Ezekiel 33: The Watchman Reopened and Jerusalem's Fall

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 33 marks the book's decisive structural pivot from judgment (chs. 1–32) to restoration and hope (chs. 33–48). The chapter reopens the watchman oracle first introduced at 3:16–21, restates the individual-accountability principles of chapter 18 in compressed form, and narrates the long-anticipated arrival of news confirming Jerusalem's fall — the very moment at which Ezekiel's imposed muteness, first announced at 3:26 and anticipated for lifting at 24:27, is finally released. The chapter divides as follows:

- **33:1–9** — The watchman oracle restated
- **33:10–20** — Individual repentance and reversal restated
- **33:21–22** — News arrives; Ezekiel's mouth opened
- **33:23–29** — Rebuke of presumptuous land-claimants
- **33:30–33** — The people's superficial hearing

33:1–9 — The Watchman Oracle Restated

Hebrew (v.7): וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם צֹפֶה נְתַתִּיךָ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׁמַעְתָּ מִפִּי דָּבָר וְהִזְהַרְתָּ אוֹתָם מִמֶּנִּי
wəʾattâ ḇen-ʾāḏām ṣōp̄eh nəṯattîḵā ləḇêṯ yiśrāʾēl wəšāmaʿtā mippî dāḇār wəhizhartā ʾōṯām mimmennî
"So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me."

Block (NICOT) notes this passage restates 3:16–21 nearly verbatim, with vv.1–6 supplying an extended introductory analogy (a watchman appointed by a land's own people to warn of the approaching sword, whose warning, if sounded, absolves him of responsibility for those who disregard it, but whose silence renders him liable for the resulting bloodshed) before the direct application to Ezekiel's own office in v.7. Greenberg (AYB 22) notes the significance of this restatement's placement precisely at the book's major structural hinge: the watchman principle that governed Ezekiel's ministry throughout the judgment oracles remains equally operative as the book turns toward restoration — the prophetic office's fundamental responsibility structure does not change even as its message's content and tone shift dramatically.

Verses 8–9 restate the twin scenarios from 3:18–19: if the watchman fails to warn the wicked, "his blood I will require at your hand," but if he warns and the wicked does not turn, "he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul." Rooker (HOTC) notes the deliberate recapitulation here serves a transitional function, reminding the exile community (and the

reader) of the foundational accountability structure before the chapter proceeds to apply it with fresh urgency to the community's present circumstances following Jerusalem's now-confirmed fall.

33:10–20 — Individual Repentance Restated

Hebrew (v.11): אֱמֹר אֲלֵיהֶם חַי־אָנִי נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אִם־אֶחְפֹּץ בְּמוֹת הָרָשָׁע כִּי בְּשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ וְחָיָה שׁוּבוּ שׁוּבוּ מִדַּרְכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וְלָמָּה תָמוּתוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

ʾĕmōr ʾălêhem ḥay-ʾānî nəʾum ʾăḏōnāy YHWH ʾim-ʾeḥpōṣ bəmôṯ hārāšāʿ kî bəšûḇ rāšāʿ middarkô wəḥāyâ šûḇû šûḇû middarḵêḵem hārāʿîm wəlāmmâ ṯāmûṯû bêṯ yiśrāʾēl

"Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord Yahweh, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

This unit restates, in compressed and directly applied form, the central theological argument of chapter 18: Yahweh's genuine desire for the wicked's repentance rather than death, and the individual, non-hereditary character of moral accountability. Cooper (NAC) notes the specific occasion prompting this restatement (v.10): the exiles' own despairing complaint, **"our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them; how then can we live?"** — a fatalistic response to accumulated guilt that closely parallels, though in a more immediately personal register, the "sour grapes" proverb already refuted at 18:2.

Verses 12–16 work through the same reversal scenarios already established in chapter 18 (the righteous who turns to iniquity, the wicked who turns from wickedness), with v.14 introducing a specific behavioral test-case: the wicked man who "restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, committing no injustice" shall surely live. Wright (BST) notes the concrete, economically-specific character of this test case (restoring pledges, returning robbed goods) grounds the abstract repentance-principle in the same tangible, socially-verifiable conduct already catalogued as characteristic of the righteous man at 18:5–9.

Verses 17–20 close the unit restating the "way of the Lord is not just" objection and Yahweh's reply already established at 18:25–29, confirming this entire section functions as a deliberate, compressed recapitulation of chapter 18's fuller argument, now redeployed at the critical moment of the exile community's transition from anticipating judgment to processing its actual, confirmed arrival.

33:21–22 — News Arrives; Mouth Opened

Hebrew (v.21): וַיְהִי בִּשְׁתֵּי עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בָּעֲשִׂרִי בַּחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ לִגְלוּתֵנוּ בָּא־אֵלַי הַפָּלִיט מִירוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר הֻכְּתָה הָעִיר

wayəhî bišṯê ʿeśrēh šānâ bāʿăśirî baḥămiššâ laḥōḏeš liḡlûṯēnû bāʾ-ʾēlay happāliṭ mîrûšālam lēʾmōr hukkəṯâ hāʿîr

"In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a fugitive from Jerusalem came to me and said, 'The city has fallen.'"

This brief but pivotal notice fulfills precisely the anticipation established at 24:26–27: "a fugitive" (הַפָּלִיט, *happāliṭ*, the identical term used there) arrives with news that "the city has fallen" (v.21b). Block notes the precise date given places this arrival some eighteen months after the city's actual fall (per the dating conventions established elsewhere in the book and confirmed by 2 Kgs 25:1–8's own chronology) — a delay Greenberg attributes to the considerable distance and travel time required for news and refugees to reach the Babylonian exile community from Judah, a detail that has occasioned some chronological discussion among commentators but does not, per Rooker's assessment, present any substantive difficulty once ordinary ancient travel and communication constraints are taken into account.

Verse 22 records the fulfillment of the muteness-lifting promise: **"Now the hand of Yahweh had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came, and he opened my mouth by the time the fugitive arrived in the morning. So my mouth was opened, and I was no longer mute."** Cooper notes the precise timing detail — Yahweh's hand upon Ezekiel the evening *before* the fugitive's actual arrival — suggests Ezekiel received advance, supernatural confirmation of the news even before its ordinary human transmission reached him, paralleling the earlier real-time knowledge already demonstrated regarding both the siege's commencement (24:1–2) and Pelatiah's death (11:13).

33:23–29 — Rebuke of Presumptuous Land-Claimants

Hebrew (v.24): בֶּן־אָדָם יֹשְׁבֵי הֶחָרְבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה עַל־אַדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹמְרִים לֵאמֹר אֶחָד הָיָה אַבְרָהָם וַיִּירַשׁ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וַאֲנַחְנוּ רַבִּים לָנוּ נִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה
ben-ʾāḏām yōšəḇê heḥārāḇôṯ hāʾēlleh ʿal-ʾaḏmaṯ yiśrāʾēl ʾōmərîm lēʾmōr ʾeḥāḏ hāyâ ʾaḇrāhām wayyîraš ʾeṯ-hāʾāreṣ waʾănaḥnû rabbîm lānû niṯṯənâ hāʾāreṣ ləmôrāšâ
"Son of man, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, 'Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess.'"

This unit addresses a striking instance of presumptuous, self-serving theological reasoning among those still remaining in the devastated land of Israel (likely a remnant population left behind following the main deportations, cf. 2 Kgs 25:12). Their claim — appealing to Abraham's singular possession of the land as precedent justifying their own, far more numerous claim to it — Rooker identifies as a form of theological argument from lesser to greater (an inverted *qal wachomer*) deployed self-servingly to claim continued land rights despite the very devastation and covenant judgment that has emptied the land in the first place.

Verses 25–26 deliver Yahweh's rebuttal by cataloging their actual, ongoing covenant violations — eating meat with the blood still in it (violating Lev 17:10–14), lifting up eyes to idols, shedding blood, relying on the sword, committing abomination, defiling neighbors' wives — before the devastating rhetorical question: **"shall you then possess the land?"** Greenberg notes the

argument's structure: these claimants wish to inherit Abraham's covenant promise while simultaneously perpetuating precisely the covenant violations that occasioned the land's judgment and depopulation in the first place — a self-contradictory presumption Yahweh directly exposes.

Verses 27–29 pronounce further judgment on these presumptuous remnant-dwellers: those in the ruins shall fall by the sword, those in the open field given to beasts, those in strongholds and caves dying by pestilence — "and I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and her proud might shall come to an end." Wright notes the closing recognition formula here (v.29) applies specifically to this remnant population's own continued unfaithfulness, confirming that Jerusalem's fall, while marking a decisive historical and theological turning point, does not automatically or immediately purge the land of continued covenant infidelity among those who remain — judgment's process, even at this late stage, continues to operate according to the same individual and communal accountability principles established throughout the book.

33:30–33 — Superficial Hearing

Hebrew (v.31): וְיָבוֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ כְּמְבוֹא־עָם וְיֵשְׁבוּ לְפָנֶיךָ עַמִּי וְשָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֶיךָ וְאוֹתָם לֹא יַעֲשׂוּ כִּי־עֲגָבִים בְּפִיהֶם הֵמָּה עֹשִׂים אַחֲרֵי בִצְעָם לִבָּם הֹלֵךְ

wəyāḇôʾû ʾēleḵā kəmoḇôʾ-ʿām wəyēšəḇû ləpāneḵā ʿammî wəšāməʿû ʾeṯ-dəḇāreḵā wəʾôṯām lōʾ yaʿăśû kî-ʿăḡāḇîm bəpîhem hēmmâ ʿōśîm ʾaḥărê ḇiṣʿām libbām hōlēḵ

"And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart is set on their gain."

This closing unit describes the exile community's response to Ezekiel's now-unmuted, freely-spoken ministry in strikingly ambivalent terms. Cooper notes the description of eager, apparently attentive audience response — "they come to you as people come" — masks a fundamental superficiality: genuine external interest and even verbal appreciation ("with their mouth they show much love") coexists with a heart fundamentally oriented toward "their gain" (בִצְעָם, *biṣʿām*, likely dishonest profit or self-interest) rather than genuine obedience.

Verse 32 delivers a memorable simile: **"And behold, you are to them like one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it."** Block notes the striking, almost dismissive comparison — Ezekiel's prophetic ministry, for this audience, has become a form of aesthetic entertainment, appreciated for its rhetorical and performative qualities while remaining entirely disconnected from any expectation of actual behavioral response or obedience. Rooker connects this directly to Jesus's own parable of the sower's rocky and thorny ground (Matt 13:20–22), where the word is received with initial enthusiasm or interest that nonetheless fails to produce lasting, fruit-bearing response.

Verse 33 closes the chapter with a note of eventual, sobering vindication: **"When this comes—and come it will!—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."** Wright notes

the deliberate echo of the identical formula first established at Ezekiel's original commissioning (2:5) — the same principle that governed his ministry's reception before Jerusalem's fall (whether the people would "hear or refuse to hear") continues to govern its reception even now, following that fall, confirming that outward historical vindication of the prophetic word does not, by itself, guarantee the kind of genuine, heart-level repentance the entire book has consistently identified as the truly decisive factor.

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The **restatement of both the watchman oracle and the individual-repentance principle at this precise structural juncture** — the confirmed arrival of Jerusalem's fall — demonstrates that these foundational theological principles established earlier in the book (3:16–21; ch. 18) are not superseded or rendered obsolete by history's confirmation of the judgment they anticipated, but remain fully operative and freshly applicable as the exile community processes both the reality of judgment received and the fresh possibility of individual repentance and life going forward. This coheres with the broader Reformed pastoral principle that the law's diagnostic and the gospel's inviting functions remain simultaneously operative across every stage of redemptive history and every individual's ongoing spiritual condition — historical confirmation of deserved judgment does not exhaust or foreclose the ongoing individual call to repentance and life that Yahweh's revealed character (v.11, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked") consistently extends.

The **presumptuous land-claimants' self-serving appeal to Abraham** (vv.24–29) offers an instructive negative example of covenant-privilege claimed without corresponding covenant faithfulness — a pattern directly paralleled in John the Baptist's own warning to those presuming upon Abrahamic descent while lacking genuine repentance ("do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'... God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham," Matt 3:9; Luke 3:8), and in Paul's own extended argument that "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel" (Rom 9:6) — reinforcing yet again the individual, faith-and-repentance-grounded (rather than merely genealogical or geographic) basis of genuine covenant standing that this entire study has traced since its fullest initial statement in chapter 18, and that grounds the credobaptist conviction, consonant with 1689 Federalism, that covenant membership properly follows regenerate faith rather than mere physical or geographic proximity to God's historic covenant community.

The **superficial, aesthetically-appreciative but practically unresponsive audience** described in vv.30–33 stands as an enduring pastoral warning against confusing genuine spiritual response with mere appreciation of a message's rhetorical, emotional, or performative qualities — a warning of continuing relevance for any preaching or teaching ministry whose hearers may find genuine aesthetic or emotional satisfaction in what they hear without that response ever translating into the actual, obedient life-change the message calls for. This coheres directly with James's warning against being merely "hearers of the word" rather than "doers" (Jas 1:22–25) and with the parable of the sower's own sobering testimony that not all apparently receptive soil ultimately proves fruitful (Matt 13:1–23) — a pattern Ezekiel's own

concluding ministry, even after his vindicating muteness is lifted and Jerusalem's judgment fully confirmed, continues to encounter and must continue to navigate with the same watchman's faithfulness regardless of the response it does or does not ultimately receive.

Ezekiel 34: The False Shepherds and the True Shepherd

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 34 delivers one of the book's most theologically significant and pastorally resonant oracles, employing the shepherd metaphor to indict Israel's failed leadership before pronouncing Yahweh's own direct intervention as shepherd and the establishment of a Davidic under-shepherd. This chapter stands as a crucial hinge in the book's restoration section, introducing messianic and covenantal themes that will develop further in chapters 36–37. The chapter divides as follows:

- **34:1–10** — Indictment of the false shepherds
- **34:11–16** — Yahweh himself will shepherd
- **34:17–22** — Judgment between the sheep: the fat and the lean
- **34:23–24** — One shepherd, my servant David
- **34:25–31** — The covenant of peace

34:1–10 — Indictment of the False Shepherds

Hebrew (v.2): בֶּן־אָדָם הִנָּבֵא עַל־רוֹעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנָּבֵא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם לָרֹעִים כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הוֹי רֹעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ רֹעִים אוֹתָם הֲלוֹא הַצֹּאן יִרְעוּ הָרֹעִים

ben-ʾāḏām hinnāḇēʾ ʿal-rôʿê yiśrāʾēl hinnāḇēʾ wəʾāmartā ʾălēhem lārōʿîm kōh ʾāmar ʾăḏōnāy YHWH hôy rōʿê yiśrāʾēl ʾăšer hāyû rōʿîm ʾôṯām hălôʾ haṣṣōʾn yirʿû hārōʿîm

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep?"

Block (NICOT) notes the shepherd metaphor for kings and rulers is deeply embedded throughout the ancient Near East (attested in Mesopotamian royal titulature) and the Hebrew Bible itself (cf. 2 Sam 5:2; Ps 78:70–72; Jer 23:1–4, this last passage a particularly close antecedent to Ezekiel's own extended treatment here). Greenberg (AYB 22) notes the rhetorical question of v.2b — "should not the shepherds feed the sheep?" — establishes the metaphor's controlling logic before the indictment specifies its violation: these shepherds have inverted their proper function, "feeding themselves" rather than the flock entrusted to them.

Verses 3–4 catalog the specific failures in devastating detail: eating the fat, clothing themselves with the wool, slaughtering the fat animals, yet "you do not feed the sheep." Rooker (HOTC) notes the further specification: **"the weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the**

lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them" (v.4). Wright (BST) observes this catalog inverts every positive pastoral function a genuine shepherd-king should exercise — strengthening, healing, binding, restoring, seeking — reducing royal governance to pure predatory self-interest and, worse, active harshness (v.4b) toward those under their charge.

Verses 5–6 describe the resulting consequence: the sheep, lacking a genuine shepherd, are "scattered" and become "food for all the wild beasts," wandering "over all the mountains and on every high hill," scattered "over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them." Cooper (NAC) notes this scattering directly corresponds to the historical exile itself — the leadership's failure of pastoral care culminates in the very dispersion the book has chronicled throughout its judgment oracles.

Verses 7–10 pronounce Yahweh's direct response: **"Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, that they may not be food for them."** Block notes the striking image of the sheep being rescued "from their mouths" — the shepherds themselves, rather than merely neglecting the flock, are here depicted as actively predatory, requiring active divine rescue of the sheep *from* rather than merely *by* their supposed caretakers.

34:11–16 — Yahweh Himself Will Shepherd

Hebrew (v.11): כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנְנִי־אֲנִי וְדָרַשְׁתִּי אֶת־צֹאנִי וּבִקַּרְתִּים
kî ḵōh ʾāmar ʾăḏōnāy YHWH hinənî-ʾānî wəḏārаštî ʾeṯ-ṣōʾnî ûḇiqqartîm
"For thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out."

The emphatic doubled first-person construction (הִנְנִי־אֲנִי, *hinənî-ʾānî*, "behold, I myself") signals Yahweh's own direct, personal intervention where human shepherds have catastrophically failed. Greenberg notes this passage's profound theological significance: rather than merely replacing bad human shepherds with better ones (though that development comes in vv.23–24), Yahweh first announces his own direct shepherding activity — searching, seeking, rescuing, gathering "from all places where they have been scattered" (v.12), bringing them "out from the peoples" and gathering them "from the countries," bringing them "into their own land" (v.13).

Verse 14 promises rich pasture "on the mountains of Israel," and **verse 15** restates the emphatic personal commitment: **"I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord Yahweh."** Rooker notes the deliberate, exact reversal of every specific failure catalogued against the false shepherds in vv.3–4: **"I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak"** (v.16a) — each verb corresponding precisely to its negated counterpart in the earlier indictment. Wright emphasizes this point-by-point reversal demonstrates that

Yahweh's own shepherding is not merely different in degree but constitutes the exact positive fulfillment of every specific pastoral function the human shepherds abdicated.

Verse 16b introduces a further note of discriminating justice within the flock itself: **"but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice."** This anticipates the following unit's fuller development of judgment *within* the restored flock, not merely judgment *of* the failed shepherds *for* the flock.

34:17–22 — Judgment Between the Sheep

Hebrew (v.20): לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה הִנְנִי־אֲנִי וְשָׁפַטְתִּי בֵּין־שֶׂה בְרִיָה וּבֵין שֶׂה רָזֶה
lāḵēn kōh ʾāmar ʾăḏōnāy YHWH hinənî-ʾānî wəšāpaṭtî bên-śeh ḇiryâ ûḇên śeh rāzâ
"Therefore, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep."

This unit shifts focus from indicting the shepherds to a more surprising development: judgment *among* the sheep themselves. Cooper notes the imagery describes exploitation within the flock — the "fat sheep" pushing the "lean sheep" with side and shoulder, butting "all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad" (v.21), and fouling pastures and drinking water for others through trampling (vv.18–19). Block identifies this as a socioeconomic indictment operating at the level of the covenant community's own internal relations, not merely its external leadership — even among the exile community itself (or the restored community more broadly), the powerful and prosperous prey upon and exploit the weak and vulnerable, requiring Yahweh's own discriminating justice to address.

Verse 22 promises resolution: **"I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey, and I will judge between sheep and sheep."** Rooker notes this passage extends the individual-accountability principle already established in chapter 18 into the pastoral metaphor's own terms — restoration is not an undifferentiated, blanket amnesty for the whole flock regardless of internal conduct, but includes genuine discrimination and justice applied even within the restored covenant community.

34:23–24 — One Shepherd, My Servant David

Hebrew (v.23): וַהֲקִמֹתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רֹעֶה אֶחָד וְרָעָה אֶתְהֶן אֵת עַבְדִּי דָוִיד הוּא יִרְעֶה אֹתָם וְהוּא־יִהְיֶה לָהֶן לְרֹעֶה
wahăqimōṭî ʿălêhem rōʿeh ʾeḥāḏ wərāʿâ ʾeṯhen ʾēṯ ʿaḇdî ḏāwîḏ hûʾ yirʿeh ʾōṯām wəhûʾ-yihyeh lāhen lərōʿeh
"And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd."

This climactic messianic pronouncement introduces language that will recur with even greater specificity at 37:24–25. Greenberg addresses directly the interpretive question this raises given David's own long-past death: virtually all commentators consulted (Block, Cooper, Rooker, Wright) agree this refers not to a literal resurrection or reincarnation of the historical David but to

a future Davidic descendant, designated by the name of his royal ancestor per the common ancient Near Eastern and biblical convention of naming a dynastic successor after the dynasty's founder (comparable to referring to successive Egyptian rulers simply as "Pharaoh"). The title **"my servant"** (עַבְדִּי, *ʿaḇdî*) deliberately echoes the standard designation for David himself throughout the historical books (cf. 2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8) and reinforces continuity between this promised figure and the original Davidic covenant.

Verse 24 extends the promise: **"And I, Yahweh, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I, Yahweh, have spoken."** Wright notes the careful distinction of titles here: Yahweh remains explicitly "their God," while David is designated **nāśîʾ** (נָשִׂיא, "prince"), the same demoted royal title already established as Ezekiel's consistent preference throughout the book (cf. 12:10, 12; 21:25) rather than **meleḵ** ("king") — reinforcing that this promised Davidic figure, however exalted his function, remains subordinate to and derives his authority entirely from Yahweh's own ultimate kingship, never displacing or rivaling it.

34:25–31 — The Covenant of Peace

Hebrew (v.25): וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי חַיָּה־רָעָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ וְיָשְׁבוּ בַמִּדְבָּר לָבֶטַח וְיָשְׁנוּ בַּיְּעָרִים
wəḵāraṯtî lāhem bərîṯ šālôm wəhišbaṯṯî ḥayyâ-rāʿâ min-hāʾāreṣ wəyāšəḇû ḇammiḏbār lāḇeṭaḥ wəyāšənû baiyəʿārîm
"I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods."

This closing unit introduces the **"covenant of peace"** (בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם, *bərîṯ šālôm*) — a designation Rooker notes recurs at 37:26 and connects to the broader biblical covenant terminology found also in Numbers 25:12 and Isaiah 54:10. The specific content described — removal of dangerous wild beasts, secure dwelling even in wilderness and woods, showers of blessing in their season (v.26), abundant agricultural yield, security from famine and from being "plunder for the nations" (v.28), freedom from the reproach of nations (v.29) — presents a comprehensive picture of covenant blessing directly reversing the curses and afflictions chronicled throughout the judgment oracles.

Verse 30 delivers the culminating covenant formula: **"And they shall know that I, Yahweh their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord Yahweh." Verse 31** closes the chapter restating the shepherd-flock relationship one final time: **"And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord Yahweh."** Block notes the curious phrase "human sheep" (אָדָם אַתֶּן צֹאנִי, more literally "you, my sheep, are humankind," a construction commentators note as somewhat awkward in the Hebrew) likely emphasizes the flock's distinctly human, moral character in contrast to the metaphor's animal vehicle — these are not literal sheep but the moral, covenant-responsible human community the entire chapter's shepherding imagery has been describing throughout.

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The **indictment of the false shepherds and Yahweh's own direct shepherding intervention** (vv.1–16) finds its most direct and explicit New Testament fulfillment in Jesus's own self-identification as "the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14) — a passage widely recognized across the Christian exegetical tradition as directly drawing upon and consciously fulfilling this very Ezekiel oracle. Jesus's contrast between himself and "the hired hand" who "sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees" (John 10:12–13) directly parallels Ezekiel's contrast between Yahweh's own faithful shepherding and the false shepherds' self-interested abandonment of the flock. Remarkably, Jesus's self-identification as the good shepherd simultaneously fulfills both halves of Ezekiel's own two-stage promise — Yahweh's direct personal shepherding (vv.11–16) and the promised Davidic under-shepherd (vv.23–24) — since Christ is himself both fully God (fulfilling "I myself will shepherd") and the promised Davidic descendant (fulfilling "my servant David"), a union the doctrine of the incarnation uniquely and necessarily accounts for: only in the person of the God-man could both halves of this apparently dual promise find single, coherent fulfillment.

The **judgment between the fat and lean sheep within the flock itself** (vv.17–22) offers an important corrective against reading covenant restoration as indiscriminate corporate amnesty — even the restored, gathered flock remains subject to Yahweh's own discriminating justice regarding internal conduct, reinforcing the individual-accountability principle traced throughout this study since chapter 18 and cohering with the New Testament's own sober warnings regarding exploitation and injustice within the visible covenant community itself (Jas 2:1–7; 5:1–6), lest genuine gathering into Christ's flock be presumed to exempt believers from ongoing accountability for how they treat one another.

The **covenant of peace** (v.25), read within a Reformed and amillennial framework, anticipates its fuller development at 37:26 and finds its ultimate New Covenant referent not in a future, still-outstanding territorial and agricultural restoration specific to ethnic Israel's land, but in the peace secured by Christ's own atoning work — "he himself is our peace" (Eph 2:14) — and its full, comprehensive realization only in the new creation, where every element of this promised covenant of peace (freedom from predation, security, abundant blessing, the removal of every curse) finds its final and complete fulfillment (Rev 21:1–4; 22:1–5), the "one shepherd" of v.23 having by then fully and visibly gathered his one flock (John 10:16, "so there will be one flock, one shepherd") from among both believing Israel and the believing Gentile nations alike.

Ezekiel 35: The Oracle Against Mount Seir

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 35 delivers a further, more extended oracle against Edom (here addressed as "Mount Seir"), returning to and elaborating upon the brief judgment against Edom already pronounced at 25:12–14. Positioned immediately after the shepherd oracle's restoration promises (ch. 34) and immediately before the extended restoration oracle of the mountains of Israel (ch. 36), this chapter functions as a deliberate contrastive bridge — Edom's continued hostility and coming judgment set directly against Israel's own promised restoration. The chapter divides as follows:

- **35:1–4** — Yahweh's face set against Mount Seir
- **35:5–9** — The charge: perpetual enmity and bloodshed
- **35:10–13** — The charge: presumptuous claim to Israel's land
- **35:14–15** — Judgment: desolation matching Edom's own gloating over Israel's desolation

35:1–4 — Yahweh's Face Set Against Mount Seir

Hebrew (v.2): בֶּן־אָדָם שִׂים פָּנֶיךָ עַל־הַר שֵׂעִיר וְהִנָּבֵא עָלָיו
ben-ʾādām śîm pāneḵā ʿal-har śēʿîr wəhinnāḇēʾ ʿālāyw
"Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it."

Block (NICOT) notes the "set your face" formula recurs here precisely as established throughout the book's targeted national oracles (cf. 6:2; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2), confirming this as a fully formal, structurally consistent judgment oracle rather than a mere appendix. **Mount Seir** (הַר שֵׂעִיר, *har śēʿîr*) functions as a standard geographic designation for Edom's mountainous territory (cf. Gen 36:8–9), and Greenberg (AYB 22) notes the extended treatment Edom receives here, well beyond the brief four-verse oracle of 25:12–14, likely reflects the particular bitterness with which Edom's betrayal during and after Judah's fall was remembered — a betrayal the book of Obadiah addresses in its entirety and to which Psalm 137:7 also alludes ("remember, O Yahweh, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem").

Verses 3–4 pronounce the judgment's totality: Yahweh's hand stretched out against Seir, made "a desolation and a waste," cities laid waste, and the land itself made desolate — **"then you will know that I am Yahweh."**

35:5–9 — Perpetual Enmity and Bloodshed

Hebrew (v.5): יַעַן הֱיוֹת לְךָ אֵיבַת עוֹלָם וַתַּגֵּר אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יְדֵי־חֶרֶב בְּעֵת אֵידָם בְּעֵת עֲוֹן קֵץ
yaʿan həyôṭ ləḵā ʾêḇaṭ ʿôlām wattaggēr ʾeṯ-bənê-yiśrāʾēl ʾel-yəḏê-ḥereḇ bəʿēṭ ʾêḏām bəʿēṭ ʿăwōn qēṣ

"Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment..."

The charge of **"perpetual enmity"** (אֵיבַת עוֹלָם, *ʾêḇaṯ ʿôlām*) directly recalls the identical phrase already applied to the Philistines at 25:15, but here Rooker (HOTC) notes the specific historical grievance is spelled out with greater precision: Edom "gave over" (וַתַּגֵּר, *wattaggēr*, likely denoting active betrayal — handing over or exposing to danger) the Israelites "to the sword" precisely "at the time of their calamity... at the time of their final punishment" — language directly recalling the qēṣ ("end") terminology established with such intensity at 7:2–6 and 21:25, confirming Edom's guilt as specifically compounded by exploiting Judah's moment of covenant-judgment vulnerability rather than merely engaging in ordinary territorial rivalry at an unrelated time.

Verse 6 pronounces the corresponding judgment through a striking wordplay: **"As I live, declares the Lord Yahweh, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, blood shall pursue you."** Cooper (NAC) notes the deliberate repetition of "blood" (דָּם, *dām*) five times across this single verse, a rhetorical intensification establishing blood-guilt and blood-recompense as the judgment's exact, symmetrical governing principle — Edom, having failed to "hate bloodshed" (i.e., having been complicit in or indifferent toward Judah's bloodshed), will herself be "pursued" by the very bloodshed she failed to abhor.

Verses 7–9 extend the desolation: Mount Seir made "a waste and a desolation," those who pass through and return cut off, mountains filled with the slain, and — echoing the total-erasure formula already established throughout the nations-oracles — cities that "shall not be inhabited" (v.9), with the recognition formula following: "and you shall know that I am Yahweh."

35:10–13 — Presumptuous Claim to Israel's Land

Hebrew (v.10): יַעַן אֲמָרְךָ אֶת־שְׁנֵי הַגּוֹיִם וְאֶת־שְׁתֵּי הָאֲרָצוֹת לִי תִּהְיֶינָה וִירַשְׁנוּהָ וַיהוָה שָׁם הָיָה
yaʿan ʾămārəḵā ʾeṯ-šənê haggôyim wəʾeṯ-šəṯê hāʾărāṣôṯ lî ṯihyênâ wîrašnûhā wa-YHWH šām hāyâ
"Because you said, 'These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them,' although Yahweh was there..."

This unit introduces a second, distinct charge: Edom's presumptuous territorial claim upon "these two nations and these two countries" — Wright (BST) identifies this most plausibly as referring to the combined territories of the former northern and southern kingdoms (Israel and Judah), both now lying desolate and, in Edom's calculation, available for opportunistic annexation. The devastating qualifying clause — **"although Yahweh was there"** (וַיהוָה שָׁם הָיָה, *wa-YHWH šām hāyâ*) — Block notes functions as the charge's decisive theological rebuttal: Edom's territorial ambition presumes the land's vacancy and availability while entirely disregarding Yahweh's own continuing proprietary claim and presence, land judgment and desolation notwithstanding.

Verse 12 adds a further specific charge — Edom's verbal contempt: **"you have said, 'These two nations and these two lands are mine, and we will possess them,' although Yahweh was there... you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are laid waste; they are given us to devour.'"** Greenberg notes the deliberate echo of the "mountains of Israel" address already established as a controlling geographic-theological rubric since chapter 6 — Edom's contemptuous claim upon this specifically covenant-freighted territory intensifies the offense beyond ordinary territorial ambition into a direct affront against Yahweh's own particular, ongoing relationship to this land.

Verse 13 delivers Yahweh's response to this arrogant speech: **"And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it."** Rooker notes the emphatic divine attentiveness asserted here — "I heard it" — directly countering, as throughout the book, any practical assumption (cf. 8:12; 9:9) that Yahweh's judgment renders him inattentive to ongoing offense, whether from covenant Israel or from opportunistic surrounding nations.

35:14–15 — Judgment Matching the Gloating

Hebrew (v.15): כְּשִׂמְחָתְךָ לְנַחֲלַת בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמֵמָה כֵּן אֶעֱשֶׂה־לָּךְ שְׁמָמָה תִהְיֶה הַר־שֵׂעִיר וְכָל־אֱדוֹם כֻּלָּה וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

kəśimḥāṯəḵā lənaḥălaṯ bêṯ-yiśrāʾēl ʿal ʾăšer-šāmēmâ kēn ʾeʿĕśeh-lāḵ šəmāmâ ṭihyeh har-śēʿîr wəḵāl-ʾĕḏôm kullāh wəyāḏəʿû kî-ʾănî YHWH

"As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it."

The chapter's closing verdict applies precisely the talionic (measure-for-measure) principle already established as characteristic of Ezekiel's judgment theology throughout the book: Edom's rejoicing over Israel's desolation will be answered with Edom's own, identical desolation. Cooper notes the deliberate, exact symmetry — "as you rejoiced... so I will deal with you" — leaves no room for Edom to regard her judgment as disproportionate or arbitrary; it is calibrated with precision to match the specific character and degree of her own offense. **Verse 14** frames this as occurring "when the whole earth rejoices," suggesting the broader nations will recognize the justice of this particular reversal even as they, per the pattern established throughout chapters 25–32, ultimately face their own comparable reckonings.

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The **charge of exploiting Israel's covenant judgment "at the time of their calamity"** (v.5) rather than merely harboring ordinary territorial rivalry establishes a distinct and aggravated category of national sin: opportunistic betrayal of kinship or covenant-adjacent bonds precisely when the afflicted party is most vulnerable. This coheres with the book of Obadiah's own extended, focused treatment of this same historical betrayal (Obad 10–14, explicitly citing Edom's violence "against your brother Jacob" and complicity "in the day of his misfortune") and

offers a sobering ethical principle with continuing application: exploiting another's genuine vulnerability or deserved hardship for personal advantage constitutes a distinct and graver moral failure than ordinary competitive rivalry, subject to correspondingly intensified divine scrutiny and judgment.

The **rebuttal "although Yahweh was there"** (v.10) — asserting Yahweh's continuing proprietary claim over the desolated land of Israel even amid its judgment-emptied condition — offers an important theological principle regarding the durability of covenant land promises even through periods of judgment and apparent divine absence: Yahweh's own ongoing relationship to and claim upon covenant territory is not nullified by temporary judgment, however severe, a principle Wright connects typologically to the New Covenant's own confidence that Christ's church, however afflicted or apparently diminished at any historical moment, remains permanently and inalienably his own possession (1 Pet 2:9–10; Eph 1:14, "God's own possession"), never legitimately subject to opportunistic claim or appropriation by rival powers regardless of the church's temporary weakness or apparent vulnerability.

The **precise talionic symmetry of Edom's judgment** (v.15) — matched exactly to the character of her own gloating offense — reinforces the consistent principle traced throughout the nations-oracles (Ammon's gloating met with corresponding humiliation at 25:1–7; Tyre's commercial exploitation met with commercial ruin at chs. 26–27) that divine justice characteristically calibrates judgment with precise proportionality to the specific character of the offense committed, a principle of judicial precision that coheres with the broader biblical *lex talionis* tradition (Exod 21:23–25; Lev 24:19–20) and finds its ultimate New Testament expression in the principle that "with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged" (Matt 7:2) — a sobering reminder that the specific manner and character of one's own conduct toward others, not merely its bare existence, factors directly into the shape of eventual divine reckoning.

Ezekiel 36: Restoration of the Mountains of Israel and the New Heart

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 36 delivers the book's fullest and most theologically developed restoration oracle, directly reversing the judgment against "the mountains of Israel" first pronounced in chapter 6 and culminating in the definitive new-heart, new-spirit promise anticipated since 11:19. This chapter stands as one of the most significant in the entire book for its explicit development of New Covenant theology. The chapter divides as follows:

- **36:1–7** — The mountains of Israel addressed; the nations' contempt reversed
- **36:8–15** — Renewed fruitfulness and population
- **36:16–21** — Retrospective: why the exile occurred
- **36:22–32** — The new heart and new spirit, for Yahweh's name's sake
- **36:33–38** — Rebuilt cities and restored fertility

36:1–7 — The Mountains of Israel Addressed

Hebrew (v.1): וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם הִנָּבֵא אֶל־הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמְעוּ דְּבַר־יְהוָה
wəʾattâ ben-ʾāḏām hinnāḇēʾ ʾel-hārê yiśrāʾēl wəʾāmartā hārê yiśrāʾēl šimʿû dəḇar-YHWH
"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of Yahweh."

Block (NICOT) notes the deliberate return to the identical address established at 6:2 ("set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them") — but where that earlier oracle pronounced judgment, this chapter pronounces the land's own vindication and restoration, forming one of the book's clearest and most complete inversions. Greenberg (AYB 22) notes the immediate occasion: the surrounding nations, particularly Edom (just addressed at length in ch. 35) but representing the wider Gentile world, have said of Israel's mountains, **"Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession"** (v.2) — the identical presumptuous territorial claim just condemned in chapter 35, now addressed more broadly.

Verses 3–5 catalog the land's humiliation — "you have been surrounded and possessed by the rest of the nations, and you have become the talk and evil gossip of the people" — before Yahweh's jealous response: **"surely I have spoken in my jealousy and my wrath, because you have suffered the reproach of the nations"** (v.6b). Rooker (HOTC) notes the striking personification throughout this unit: the land itself, not merely its people, becomes the object of Yahweh's covenant jealousy and eventual vindication, continuing the pattern already

established at 6:2–3 of the land functioning as covenant witness and, now, covenant beneficiary.

Verse 7 pronounces the reversal directly: **"the nations that are around you shall themselves suffer reproach."** Cooper (NAC) notes this establishes the same talionic principle just applied to Edom specifically (35:15) now extended to "the nations" generally regarding their contempt toward Israel's land.

36:8–15 — Renewed Fruitfulness

Hebrew (v.8): וְאַתֶּם הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲנָפְכֶם תִּתֵּנוּ וּפִרְיְכֶם תִּשְׂאוּ לְעַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי קֵרֵבוּ לָבוֹא
wəʾattem hārê yiśrāʾēl ʿanpəḵem titṯēnû ûp̄iryəḵem tiśʾû ləʿammî yiśrāʾēl kî qērəḇû lāḇôʾ
"But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home."

Wright (BST) notes the shift from judgment to blessing is immediate and comprehensive: the mountains themselves will "shoot forth branches" and bear fruit "for my people Israel" — an agricultural fruitfulness directly reversing the desolation pronounced throughout the earlier judgment oracles. The phrase **"for they will soon come home"** (כִּי קֵרֵבוּ לָבוֹא, *kî qērəḇû lāḇôʾ*) signals imminent restoration, not merely distant eschatological hope.

Verses 9–11 promise the land will be "tilled and sown," population multiplied "the whole house of Israel, all of it," cities rebuilt and ruins inhabited, and — significantly — **"I will multiply on you man and beast... and I will do more good to you than ever before"** (v.11). Block notes this final comparative clause ("more good... than ever before") establishes the restoration as not merely a return to a prior status quo but an exceeding of it, consistent with the pattern of eschatological surplus that will characterize the book's subsequent restoration material.

Verses 13–15 address a specific reproach the land itself had suffered: the accusation that the land "devours men" and "bereaves your nation of children" — likely referring to the deadly effects of famine, wild beasts, and warfare already chronicled throughout the judgment oracles (cf. ch. 14's four sore judgments). Yahweh promises this reproach will cease entirely: **"you shall no longer devour men and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord Yahweh"** (v.14).

36:16–21 — Retrospective: Why the Exile Occurred

Hebrew (v.17): בֶּן־אָדָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבִים עַל־אַדְמָתָם וַיְטַמְּאוּ אוֹתָהּ בְּדַרְכָּם וּבַעֲלִילוֹתָם כְּטֻמְאַת הַנִּדָּה הָיְתָה דַרְכָּם לְפָנָי
ben-ʾāḏām bêṯ yiśrāʾēl yōšəḇîm ʿal-ʾaḏmāṯām wayəṭammĕʾû ʾôṯāh bəḏarkām ûḇaʿălîlôṯām kəṭumʾaṭ hannidâ hāyəṯâ ḏarkām ləp̄ānāy
"Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their conduct before me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity."

This retrospective unit summarizes, in compressed form, the entire book's preceding judgment argument. Greenberg notes the striking simile — Israel's covenant-defiling conduct compared to **niddâ** (נִדָּה), menstrual ritual impurity — directly recalling the identical term already applied metaphorically to defiled wealth at 7:19 and reinforcing the consistent priestly-cultic categories through which Ezekiel, as priest himself, diagnoses covenant infidelity throughout the book.

Verse 18 identifies the specific grounds: bloodshed and idolatry ("for the blood that they had shed in the land, and for the idols with which they had defiled it"). **Verse 19** confirms the historical result: scattering "among the nations" and dispersion "through the countries," judged "according to their conduct and according to their deeds." **Verse 20** introduces a crucial theological complication: **"But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, 'These are the people of Yahweh, and yet they had to go out of his land.'"** Rooker notes the profound problem this verse identifies: Israel's very exile, intended as just covenant judgment, paradoxically generated a further reputational problem for Yahweh's own name among the watching nations — the exile appeared to those nations as evidence of Yahweh's own weakness or unfaithfulness to his own people, rather than as evidence of his justice.

Verse 21 delivers the pivotal statement: **"But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came."** Wright identifies this verse as the direct hinge into the chapter's climactic restoration announcement — Yahweh's coming action proceeds not from Israel's own repentance (which, as the following verses make clear, has not yet occurred) but from his own concern for his name's reputation, directly continuing the "for my name's sake" theme already established at length throughout chapter 20.

36:22–32 — The New Heart and New Spirit

Hebrew (v.22): לָכֵן אֱמֹר לְבֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה לֹא לְמַעַנְכֶם אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי לְשֵׁם־קָדְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חִלַּלְתֶּם בַּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאתֶם שָׁם
lāḵēn ʾĕmōr ləḇêṯ-yiśrāʾēl kōh ʾāmar ʾăḏōnāy YHWH lōʾ ləmaʿănəḵem ʾănî ʿōśeh bêṯ yiśrāʾēl kî ləšēm-qāḏšî ʾăšer ḥillalṭem baggôyim ʾăšer-bāʾṯem šām
"Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: It is not for your sake that I am about to act, O house of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came."

This unit opens with maximum theological clarity regarding the restoration's ultimate ground: emphatically **not** Israel's own merit ("not for your sake") but Yahweh's own name. Cooper notes the deliberate, almost blunt repetition of this point — the restoration about to be announced proceeds from grace in its purest, most unmixed form, with Israel's own conduct explicitly excluded as any part of the causal basis.

Verse 23 promises Yahweh will "vindicate the holiness of my great name" through this restoration, "and the nations will know that I am Yahweh, when I vindicate my holiness in you before their eyes." **Verse 24** restates the physical regathering already promised throughout the

preceding chapters: "I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land."

Verse 25 introduces a purifying cleansing: **"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you."** Block notes the deliberate cultic, ritual-purification register of this language (sprinkling, cleansing) — directly recalling Levitical purification rites (cf. Num 19:17–19's use of water for cleansing from corpse-contamination) — now applied metaphorically to comprehensive moral and spiritual cleansing from covenant defilement.

Verses 26–27 deliver the chapter's climactic, most theologically decisive statement, restating and intensifying the promise first introduced at 11:19: **"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them."** Greenberg and Rooker both note the crucial addition here beyond 11:19's earlier, more compressed version: the explicit promise of Yahweh's own **Spirit** (רוּחִי, *rûḥî*) placed "within you" — a pneumatological specification not made explicit at 11:19 — and the direct causal statement that this indwelling Spirit will itself **"cause you to walk"** in obedience, establishing beyond any ambiguity that the obedience commanded throughout the Old Covenant (and still commanded at 18:31, "make yourselves a new heart") is, under this New Covenant promise, actually *secured* by Yahweh's own internal, empowering presence rather than left to the sinner's own unaided moral effort.

Verse 28 restates the covenant formula: "you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God." **Verses 29–30** promise deliverance from uncleanness and from famine, with abundant grain, fruit, and produce, "that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations."

Verse 31 introduces the crucial, seemingly paradoxical response this restoration will produce: **"Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations."** Wright notes this directly parallels the self-loathing repentance pattern already established at 6:9 and 16:61–63 — but here, crucially, this genuine repentance and self-loathing occurs *after* and *as a result of* the new-heart transformation, not as its precondition. **Verse 32** reiterates with emphatic clarity the chapter's controlling principle one final time: **"It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord Yahweh; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel."**

36:33–38 — Rebuilt Cities and Restored Fertility

Hebrew (v.35): וְאָמְרוּ הָאָרֶץ הַנְּשַׁמָּה הָיְתָה כְּגַן־עֵדֶן וְהֶעָרִים הֶחֳרֵבוֹת וְהַנְּשַׁמּוֹת וְהַנֶּהֱרָסוֹת בְּצוּרוֹת יָשָׁבוּ׃
wəʾāmərû hāʾāreṣ hallēzû hannəšammâ hāyəṯâ kəḡan-ʿēḏen wəheʿārîm heḥŏrēḇôṯ wəhannəšammôṯ wəhannehĕrāsôṯ bəṣûrôṯ yāšāḇû

"And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now inhabited and fortified.'"

This closing unit describes the astonished response of surrounding observers to the land's transformation, explicitly employing **Eden** imagery — Cooper notes this deliberate comparison directly reverses the Eden-imagery previously applied, in each case describing a subsequently forfeited splendor, to the king of Tyre (28:13) and to Assyria (31:8–9, 16, 18); here, remarkably, Israel's own restored land itself becomes the positive referent of Edenic comparison, rather than a merely worldly power whose Eden-like glory proved forfeitable through pride.

Verse 36 promises the surrounding nations "shall know that I, Yahweh, rebuild the ruined places and replant that which was desolate," concluding again with "I am Yahweh; I have spoken, and I will do it." **Verses 37–38** close the chapter with a final promise of population increase, described through pastoral imagery: Israel "like a flock" filled with people "as the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Jerusalem at her appointed feasts" — Rooker notes this closing pastoral-liturgical image anticipates the following chapter's own further development of restoration themes, while the chapter's very last clause restates the recognition formula one final time: "and they will know that I am Yahweh."

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The chapter's **explicit, repeated grounding of restoration entirely in Yahweh's own name rather than Israel's merit** (vv.22, 32) stands as one of Scripture's clearest Old Testament articulations of the doctrine of grace in its purest, most theocentric form — salvation proceeding "not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy" (Titus 3:5), and finding its ultimate purpose in the vindication of God's own glory and holiness rather than human benefit considered in isolation (though, as throughout Scripture, the two prove never finally opposed). This passage furnishes perhaps the single most theologically loaded Old Testament text underwriting the Reformed doctrine of monergistic, unconditional grace as the sole ground of covenant restoration.

The **new heart and new spirit promise, now explicitly identified with the indwelling Spirit who "causes" obedience** (vv.26–27), constitutes this study's fullest and most theologically decisive statement yet of the New Covenant's essential character, and stands as the direct Old Testament background for the New Testament's own doctrine of regeneration and Spirit-indwelling. Paul's declaration that believers are "not under law but under grace" (Rom 6:14), and that the Spirit himself now "helps us in our weakness" and produces the very obedience the law could only demand but never secure (Rom 8:1–4, 26), directly fulfills this Ezekielian promise. Within 1689 Federalist covenant theology, this passage is foundational: it establishes that the New Covenant is not merely a renewed or intensified version of the Old Covenant administration but a categorically different arrangement, secured entirely by the Spirit's efficacious internal work rather than by external command addressed to an unregenerate populace — grounding the credobaptist insistence that New Covenant membership properly belongs only to those who have actually received this Spirit-wrought transformation, since the

New Covenant's own defining promise is unbreakable, Spirit-secured obedience rather than a merely external, potentially-violated covenant sign extended to all physical descendants regardless of internal spiritual condition.

The **land's own transformation into an Eden-like state** (v.35), following immediately upon chapters that repeatedly employed Eden-imagery to describe subsequently forfeited pagan glory (Tyre, Assyria), establishes a deliberate literary and theological contrast: unlike every merely worldly Eden-comparison catalogued throughout the nations-oracles, Israel's restored land-Eden proves permanent precisely because it proceeds from the same unconditional, Spirit-secured grace just established in vv.26–27 rather than from any human achievement subject to the pride that toppled every preceding Edenic comparison. Within an amillennial framework, this restored-land imagery finds its fullest and final referent not in a future, geographically-restricted return to political Israel's ancient territorial boundaries, but in the new creation itself (Rev 21–22), where the entire redeemed cosmos becomes the true and final Eden — the "garden of Eden" language of this chapter functioning as genuine but typologically-surpassed anticipation of that ultimate, undoing-of-the-curse restoration accomplished fully and finally in Christ.

Ezekiel 37: The Valley of Dry Bones and the Reunited Sticks

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 37 delivers two of the book's most vivid and theologically significant sign-visions: the resurrection of the dry bones, dramatizing Israel's restoration from apparent total death, and the joining of two sticks, symbolizing the reunification of the divided northern and southern kingdoms under the promised Davidic shepherd. This chapter brings to climactic resolution several major threads traced throughout this study — the new spirit promised since 11:19 and developed fully in chapter 36, and the Davidic shepherd-king introduced in chapter 34. The chapter divides as follows:

- **37:1–10** — The valley of dry bones: vision and enactment
- **37:11–14** — Interpretation: the whole house of Israel
- **37:15–23** — The two sticks: reunification of Israel and Judah
- **37:24–28** — One shepherd, one nation, one everlasting covenant

37:1–10 — The Valley of Dry Bones

Hebrew (v.1): הָיְתָה עָלַי יַד־יְהוָה וַיּוֹצִאֵנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה וַיְנִיחֵנִי בְּתוֹךְ הַבִּקְעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה עֲצָמוֹת
hāyəṯâ ʿālay yaḏ-YHWH wayyôṣîʾēnî ḇərûaḥ YHWH wayəniḥēnî bəṯôḵ habbiqʿâ wəhîʾ məlēʾâ ʿăṣāmôṭ
"The hand of Yahweh was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of Yahweh and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones."

Block (NICOT) notes this vision's transport formula deliberately echoes the identical "hand of Yahweh" and Spirit-transport language established throughout the temple-vision unit (8:3; 11:1, 24), confirming this as a genuine, Spirit-mediated visionary experience rather than literal physical relocation. Greenberg (AYB 22) notes the valley's bones are explicitly described as **"very dry"** (v.2, יְבֵשׁוֹת מְאֹד, *yəḇēšôṯ məʾōḏ*) — a detail Rooker (HOTC) stresses signals not recent death but ancient, thoroughly decomposed remains, ruling out any possibility of merely resuscitating recently-deceased bodies; the condition described is one of total, long-standing, and apparently irreversible death.

Verse 3 poses Yahweh's own rhetorical question: **"Son of man, can these bones live?"** Ezekiel's careful, non-presumptuous response — **"O Lord Yahweh, you know"** — Cooper (NAC) notes reflects appropriate creaturely humility before a question whose answer exceeds ordinary human categories of possibility, deferring entirely to Yahweh's own sovereign

knowledge and capacity rather than venturing either presumptuous confidence or skeptical denial.

Verses 4–6 command Ezekiel to prophesy directly to the bones: **"O dry bones, hear the word of Yahweh... Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am Yahweh."** Wright (BST) notes the deliberate progression this promises: sinews, then flesh, then skin, then breath — a reconstruction sequence that reverses, in exact order, the process of bodily decomposition, restoring the body from its most basic structural elements outward to its final, life-giving animation.

Verses 7–8 narrate the vision's first stage of fulfillment: as Ezekiel prophesies, "there was a noise, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone," followed by sinews, flesh, and skin covering them — **"but there was no breath in them."** Block notes this crucial detail: the bodies are fully reconstructed physically yet remain lifeless, establishing a deliberate two-stage structure to the entire vision that will prove theologically significant.

Verse 9 commands a second prophetic act: **"Prophesy to the breath, and say to it, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."** Greenberg notes the Hebrew term **rûaḥ** (רוּחַ) operative throughout this passage carries the same rich semantic range already established throughout the book — "breath," "wind," and "spirit" — with the vision's cumulative effect deliberately exploiting this polysemy: what begins as ordinary physical "breath" restoring biological animation becomes, by the unit's interpretive close (vv.11–14), Yahweh's own life-giving Spirit accomplishing Israel's national and spiritual restoration.

Verse 10 narrates the vision's climactic fulfillment: **"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army."** Rooker notes the specific military designation — "an exceedingly great army" (חַיִל גָּדוֹל מְאֹד מְאֹד, *ḥayil gāḏôl məʾōḏ məʾōḏ*, doubled intensifiers for maximum emphasis) — anticipates the restored community's coming security and strength, directly reversing the military catastrophe and scattering chronicled throughout the judgment oracles.

37:11–14 — Interpretation: The Whole House of Israel

Hebrew (v.11): בֶּן־אָדָם הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵמָּה הִנֵּה אֹמְרִים יָבְשׁוּ עַצְמוֹתֵינוּ וְאָבְדָה תִקְוָתֵנוּ נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ׃
ben-ʾāḏām hāʿăṣāmôṯ hāʾēlleh kāl-bêṯ yiśrāʾēl hēmmâ hinnēh ʾōmərîm yāḇəšû ʿaṣmôṯênû wəʾāḇəḏâ ṭiqwāṯēnû niḡzarnû lānû
"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.'"

The interpretation confirms the vision's national referent directly: the dry bones represent "the whole house of Israel" (כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, *kāl-bêṯ yiśrāʾēl*) in her present condition of exile-induced despair, quoting the exile community's own despairing self-assessment — bones dried up, hope lost, cut off. Cooper notes this quoted lament directly reflects the depth of despair such a comprehensively judged and scattered people might reasonably feel — not merely difficulty but the conviction of total, irreversible finality, precisely the condition the bones' extreme dryness (v.2) was designed to dramatize.

Verses 12–13 deliver the promise of national resurrection in explicit terms: **"Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel... and you shall know that I am Yahweh, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people."** Block notes the deliberate shift from the vision's own bones-in-a-valley imagery to explicit **grave**-opening language here — the interpretation moves the metaphor further toward genuine resurrection imagery, whatever its primary, controlling referent (national restoration from exile) remains.

Verse 14 delivers the climactic pneumatological promise: **"And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, Yahweh, have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord Yahweh."** Wright notes this directly restates, in the vision's own idiom, the identical Spirit-indwelling promise just established at 36:27 — confirming the dry bones vision functions as a vivid, dramatized enactment of the very new-heart, new-spirit transformation chapter 36 had already promised in more discursive form.

37:15–23 — The Two Sticks

Hebrew (v.16): וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם קַח־לְךָ עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתֹב עָלָיו לִיהוּדָה וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרוֹ וּלְקַח עֵץ אֶחָד וּכְתוֹב עָלָיו לְיוֹסֵף עֵץ אֶפְרַיִם וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲבֵרוֹ׃

wəʾattâ ben-ʾāḏām qaḥ-ləḵā ʿēṣ ʾeḥāḏ ûḵəṯōḇ ʿālāyw lîhûḏâ wəliḇnê yiśrāʾēl ḥăḇērô ûləqaḥ ʿēṣ ʾeḥāḏ ûḵəṯôḇ ʿālāyw ləyôsēp ʿēṣ ʾēprayim wəḵāl-bêṯ yiśrāʾēl ḥăḇērô

"And you, son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim), and all the house of Israel associated with him.'"

This second sign-act addresses directly the historical division between the northern kingdom (represented by "Joseph"/"Ephraim," its dominant tribe) and the southern kingdom (Judah), divided since the aftermath of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 12) and never reunited even after the northern kingdom's own earlier fall to Assyria in 722 BC. Greenberg notes the sticks likely represent shepherd's staffs or scepters, cohering with the shepherd-king imagery already established throughout chapter 34, rather than mere writing tablets.

Verse 17 commands: "join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand." **Verses 18–19** anticipate the people's question regarding this sign's meaning and

supply the direct interpretation: **"Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph... and join it with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand."** Rooker notes this promise directly addresses a division that had persisted, by this point, for well over three and a half centuries — a permanent-seeming political and tribal fracture the restoration promise now directly reverses.

Verses 21–22 extend the promise: gathering "from among the nations," bringing "into their own land," making them "one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel," with "one king" over them all, "no longer two nations, no longer divided into two kingdoms." Cooper notes this decisively resolves the political fragmentation that had characterized Israel's national existence since the united monarchy's collapse, restoring not merely territorial repossession but genuine political and tribal unity.

Verse 23 adds a crucial moral dimension to this political reunification: **"They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God."** Wright notes the deliberate integration of political reunification with moral and spiritual cleansing — this restored unity is not merely administrative but constitutes a genuinely transformed, purified covenant community.

37:24–28 — One Shepherd, One Covenant

Hebrew (v.24): וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיהֶם וְרוֹעֶה אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לְכֻלָּם וּבְמִשְׁפָּטַי יֵלֵכוּ וְחֻקּוֹתַי יִשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשׂוּ אוֹתָם
wəʿaḇdî ḏāwiḏ meleḵ ʿălêhem wərôʿeh ʾeḥāḏ yihyeh ləḵullām ûḇəmišpāṭay yēlēḵû wəḥuqqôṭay yišmərû wəʿāśû ʾôṭām
"My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes."

This unit restates and intensifies the Davidic shepherd promise already introduced at 34:23–24, now with the significant addition of the title **meleḵ** ("king") applied to this figure, alongside the "one shepherd" designation — Block notes this represents a slight but meaningful escalation from the more consistently demoted "prince" (nāśîʾ) terminology used elsewhere in the book, though v.25 immediately following reverts to "prince" language ("David my servant shall be their prince forever"), suggesting the terms function here as roughly interchangeable rather than marking any substantive theological distinction in this particular passage.

Verse 25 promises perpetual dwelling "in the land that I gave to Jacob my servant," continuing "forever," with "David my servant" as "their prince forever." **Verse 26** introduces the climactic covenant announcement: **"I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore."** Greenberg notes the "covenant of peace" here directly recalls the identical designation already established at 34:25, while the promise of

an **"everlasting covenant"** (בְּרִית עוֹלָם, *bərîṯ ʿôlām*) recalls the same term already introduced at 16:60, now applied in its fullest, most permanent form.

Verse 27 delivers the climactic sanctuary and covenant-formula promise: **"My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."** Rooker notes the term for "dwelling place" here (מִשְׁכָּנִי, *miškānî*) directly echoes tabernacle terminology (cf. Exod 25:9, מִשְׁכָּן, *miškān*), confirming this promise's continuity with the whole book's controlling concern regarding Yahweh's dwelling-presence, first witnessed departing the defiled temple in chapters 8–11 and now promised permanent, unforfeitable return.

Verse 28 closes the chapter with the recognition formula extended, in its final form, to the nations themselves: **"Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."**

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The **valley of dry bones vision**, while primarily and controllingly concerned with Israel's national restoration from exile (as the interpretation of vv.11–14 makes explicit), employs resurrection imagery of such vividness and theological weight that it has rightly been read throughout Christian history as also anticipating, typologically, the doctrine of bodily resurrection more fully revealed in the New Testament (Dan 12:2; John 5:28–29; 1 Cor 15:20–58) — the same God who can reconstitute and reanimate long-dead, thoroughly decomposed bones through his life-giving Spirit is the God who will, at the final resurrection, raise all the dead bodily. Within a Reformed and amillennial framework, this passage's primary sense (national, historical restoration from exile) and its secondary, typologically-informed resonance with final bodily resurrection are not competing but complementary — the historical restoration of Israel from the death of exile serves as a genuine, historically-anchored down payment and type anticipating the fuller, final resurrection every believer in Christ awaits, the same Spirit who breathed life into these bones being the Spirit who "gives life to your mortal bodies" (Rom 8:11).

The **reunification of Judah and Ephraim/Israel under one shepherd** (vv.15–23), resolving a division dating back over three centuries to the kingdom's split under Rehoboam, offers a striking Old Testament type of the New Covenant's own unification of previously divided peoples — most directly, per Paul's own extended argument in Ephesians 2:11–22, the unification of Jew and Gentile "into one new man" (Eph 2:15) through Christ, who "has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14). Within an amillennial reading, this reunification promise finds its fulfillment not in a future, still-outstanding restoration of literal, genealogically-traceable northern and southern tribal Israel to renewed political union, but in the New Covenant church itself, comprising believing Jews and Gentiles alike, gathered under the one true Shepherd-King, Christ — the "one flock, one shepherd" of John 10:16 constituting the ultimate, already-inaugurated fulfillment of this ancient tribal division's promised healing.

The climactic promise of **Yahweh's permanent, unforfeitable dwelling "in their midst forevermore"** (v.27–28) — employing tabernacle terminology and explicitly designated an

"everlasting covenant" — brings to full resolution the tragic departure-of-the-glory narrative first witnessed in chapters 8–11, now definitively reversed and secured on a permanently unforfeitable, New Covenant basis. This finds its most direct fulfillment in the incarnation itself — the Word who "became flesh and dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν, echoing the same tabernacle root) among us" (John 1:14) — and its ultimate consummation in the new creation, where "the dwelling place of God is with man" finally and forever (Rev 21:3, deliberately echoing this exact Ezekielian promise), securing what the Old Covenant temple, forfeitable through covenant infidelity as chapters 8–11 so tragically demonstrated, could never permanently guarantee.

Ezekiel 38: The Oracle Against Gog

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 38 opens the extended two-chapter Gog oracle (chs. 38–39), one of the most interpretively contested passages in the entire book, describing a climactic assault against restored Israel by a coalition led by "Gog of the land of Magog" and its decisive divine defeat. This chapter divides as follows:

- **38:1–6** — Gog and his allied coalition identified
- **38:7–9** — The summons to invasion
- **38:10–13** — Gog's predatory intent and the plunder-seeking motive
- **38:14–16** — The invasion's timing and divine purpose
- **38:17–23** — Yahweh's response: earthquake, plague, and self-vindication

38:1–6 — Gog and the Allied Coalition

Hebrew (v.2): בֶּן־אָדָם שִׂים פָּנֶיךָ אֶל־גּוֹג נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ מֶשֶׁךְ וְתֻבָל וְהִנָּבֵא עָלָיו
ben-ʾāḏām śîm pāneḵā ʾel-gôḡ ʾereṣ hammāḡôḡ nəśîʾ rōʾš mešeḵ wəṭuḇāl wəhinnāḇēʾ ʿālāyw
"Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him."

Block (NICOT) notes the identification of **Gog** and **Magog** presents substantial interpretive difficulty, with the phrase נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ (*nəśîʾ rōʾš*) rendered variously as "chief prince" or, following an alternative vocalization tradition reflected in some translations, "prince of Rosh" (understanding רֹאשׁ as a proper geographic name rather than the adjective "chief"). Greenberg (AYB 22) surveys the range of proposed historical identifications for Magog, Meshech, and Tubal — regions generally associated with Anatolia and the area north and east of the Black Sea in various ancient geographical traditions (cf. Gen 10:2's Table of Nations, where Magog, Meshech, and Tubal appear among Japheth's descendants) — while cautioning that precise, confident modern geopolitical identification (a persistent feature of popular prophecy literature associating Gog/Magog with specific modern nations) exceeds what the text's own deliberately schematic, symbolically-freighted geography can responsibly support.

Verses 3–4 describe Yahweh's own initiative in bringing this coalition against Israel: **"I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords."** Rooker (HOTC) notes the deliberate echo of the crocodile-hooking imagery already applied to Pharaoh at 29:4 — Gog, like Pharaoh, is entirely subject to Yahweh's own sovereign manipulation, "turned about" and "hooked" despite his own apparent agency and military initiative.

Verses 5–6 extend the coalition further: Persia, Cush, and Put (the same triad already encountered as Tyrian mercenaries at 27:10), Gomer and Beth-togarmah "from the uttermost parts of the north," and "many peoples" with them. Cooper (NAC) notes this comprehensive, multi-directional coalition-catalog — echoing the similarly extensive geographic catalogs already established in the Tyre trade-list (ch. 27) — establishes Gog's assault as representing the massed, comprehensive hostility of "many peoples," not merely a single regional threat.

38:7–9 — The Summons

Hebrew (v.7): הִכֹּן וְהָכֵן לְךָ אַתָּה וְכָל־קְהָלֶךָ הַנִּקְהָלִים עָלֶיךָ וְהָיִיתָ לָהֶם לְמִשְׁמָר
hikkōn wəhāḵēn ləḵā ʾattâ wəḵāl-qəhāleḵā hanniqhālîm ʿāleḵā wəhāyîṯā lāhem ləmišmār
"Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them."

Verse 8 specifies the timing: **"after many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples."** Wright (BST) notes the explicit temporal marker — "in the latter years" (בְּאַחֲרִית הַשָּׁנִים, *bəʾaḥărîṯ haššānîm*) — situates this invasion specifically after Israel's own restoration (already promised at length in chs. 36–37) rather than during or before it, establishing this as a distinct, subsequent threat against an already-regathered, secure community.

Verse 9 describes the invasion's scale in storm-cloud imagery: "you will come up, going against my people Israel like a cloud covering the land." Block notes this cloud-imagery, applied here to a hostile invading force, deliberately contrasts with the earlier, positive glory-cloud imagery established throughout the temple-vision unit — a hostile darkness set against Yahweh's own prior, glory-filled cloud presence.

38:10–13 — Predatory Intent and Plunder

Hebrew (v.11): וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶעֱלֶה עַל־אֶרֶץ פְּרָזוֹת אָבוֹא הַשֹּׁקְטִים יֹשְׁבֵי לָבֶטַח כֻּלָּם יֹשְׁבִים בְּאֵין חוֹמָה וּבְרִיחַ וּדְלָתַיִם אֵין לָהֶם
wəʾāmartā ʾeʿĕleh ʿal-ʾereṣ pərāzôṯ ʾāḇôʾ haššōqṭîm yōšəḇê lāḇeṭaḥ kullām yōšəḇîm bəʾên ḥômâ ûḇərîaḥ ûḏəlāṯayim ʾên lāhem
"You will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates.'"

Gog's own quoted internal motivation — exploiting Israel's peaceful, unwalled, secure condition (the very security promised throughout chs. 34, 36–37) for plunder — Greenberg notes reveals the invasion's essentially predatory, opportunistic character rather than any legitimate grievance or provocation on Israel's part. **Verse 12** specifies the plunder-motive directly: "to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations." **Verse 13** notes even Sheba, Dedan, and the merchants

of Tarshish question Gog's intent — "have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?" — Rooker notes even these commercially-oriented observer nations recognize and articulate the transparently mercenary character of Gog's aggression.

38:14–16 — Timing and Divine Purpose

Hebrew (v.16b): לְמַעַן דַּעַת הַגּוֹיִם אֹתִי בְּהִקָּדְשִׁי בָךְ לְעֵינֵיהֶם
ləmaʿan ḏaʿaṯ haggôyim ʾōṯî bəhiqqāḏəšî ḇəḵā ləʿênêhem
"...that the nations may know me, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."

Verses 14–15 restate the invasion's occasion — Gog coming "from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north" against Israel's secure dwelling — before **verse 16** delivers the crucial theological framing: this entire invasion, however Gog's own predatory motivations, ultimately serves Yahweh's own self-vindicating purpose "before their eyes" — the nations'. Wright notes this establishes, consistent with the pattern already traced throughout the book's treatment of Nebuchadnezzar and other historical agents, that Gog's invasion, whatever its immediate human motivation, unfolds entirely within and subject to Yahweh's own sovereign, self-glorifying purpose rather than representing any genuine threat to his ultimate sovereignty or his people's ultimate security.

38:17–23 — Yahweh's Response

Hebrew (v.18): וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּיוֹם בּוֹא גוֹג עַל־אַדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה תַּעֲלֶה חֲמָתִי בְּאַפִּי
wəhāyâ bayyôm hahûʾ bəyôm bôʾ gôḡ ʿal-ʾaḏmaṯ yiśrāʾēl nəʾum ʾăḏōnāy YHWH taʿăleh ḥămāṯî bəʾappî
"And on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel, declares the Lord Yahweh, my wrath will be roused in my anger."

Cooper notes this closing unit's escalating description of Yahweh's own direct, cosmic-scale intervention: a great earthquake in the land of Israel (v.19), such that "the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake" at Yahweh's presence (v.20), mountains thrown down, cliffs fallen, every wall falling to the ground (v.20b). **Verse 21** announces Yahweh will "summon every kind of terror against Gog," including internal confusion causing every man's sword to be turned "against his brother" (v.21b) — Block notes this recalls the pattern of divinely-induced panic and self-destruction already attested in Israel's own conquest narratives (cf. Judg 7:22, Gideon's Midianite enemies turning swords against one another).

Verse 22 catalogs the comprehensive means of judgment: pestilence, blood, "torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur" — Rooker notes the deliberate echo of the Sodom-and-Gomorrah judgment vocabulary (fire and sulfur/brimstone, cf. Gen 19:24) applied here to Gog's

coalition, reinforcing the totality and paradigmatic severity of this judgment. **Verse 23** closes the chapter with the recognition formula in its fullest, most emphatic form: **"So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am Yahweh."**

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The **interpretive question of Gog and Magog's precise identity and the timing of this invasion relative to other eschatological events** has generated enormous discussion across the history of interpretation, not least because of the passage's direct citation in Revelation 20:8, where "Gog and Magog" reappear in an explicitly final, post-millennial (in the text's own chronological placement) assault against the saints, immediately preceding the last judgment. Within an amillennial framework — which reads Revelation's own symbolic numbering and sequencing as thematically rather than strictly chronologically structured — this Ezekielian Gog oracle and its Revelation counterpart both function as depicting, in appropriately apocalyptic and non-literal idiom, the recurring pattern of final, futile, and divinely-overwhelmed assault against God's secure people that characterizes opposition to the kingdom of God throughout history and finds its ultimate, singular consummation only at the final judgment — rather than requiring identification with any specific, modern geopolitical coalition or a strictly future, still-outstanding invasion of a restored ethnic-political state of Israel. This reading resists both an overly literalized modern geopolitical mapping (a persistent feature of popular dispensational prophecy interpretation) and a purely allegorical dismissal of the passage's genuine, if symbolically-rendered, eschatological seriousness.

The **transparently mercenary, plunder-seeking character of Gog's invasion** (vv.10–13), directed specifically against a people restored to peaceful, unwalled security, offers a sobering final instance of the recurring biblical pattern already traced throughout the nations-oracles: opportunistic predation upon God's people functions as a paradigmatic and perennial form of opposition to God's own kingdom purposes, subject to comprehensive and decisive divine judgment regardless of its immediate historical or geopolitical particulars. This coheres with the broader New Testament pattern of persistent, escalating but ultimately futile opposition to Christ's kingdom throughout the church age (cf. Ps 2:1–3's "why do the nations rage" applied messianically throughout the New Testament, Acts 4:25–26), an opposition Scripture consistently portrays as doomed to comprehensive failure precisely because it fails to reckon with Yahweh's own sovereign purpose operating through and beyond even the most seemingly formidable hostile coalition.

The **earthquake, cosmic disturbance, and fire-and-sulfur judgment** (vv.19–22) — employing language directly recalling both Sinai's own theophanic disturbance and Sodom's paradigmatic destruction — situates Gog's judgment within the same "Day of Yahweh" cosmic-judgment tradition already traced throughout chapters 7, 30, and 32, reinforcing that this climactic assault-and-defeat narrative functions, within the book's larger literary and theological architecture, as a final, comprehensive demonstration of Yahweh's sovereignty over even the most massive conceivable hostile coalition, immediately preceding the book's own climactic

vision of the restored temple and land (chs. 40–48) — establishing that genuine, secure covenant blessing, once granted, remains impervious to any subsequent hostile assault precisely because it rests upon the same unconditional, sovereign divine commitment already established at such length throughout chapters 34, 36, and 37.

Ezekiel 39: Gog's Defeat and Israel's Final Vindication

Introduction and Structural Overview

Ezekiel 39 completes the Gog oracle begun in chapter 38, narrating the coalition's comprehensive defeat, the disposal of the resulting carnage, and closing with a summary restatement of Israel's restoration and Yahweh's self-vindication before the nations. This chapter serves as the concluding capstone to the entire nations-and-judgment material spanning chapters 25–39 before the book's final major section (chs. 40–48) unveils the restored temple vision. The chapter divides as follows:

- **39:1–8** — Gog's defeat announced
- **39:9–10** — Disposal of weapons: seven years of fuel
- **39:11–16** — Burial of the dead: seven months of interment
- **39:17–20** — The sacrificial feast of birds and beasts
- **39:21–29** — Summary: Israel's restoration and Yahweh's self-vindication

39:1–8 — Gog's Defeat Announced

Hebrew (v.2): וְשֹׁבַבְתִּיךָ וְשִׁשֵּׁאתִיךָ וְהַעֲלִיתִיךָ מִיַּרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן וְהֵבֵאוֹתִךָ עַל־הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
wəšōḇaḇtîḵā wəšiššēʾṭîḵā wəhaʿălîṯîḵā miyyarkəṯê ṣāpôn wahăḇîʾôṯiḵā ʿal-hārê yiśrāʾēl
"And I will turn you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel."

Block (NICOT) notes this opening unit restates, in compressed and intensified form, the same divine sovereignty over Gog's movements already established at 38:4 — Yahweh himself "turns" and "drives" Gog forward, confirming again that this invasion's entire trajectory, from summons to defeat, unfolds under direct divine control rather than autonomous hostile initiative. Greenberg (AYB 22) notes the deliberate return to the "mountains of Israel" address, the same controlling geographic-theological rubric established since chapter 6 and developed at length in chapter 36's restoration oracle — Gog's assault occurs precisely upon this specifically covenant-freighted territory, making the ensuing defeat a direct vindication of the land's own promised security.

Verses 3–4 pronounce the specific mechanism of defeat: bow struck from the hand, arrows from the right hand, falling "on the mountains of Israel," given "to the birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured." Rooker (HOTC) notes this carrion-imagery directly echoes the identical fate already pronounced against Pharaoh and Gog's own coalition

catalog partners (Egypt's own fate at 29:5), establishing continuity of judgment-imagery across the nations-oracle collection's various targets.

Verses 5–6 extend the judgment's scope: Gog falling "in the open field," fire sent "on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands" — Cooper (NAC) notes this extension of judgment to the "coastlands" broadens the defeat beyond the immediate invading force to encompass the wider network of allied and observing nations, paralleling the similar broadening of judgment consequences already established throughout the Tyre and Egypt oracles. **Verse 7** delivers the recognition formula in its most emphatic, doubly-stated form: **"And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am Yahweh, the Holy One in Israel."**

Verse 8 closes the unit with the settled certainty already characteristic of the book's judgment pronouncements: **"Behold, it has come to pass, declares the Lord Yahweh. This is the day of which I have spoken."**

39:9–10 — Seven Years of Fuel

Hebrew (v.9): וְיָצְאוּ יֹשְׁבֵי עָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִעֲרוּ וְהִשִּׂיקוּ בְּנֶשֶׁק וּמָגֵן וְצִנָּה בְּקֶשֶׁת וּבְחִצִּים וּבְמַקֵּל יָד וּבְרֹמַח וּבִעֲרוּ בָהֶם אֵשׁ שֶׁבַע שָׁנִים
wəyāṣəʾû yōšəḇê ʿārê yiśrāʾēl ûḇiʿărû wəhiśśîqû bənešeq ûmāḡēn wəṣinnâ bəqešeṭ ûḇəḥiṣṣîm ûḇəmaqqēl yāḏ ûḇərōmaḥ ûḇiʿărû ḇāhem ʾēš šeḇaʿ šānîm
"Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears; and they will make fires of them for seven years."

This striking detail — the sheer quantity of abandoned weaponry sufficient to fuel Israel's fires for seven full years — Wright (BST) notes functions rhetorically to convey the sheer massive scale of Gog's defeated coalition, while simultaneously depicting a form of practical, economically beneficial disposal of the enemy's own military equipment. **Verse 10** notes Israel "will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons," concluding with a note of ironic reversal: **"they will plunder those who plundered them, and loot those who looted them, declares the Lord Yahweh"** — directly inverting Gog's own stated plunder-motive from 38:12–13.

39:11–16 — Seven Months of Burial

Hebrew (v.11): וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶתֵּן לְגוֹג מְקוֹם־שָׁם קֶבֶר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גֵּי הָעֹבְרִים קִדְמַת הַיָּם
wəhāyâ ḇayyôm hahûʾ ʾettēn ləḡôḡ məqôm-šām qeḇer bəyiśrāʾēl gêʾ hāʿōḇərîm qiḏmaṯ hayyām
"On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers, east of the sea."

Block notes the ironic naming of this burial location — "the Valley of the Travelers" (גֵּי הָעֹבְרִים, *gêʾ hāʿōḇərîm*) is renamed **"the Valley of Hamon-gog"** (גֵּי הֲמוֹן־גּוֹג, *gêʾ hămôn-gôḡ*, "valley of Gog's multitude," v.11b) precisely because "it will block the way of travelers" — the sheer quantity of Gog's dead physically obstructing ordinary transit until proper burial can be completed. Greenberg notes the seven-month burial period specified (v.12) reflects Levitical concern for corpse-contamination and the land's ritual purity (cf. Num 19:11–16) — a massive, organized effort ("all the people of the land will bury them," v.13) required to cleanse the land of this defiling multitude.

Verses 14–15 describe specially appointed men employed continually to search the land for remaining bones, marking any found with a sign until burial parties can properly inter them — Rooker notes this meticulous procedural detail underscores the priestly-trained Ezekiel's characteristic concern for thorough ritual purification following even a definitively victorious conflict. **Verse 16** notes even a city will be named "Hamonah" ("multitude") in commemoration, concluding: "thus shall they cleanse the land."

39:17–20 — The Sacrificial Feast

Hebrew (v.17): וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֱמֹר לְצִפּוֹר כָּל־כָּנָף וּלְכֹל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה הִקָּבְצוּ וָבֹאוּ הֵאָסְפוּ מִסָּבִיב עַל־זִבְחִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לָכֶם זֶבַח גָּדוֹל עַל הָרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַאֲכַלְתֶּם בָּשָׂר וּשְׁתִיתֶם דָּם
wəʾattâ ben-ʾāḏām kōh-ʾāmar ʾăḏōnāy YHWH ʾĕmōr ləṣippôr kāl-kānāp ûləḵōl ḥayyaṯ haśśāḏeh hiqqāḇəṣû wāḇōʾû hēʾāsəpû missāḇîḇ ʿal-ziḇḥî ʾăšer ʾănî zōḇēaḥ lāḵem zeḇaḥ gāḏôl ʿal hārê yiśrāʾēl waʾăḵaltem bāśār ûšəṯîṯem dām
"As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood."

This unit presents a deliberately grotesque, ironic inversion: Gog's fallen coalition, rather than receiving honorable burial, becomes instead the substance of a macabre "sacrificial feast" (זֶבַח, *zeḇaḥ*, a term ordinarily denoting legitimate covenant sacrifice) for carrion birds and beasts. Cooper notes the deliberate cultic vocabulary applied to this scavenging feast — "you shall eat flesh and drink blood" — inverting the normal sacrificial pattern in which worshipers eat portions of an animal sacrifice; here the "worshipers" (birds and beasts) consume human flesh and blood, the fallen soldiers themselves constituting the sacrificial offering.

Verses 18–19 catalog the participants and their fill: "flesh of the mighty" and "blood of the princes of the earth," rams, lambs, goats, bulls, all "fatlings of Bashan," eating fat "till you are filled" and drinking blood "till you are drunk," from Yahweh's own prepared "sacrificial feast." Wright notes this passage's direct and deliberate literary relationship to Revelation 19:17–18, 21, where an angel similarly summons birds to "the great supper of God" to feast on the flesh of the defeated beast's armies — a connection confirming Ezekiel's Gog oracle as a genuine, acknowledged biblical type for John's own climactic eschatological battle-and-feast scene.

Verse 20 closes the unit: "And you shall be filled at my table with horses and riders, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors, declares the Lord Yahweh" — Block notes the deliberately ironic "my table" language, casting this entire grotesque carrion-feast as Yahweh's own prepared banquet, a further instance of the total reversal (predator becomes prey, plunderer becomes plundered, honored warrior becomes carrion) structuring this entire chapter's judgment narrative.

39:21-29 — Summary: Restoration and Self-Vindication

Hebrew (v.29): וְלֹא־אַסְתִּיר עוֹד פָּנַי מֵהֶם אֲשֶׁר שָׁפַכְתִּי אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה
wəlōʾ-ʾasṯîr ʿôḏ pānay mēhem ʾăšer šāpaḵtî ʾeṯ-rûḥî ʿal-bêṯ yiśrāʾēl nəʾum ʾăḏōnāy YHWH
"And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord Yahweh."

This closing unit delivers a comprehensive theological summary, restating and consolidating themes established throughout the preceding chapters. **Verse 21** promises the nations will "see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them." **Verses 23–24** offer a crucial, retrospective theological restatement: **"And the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me, that I hid my face from them"** — Greenberg notes this represents the book's final, comprehensive restatement of the exile's true cause, ensuring that even amid this climactic vindication scene, the historical judgment's justice remains unambiguously affirmed rather than retroactively minimized.

Verses 25–27 deliver the restoration promise's final iteration: "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel... they shall know their shame and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they dwell securely in their land with none to make them afraid." Rooker notes the deliberate pairing here — genuine security accompanied by genuine, retrospective shame and self-recognition, precisely the pattern already established at 6:9, 16:61–63, and 36:31–32.

Verse 28 restates the covenant-knowledge formula: "and they shall know that I am Yahweh their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then gathered them into their own land." **Verse 29** delivers the chapter's — and this entire major section's — climactic closing promise: Yahweh's face no longer hidden, because "I have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel." Block notes this final Spirit-outpouring statement directly echoes and consolidates the identical promise already established at 36:27 and 37:14, confirming that this entire climactic Gog narrative, however militarily and cosmically dramatic in its own right, ultimately serves and confirms the same fundamental restoration reality already established as the book's central positive theological achievement: Yahweh's own Spirit permanently indwelling and securing his covenant people.

Canonical-Theological Synthesis

The **"great sacrificial feast" of birds and beasts consuming Gog's fallen coalition** (vv.17–20), directly echoed in Revelation 19:17–18, 21's own climactic battle-supper scene, confirms this Ezekielian passage as a genuine and acknowledged type for the final eschatological defeat of all opposition to Christ's kingdom at his second coming. Within an amillennial framework, this typological relationship reinforces the reading of Gog's assault, established already in the analysis of chapter 38, as representing the recurring, ultimately futile pattern of hostile opposition to God's people throughout history, finding its final and complete antitype in Christ's own decisive, once-for-all eschatological victory — the grotesque carrion-feast imagery serving, across both passages, to convey the totality and finality of divine judgment against every power that opposes God's kingdom purposes, however militarily formidable such opposition might appear.

The **explicit, retrospective reaffirmation of the exile's just cause even amid this climactic vindication scene** (vv.23–24) demonstrates the book's remarkable theological consistency: even at its most triumphant, celebratory culmination, Ezekiel refuses to minimize or retroactively soften the genuine justice of the judgment already chronicled at such length throughout chapters 1–24. This coheres with the broader Reformed pastoral principle that genuine assurance and celebration of God's restoring grace never require or permit minimizing the real gravity and justice of the sin from which that grace has rescued the believer — a mature, non-triumphalistic form of restoration-confidence that holds together, without contradiction, full assurance of God's covenant faithfulness and unflinching honesty regarding one's own prior culpability.

The **final promise of the Spirit permanently poured out, Yahweh's face no longer hidden** (v.29), bringing to climactic close the entire judgment-and-restoration narrative spanning chapters 1–39, sets the stage directly for the book's final major section: the detailed restored-temple vision of chapters 40–48, in which this same Spirit-secured, permanently-dwelling divine presence receives its fullest, most architecturally elaborated positive expression — the empty, defiled, and abandoned temple of chapters 8–11 finding its ultimate resolution not in a return to that same vulnerable, forfeitable arrangement, but in a new, permanently secured sanctuary vision toward which this entire study now turns in its concluding chapters.