnezzar will attack. Through chapters 27 – 28, the LORD surveys the relationships *Tyre* has had with many cities and countries through the years. Chapters 27 – 28 will mention the specific product or service provided by *Tyre's* suppliers and their importance.

F. Vision Six – (Eze 29:1 – 29:16)

1. Migdol, Syene, Ethiopia (29:10)

Migdol was a strong and mighty fortress in the north of Egypt located on the Nile. *Syene* was a town on the furthest point south in Egypt on the Nile right on the border with *Ethiopia*. *Syene* is now called *Aswan*.²² The LORD's point in this vision is to instruct the Pharaoh of Egypt that the Nile belonged to the LORD and not the king.

2. Pathros (29:14)

Pathros is in upper Egypt, near *Syene* mentioned above.²³ When Mizram (Egypt), the son of Ham moved to the continent after the *tower of Babel*, the first settlement was in the *Pathros* area. The capital of upper Egypt was soon established nearby. As time progressed, the population moved further north into the lower lands along the Nile and lower Egypt was formed. After a while a capital was established in the lower part too. Upper and lower Egypt began to operate as separate countries but in time they were united under one Pharaoh. In this vision, the LORD would doom Egypt to be financially desolate for 40 years after Nebuchadnezzar became the ruler of Egypt. History records that the LORD fulfilled this vision.

¹⁸ Easton's Illustrated Dictionary

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² Holman Dictionary

²³ Holman Dictionary

G. Vision Seven – (Eze 29:17 – 30:19)

1. Libya (30:5), Zoan (30:14), Sin (30:15), Thebes (30:15), Memphis (30:16), On (30:17), Pibeseth (30:17)

In vision seven, the LORD prophesies through Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar would leave his conquest of Tyre and completely defeat Egypt and the cities and countries mentioned in this chapter. These entities associated with Egypt would soon belong to Nebuchadnezzar including the last that we will mention next.

2. Tehaphanehes (30:18)

Tehaphanehes, also called *Tahpanhes*, was an Egyptian city on the *Tanitic* tributary of the Nile River in the delta section near the Mediterranean Sea.²⁴ For background, in vision seven, Zedekiah is still the rebellious king of the Southern Kingdom. He was rebellious to Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel to whom he was required to report. Nebuchadnezzar had not yet made his entry into the city to destroy it; that would happen in 586 BC. When that happened, Zedekiah would be removed and Gedaliah would be put in his place, not as a king, but as a governor of the remains of the Southern Kingdom. In the book of Jeremiah, we learn in chapters 2, 43, 44 and 46 that after the death of Gedaliah, many of the Jewish leaders would run from Jerusalem to the city of *Tehaphanehes* and they would take Jeremiah with them. The prophet would warn them that they were going to die there because they left Jerusalem. He also informed them that Nebuchadnezzar was coming to *Tehaphanehes* to kill them and he would set his throne as the new king of Egypt right on the brick platform where they were standing at Jeremiah's delivery of the prophecy. In this vision, Ezekiel reveals the same future event to the Israelites living at the *Chebar River* near him. History reveals that Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled this prophecy almost a decade after it was delivered. On that brick spot, Nebuchadnezzar set his royal pavilion.

H. Vision Twelve – (Eze 33:21 – 39:29)

1. Mount Seir (35:2)

Mount Seir is the mountain range occupied by the Edomites after they ousted the Horites after Jacob returned from Haran with his family. It runs from the eastern side of the Dead Sea all the way down to the Gulf of Aqaba. Within this mountain range there is a small section called the Mountains of Paran. Some documents found in Egypt seem to indicate that a tribe existed in the area and called the range Seir and the descendants of Esau lived in the same area and called the range Paran. This makes perfectly logical sense. The Seir clans were concentrated in the southern range and the Edomites were concentrated in the middle and northern range.²⁵

2. Valley of the Dry Bones (37:4)

Absolutely nothing is known about the location of the *valley of the dry bones*. Ezekiel saw it in this vision, and it represented the dry state of the *Nation of Israel* and its ultimate new life.

3. Magog (38:1)

Magog is a tribal area where descendants of Japheth lived, the son of Noah. In the future, the name of their king will be *Gog*. They live between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea even today.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Easton's Illustrated Dictionary

4. Rosh (38:1)

Rosh can rightfully be translated Russia, specifically the tribes of Russian Japheth descendants who live just north of *Magog* today.

5. Gomer (38:6)

Gomer is a tribal area where descendants of Japheth lived, the son of Noah. Today, they live to the west of *Magog* south of the Black Sea.

6. Hammon-gog (39:11)

The *valley of Hammon-gog* will be the burial ground of King Gog along with all his allies when they are defeated by the great and mighty western king of the Revived Roman Empire, although, the first Roman Empire would not come into being for another 500 years after Ezekiel. Then, it would have to exist in some form until 1453 AD. Then, in our future, the remnant of the ten toes of the old Roman Empire will gather back together to form this new empire. The king of that new empire will kill Gog.

The valley will be located *east of the sea*. Which sea? Mediterranean, Galilee, or Dead? The *valley of Hamon* means the *valley of passengers*.²⁶ The passengers will travel on well-worn trade routes.

Israel is the nation in view in this passage. Two major trade routes ran from north to south in Israel. One was located along the Mediterranean Sea. The other ran on the east side of the Jordan River and past the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The latter route was the safest and easiest to transverse. First, the path was flatter with fewer hills and valleys. Second, the path was far enough from the shore that the turbulent winds from the Mediterranean Sea did not effect the travel as often as with the other route. Third, the lodging, food and water waypoints were plentiful on the east side of the Jordan. Fourth, security was greater away from the sailor life with all the seaports along the Mediterranean. Fifth, the trade route on the east side of the Jordan was called the *way of the passengers!*

Now we must determine whether the *valley of Hamon* was east of the Sea of Galilee or the Dead Sea. When traveling down the trade route to attempt to attack the capital of Israel, if an army reached the east of the Dead Sea, the army had gone too far. North of the Dead Sea, the army would have turned west to cross the Jordan River and approached Jerusalem traveling through Jericho. Jerusalem sits west of the northern tip of the Dead Sea. To approach Jerusalem from the east side of the Dead Sea would add about 80 miles to the trip and necessitate traversing the mountains as high as 5,000 feet located at the southern tip of the Dead Sea. Furthermore, if the army of Gog had reached that point with modern warfare, Jerusalem was already close enough to be easily destroyed. On the other hand, Gog will be stopped in the Lebanon area at the northern boarder of the Promised Land. It will make its way through two mountains east of the Sea of Galilee and be stopped and destroyed in the valley. The valley east of the Eastern Sea, the Sea of Galilee makes the most sense.

7. Bashan (39:19)

Bashan is located east of the Sea of Galilee in a well-watered area of the Promised Land that bordered Lebanon. It is another clue for the reasoning that *Gog* will be stopped to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee.

²⁶ Ibid