

INTRODUCTION

In the book of Ezekiel, we read of a priest, Ezekiel ben Buzi, one of the Judean exiles deported along with King Jehoiachin to Babylonia in 597 BC. Five years into their exile, visions of God compelled him to relinquish his old way of life as a priest to become a prophet to the exiles. Engaging in a series of symbolic acts, the prophet became a sign prefiguring certain doom for Jerusalem. A year or so later, again in visions of God, he witnessed cultic and political abominations in the Jerusalem temple and, more startling still, its abandonment by its deity, the God of Israel. Fourteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was once more taken up in visions of God, this time to walk through the courts of a “structure like a city,” the dwelling place of God in the land of Israel. Again the prophet became a sign, this time of the imminent reconciliation of the people of Israel with this God in the land promised to their ancestors a long time ago. How to make sense of these remarkable visions and the equally remarkable book in which they are found is the task of this commentary.

Literary Structure

The book of Ezekiel reflects a degree of literary coherence unmatched in the canon of biblical prophets. Organized around three major visions of God (Ezek 1, 8–11, 40–48), the book tells the story of God’s final attempt as their only legitimate king to claim the loyalty of his subjects, the rebellious and recalcitrant house of Israel. The prophet Ezekiel plays a key role in this campaign. Date notices introducing nearly a dozen visions and oracles suggest that the book was structured as a prophetic diary, perhaps to document the prophet’s words on particular occasions (Ezek 24:1; cf. Isa 8:16). Other elements, such as the length of time between his inaugural and final visions, confirm this impression. In both vision and symbolic act, the prophet is so closely identified with divine judgment that his life becomes a mirror of the judgment itself. His first vision gives him a glimpse of the cosmos under the rule of God and inaugurates him into his role as a prophet, a visible sign of the power of God (chs. 1–7). As the book unfolds, the prophet will see visions, the people

will see the prophet, and both spectacles will demonstrate without a doubt that Yahweh is the God of Israel.

The literary distinctiveness of Ezekiel has long been recognized. Well into the nineteenth century, it was a foregone conclusion that

its design was best explained as the work of a single writer. Unlike other prophetic books, whose abrupt shifts in focus and theme eventually led to complex theories of original oral delivery, transmission, and redaction, the book of Ezekiel gave the impression of having been written almost in a single sitting.¹ But eventually the literary integrity of the book came to be regarded as a liability, and if there was a prophet hidden in this baggy book, he needed to be rescued by way of newly emerging methods of critical study. As these methods were developed, each was applied to the study of the prophet, sometimes with disastrous results. At one point, for example, less than 200 verses of the book were regarded as the original words of the prophet.² Despite these negative results, twentieth-century studies of Ezekiel also contributed to a clarification of the prophet's Judean heritage. Form- and tradition-critical studies established his essential connections with biblical traditions and demonstrated that much of the book could be

squarely situated within the phenomenon of biblical prophecy. By the middle of the twentieth century, many of the more radical positions had been discarded, though it remained customary to treat the book as a collection of original oracles that could be attributed to the prophet Ezekiel but that had undergone literary reworking, either by Ezekiel himself or a school associated with him. The achievements of the past century of study reached their high point



Ezekiel from the Gutenberg Bible

Text printed with moveable letters and hand painted initials and marginalia: page 105 recto, the book of Ezekiel with initial “E” and depiction of the prophet.

Ruth Schacht. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany. [Credit: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource]

in the two-volume commentary on Ezekiel by Walther Zimmerli, a commentary that continues to commend itself for careful study.³

As significant as these achievements were, the book of Ezekiel resisted critical methods better suited to other books of prophetic literature. Consider this example: one of the tasks of form criticism was to establish the contours of originally oral pronouncements by the identification of introductory and concluding prophetic formulas (e.g., the messenger formula, “thus says the Lord,” or the oracle formula “says the Lord”). These formulas appear in Ezekiel in abundance, and early form-critical studies proceeded with confidence to extract Ezekiel’s supposedly original oracles from their literary contexts. But in Ezekiel these formulas appeared to function not as markers delineating the contours of oral speech but as transitional cues holding literary materials together. Other features called into question the notion that the book was a collection or record of speeches delivered by the prophet.⁴ Much of the book is presented as private communications from God to prophet, some of them instructions to pronounce oracles; many of these units lack reports to suggest that Ezekiel followed these instructions. Similarly, although the symbolic acts of chapters 4–5 are often interpreted as public performances, the narratives report only that the prophet was commanded to perform them, not that he did so.

Given these unusual features of the book, some critics have revived the earlier assessment of the book as a product of writing, not of oral prophetic speech, though now with a greater appreciation for the prophet as a writer. Moshe Greenberg paved the way for this assessment, both in his programmatic essays and in his commentary in the Anchor Bible series, which, at this date, remains uncompleted.⁵ Ellen Davis provided a theoretical framework for understanding the unique capacities of writing in the transition from oral to literate cultures, as well as the manner in which writing would have enhanced Ezekiel’s role as a prophet in exile.⁶ More than the means for recording oral speech, wrote Davis, writing allowed Ezekiel to critique Israelite and Judean traditions at a significantly deeper level than was possible in oral communication. Others have contributed to an understanding of the book’s integrity as a written composition, either by focusing on its rhetorical dimensions, its use of metaphor, or its development of key themes. While some of these critics, particularly Davis and Greenberg, have posited that the prophet Ezekiel was the author of his book, others maintain that the question of authorship cannot be answered definitively.⁷

One question that has emerged from this renewed interest in the literary coherence of Ezekiel is whether it is possible to speak of a genre for the book as a whole. Because there are no adequate parallels in the biblical tradition to explain the structure and coherence of Ezekiel, Robert Wilson has concluded, "As one of the first to produce written prophecy, Ezekiel had few models to guide him in his search for forms appropriate to the new medium."⁸ The priestly, Jerusalemite, and prophetic heritage from which he drew was indeed rich; but, as Wilson has intimated, none of it provides adequate models for explaining the unique coherence achieved in Ezekiel's book. Without discounting the prophet's extraordinary creativity, one may nevertheless ask whether Ezekiel's models might not have been derived from other literary sources. One likely source for the design of the book of Ezekiel may be found in the ancient Near Eastern literary tradition, primarily the building inscriptions.⁹ These inscriptions typically consist of three parts, a self-introduction, historical survey, and building account, and were frequently used by kings to recount their deeds in behalf of their gods and subjects. Others have demonstrated the pervasive impact of this genre on the ancient Near Eastern literary tradition.¹⁰ The overall structure of Ezekiel resembles that of the building inscriptions, and the book as a whole bears even more interesting similarities to one set of exemplars, Esarhaddon's Babylonian inscriptions (c. 680 BC). Like the book of Ezekiel and unlike the other Assyrian inscriptions, Esarhaddon's Babylonian inscriptions revolve around the fate of a single city, which had so angered its gods that they had abandoned it to destruction. After receiving numerous signs of the return of divine favor, Esarhaddon set about to rebuild the city, restore its temples and shrines, and restore the rights of the oppressed Babylonians. More fine-grained comparisons of Ezekiel with Esarhaddon's inscriptions prevent further compelling evidence of a relationship, and they are presented in the course of this commentary.

If the Assyrian building inscriptions help us to solve the problem of the genre of the book of Ezekiel, they raise others. At the most basic level, one needs to ask how Ezekiel, a prophet of the Babylonian exile, came into contact with the literary traditions of the Assyrians, whose empire came to an end with the fall of Nineveh in 612 and whose political control in Syria Palestine is thought to have ended much earlier, possibly as soon as 640. Moreover, a cursory reading of the biblical texts gives the impression that the Assyrians were the enemies of Israel and Judah, the despised instruments of God's wrath (cf. Isa 10:5-15). How, then,

did Ezekiel come to be so deeply influenced by the Assyrian literary and cultural tradition?

The Cultural and Historical Context of Ezekiel

One of the striking features of Ezekiel is its use of date notices to introduce many of the oracles and visions. Most of the dated oracles cluster around the years of Nebuchadnezzar's siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 588–586 BC; other date notices suggest that his prophetic activity began several years earlier (1:1; 8:1) and continued for at least sixteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem (40:1; 29:17-21).

Although much of the critical work of the past century has been devoted to demonstrating the intelligibility of the book within this historical context,¹¹ Ezekiel's own analysis of the crisis suggests that its roots reach back somewhat further, and encompass the immediately preceding decades of Judean attempts to secure its position within the context of declining Assyrian influence and the ensuing competition between Egypt and Babylon to gain control over Syria-Palestine. Especially revealing in this regard is his political allegory of the fortunes of the sisters Oholah and Oholibah, the adulterous "sisters" Samaria and Jerusalem (Ezek 23). Watching the older sister Samaria lust after the Assyrians, Jerusalem does not read the sister's ensuing destruction as a cautionary tale but engages in a more deadly dalliance. Almost immediately after she takes up with Assyria, Jerusalem is then drawn to other lovers, first the Babylonians (NRSV Chaldeans) and then the Egyptians. By Ezekiel's account, Jerusalem's fate is forged within this deadly triangle of competing allegiances.

Ezekiel's allegory evokes the chaotic bids for security in the last decade of the seventh century. For more than a century before that time, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were firmly under Assyrian control. By 722, the city of Samaria had been destroyed and its people deported to other kingdoms within the vast network of Assyrian vassal states. The kingdom of Judah, by contrast, enjoyed (or endured) a longer association. Second Kings reports that the Judean king Ahaz initiated an alliance with Assyria in 732, though the alliance may already have been in place at the beginning of that decade.¹²

Although 2 Kings barely mentions Assyria after the disastrous invasion of Sennacherib in 701, Judah remained under the control of Assyria for much of the seventh century. The evidence is fragmentary and difficult to sort out, particularly since both the



The Prophet Ezekiel

Michelangelo (1475–1564). *The Prophet Ezekiel*. Detail of the Sistine ceiling. Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican State. [Credit: Scala / Art Resource]

biblical and Assyrian texts present “facts” in line with their respective ideological and theological positions. One well-known case in point is Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem in 701. Biblical accounts report that the city was miraculously delivered (2 Kgs 18–19//Isa 36–37), while the Assyrian accounts report that Sennacherib trapped Hezekiah in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage” and imposed additional penalties on top of an already steep tribute (*ANET*, 288). Although the archaeological evidence tends to bear out Sennacherib’s version of a massive destruction from which Judah only gradually recovered, 2 Kings preserves the fiction of a miraculous deliverance of Judah by omitting any reference to subsequent Judean vassalage to Assyria. Nothing is said about the continuing submission to Assyria of Hezekiah’s successor Manasseh, though Esarhaddon reports that as a faithful vassal he contributed labor and supplies for the rebuilding of Nineveh (*ARAB* 2:690). In addition, 2 Chronicles 33:10–13 reports that Manasseh was taken in

chains by the Assyrian king to Babylon. The details are not clear, and the veracity of the report has been disputed, but the purpose of the trip may have been to break an alliance between Judah and Babylon, possibly by using one rebel as an object lesson for the other (just as Ezekiel has done in the case of the two sisters Oholah and Oholibah). In any case, Manasseh's punishment did not result in a further weakening of his power. Rather, after this event, he fortified the defensive walls of Jerusalem and further strengthened the armies in the fortified cities of Judah (2 Chr 33:14).¹³

Reconstructing the period of Josiah's reign (639–609) is even more complicated. Again, 2 Kings makes no mention of Josiah's relationship to Assyria; moreover, Assyrian records omit any reference to Josiah. For that matter, the annals of Assurbanipal end in 639 BC, just a year before Josiah came to the throne.¹⁴ Although the silence from the Assyrian side has led to the suggestion that Josiah was a strong king who took advantage of a weakening and retreating Assyria to press his reforms, recent reconstructions of the Josianic era have painted a more nuanced picture. Piecing together evidence of continuing Assyrian dominance from the Babylonian annals, which report peace and prosperity in the east under Assyrian rule for the years 627–624, Nadav Na'aman has argued that Assyria maintained its hold in Syria-Palestine well into the late 620s. Only when it became preoccupied with crushing revolts in Babylonia in the late 620s did it retreat from Syria-Palestine. Assyria's retreat did not create a power vacuum in the region; rather, at that time, suggests Na'aman, Assyria willingly ceded its western territories to Egypt in exchange for badly needed military assistance in its wars to the south and west.¹⁵ Egypt thus came to exercise its influence in Syria-Palestine, not as a result of a power vacuum left by a weakened Assyria, but by common agreement between the two states, whose partnership appears to have lasted into the next decade. On the evidence of 2 Kings 23:19, where it is reported that Pharaoh Necho went up to Harran to "meet" Assyria in 609, it is possible to suggest, on the one hand, that Assyria continued to defend at least a portion of its holdings in the west even after the destruction of Nineveh in 612, and, on the other, its partnership with Egypt lasted to the bitter end. How one interprets the biblical accounts of Josiah's reign, in particular his cultic reforms, reclamation of traditional Israelite territory, and his fatal encounter with Pharaoh Necho in 609 must take into account the enduring alliance between Egypt and Assyria.¹⁶

In any case, Na'aman's suggestion that Assyria remained influential in the west well into the 620s gives further credence to Ezekiel's

account of Jerusalem's shifting allegiances in Ezekiel 23. As the brief and ambiguous report of Josiah's death intimates, Assyria remained a part of the international picture until 609, even though Egypt by that time played a more dominant role in Judean affairs (2 Kgs 23:29-35). Just four years later Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt at Carchemish and laid claim to the Syro-Palestinian states, including Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 24:1). The interval between Josiah's death in 609 and the deportation of Judeans to Babylonia in 597 was not long. Ezekiel's allegory of Jerusalem's infidelities expresses what, in his view, was a feverish bid to secure its position in a chaotic world.

Given the long dominance of Assyria in the west, it should not be surprising to find evidence of Assyrian cultural and literary influence in the book of Ezekiel. Two factors, which need not be mutually exclusive, may have contributed to Ezekiel's appropriation of Assyrian literary and political traditions. First, as Mordechai Cogan has suggested, it is possible to speak of a "new cultural and technological koine" created by the establishment of an empire stretching from Egypt to Anatolia;¹⁷ this participation in the larger culture was not forced on Judah, argued Cogan, but was, rather, voluntarily adopted by the Judean elite. Nor was cultural influence a one-way street; Steven Holloway has called it a "bilateral hybridization."¹⁸ Despite evidence that Assyria was despised in some Judean quarters (cf. Nahum, Jonah), its culture had a lasting impact on Judean religious and cultural life. Ezekiel is not unique in this regard; for example, Deuteronomy derives its distinctive understanding of allegiance to God from political metaphors in seventh century Assyrian vassal treaties. Particularly among the elite classes from which Ezekiel and his fellow exiles were drawn, it may be more appropriate to think of Assyrian culture as a penetrating stain than as a thin veneer to be peeled off once Assyria lost political control of its vassals.

Second, Assyrian literary models may have been available to Ezekiel in Babylon. Recently, Mark J. Boda has assembled evidence that Assyrian and Babylonian literary models were appropriated and imitated well into the Hellenistic era.¹⁹ There is good evidence that Assyrian literary models continued to be appropriated even among the Babylonians. Although the building inscriptions of Nabonidus (c. 626–605 BC) and Nebuchadnezzar (c. 605–562 BC) revert to Old Babylonian conventions, at least one of the inscriptions of Nabonidus (c. 556–539 BC) can be shown to have imitated seventh-century Assyrian literary models.²⁰ Such scribal imitation of Assyrian literary models can also be demonstrated in the compo-

sition of the Cyrus Cylinder, which Babylonian priests composed in order to legitimate the claim of the Persian king Cyrus to rule Babylon (c. 539 BC).²¹ That Babylonians should adopt Assyrian protocols either for their own building projects, as in the case of Nabonidus, or to legitimate the claims of a Persian to Babylonian rule, seems strange to us; but our surprise is more probably due to our uncritical adoption of the Bible's presentation of the great empires as the succession of one evil after another (cf. Dan 2, 7). More likely, the impact of Assyrian hegemony reverberated in the cultural traditions of those it affected for many generations to come.²²

At least for Ezekiel, Babylon could not measure up to Assyria. Babylon was not a new agent of cosmic order replacing the cosmic tree of Assyria. Rather, the Babylonians, rebels themselves, had distracted Jerusalem away from its first lover, Assyria (23:13-14), and now Jerusalem must suffer the consequences of its disloyalty. To appropriate Ezekiel's ugly metaphor of adultery, Jerusalem has made her bed and she must lie in it. Nebuchadnezzar may be Yahweh's loyal servant (29:17-21), but Babylon remains a source of potential rebellion (38-39). Thus unlike his contemporary Jeremiah, Ezekiel does not promote Babylon as a source of peace, at least not in the way that Jeremiah does:

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. (Jer 29:5-7)

If Jeremiah counseled accommodation to a new life in exile, Ezekiel saw life among the Babylonians as a life of unendurable shame. With the fall of Assyria and the scramble of the other kingdoms to claim their place on the world stage, Ezekiel writes, not in the midst of a crisis, but at the end of history. It is widely recognized that the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC was a catastrophic event bringing all of the Judean institutions to an end and posing the deepest challenge to Yahwistic traditions of promise, protection, and presence. But it was a crisis compounded by the collapse of a larger order made possible by Assyrian hegemony. Out of the rubble, Ezekiel assembled a new vision grounded in the invincible sovereignty of the God of Israel.

Theological Significance

In the standard textbooks on the history of Western art, a story is often told of aesthetic changes in sculptural representations. From the Egyptians, Greek sculptors inherited a tradition of representing the male figure in a highly stylized form called the *kouros*. As Greek sculptors developed their own aesthetic traditions, the *kouros* stepped out of the Eastern world and became imbued with the individuality and expressiveness so characteristic of Greek sculpture—and familiar to us as essential depictions of the human being.

In a similar way, the book of Ezekiel is a transitional text. All too often, its alien ancestry cannot quite measure up to contemporary judgments of theological adequacy. And yet, it has made the crucial first step from the ancient world of imperial domination and control to a theological vision of the city of God. It has been said that in the Old Testament the God of Israel often sounds like an Assyrian potentate; Ezekiel helps us to see why. In the struggle to extricate his fellow exiles from the entanglements of dead-end politics, Ezekiel presents the God of Israel as the only one who could justifiably claim to rule Israel. In doing so, he employs stock metaphors from Assyrian royal ideology. Assyrian kings claimed dominion over the four quarters of the earth; only God could make that claim. Assyrian kings demanded absolute loyalty, so did Yahweh. Assyrian kings claimed to be shepherds of their flocks; only Yahweh was the good shepherd. Because Ezekiel uses the metaphors of Yahweh's rivals for the hearts and minds of the house of Israel, traces of the struggle remain: "I will be your King"; "You shall know that I am the Lord." But in the process, Ezekiel limns a radical alterity that continues to shape Christian and Jewish visions of a transcendent order.

Coupled with Ezekiel's radical theocentricity is a comprehensive moral vision. As far as Ezekiel is concerned, there is only one kingdom. He does not give his readers the option of rendering to Caesar, or for that matter, of even trying to decide whether Caesar is owed anything. Such an unflinching vision would seem to be totally irrelevant for a life in exile or any life in the real world, but this would be a problem only if it could be demonstrated that Ezekiel was charting a political program for a practical return to the land. Increasingly, however, critics are seeking to understand how the book functioned as a theological manifesto for exiles, strangers in a strange land. For such an audience, the vision of Ezekiel provides the foundation for the reconciliation of a deeply fragmented Judean community.

Many of the questions addressed by Ezekiel reflect a deep conflict between Judeans who retained at least a semblance of political control in Jerusalem, and Ezekiel's audience, the exiles in Babylonia. What is the responsibility of citizens to one another? In what way are the generations linked in cycles of guilt and punishment? Does Yahweh keep covenant, and with whom and for what reason? Underlying all of these questions is the perennial question of the expatriate: what about the land that I have been forced to leave, which my brother has taken from me? Just as Ezekiel shatters the claims of the empires for the allegiance of Israel, he gives no quarter to intramural quarrels. In retelling the history of the exodus; in recounting the responsibility of the Judeans to the exiles and of the generations to one another; and not least in exposing the lie of political and economic power, Ezekiel always turns the question of human shortcomings back to the question of Yahweh's faithfulness. Amid disputes within the community over election, Yahweh declares that all lives belong to him. The God who threatens to purge out rebels in the wilderness of exile is the same God who promises to leave no one behind. Yahweh's determination to be king over the rebellious house of Israel turns out to be an offer of royal magnanimity, which has as its goal the recreation of human community. In the city of Yahweh's own design and in the sanctifying and blessing presence of Yahweh, the slate is wiped clean, and life in community begins again.

NOTES

¹ Rudolf Smend, *Der Prophet Ezechiel* (KHAT; Leipzig: Hirzel, 1880), xxi, cited by Kathryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel Among the Critics," *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 2 (1994): 9.

² Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter un das Buch* (BZAW 139; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1914).

³ Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 2 vols., trans. Ronald E. Clements and James D. Martin (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979, 1983; first published in Germany, 1969).

⁴ Robert R. Wilson, "Ezekiel," in *HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. James L. Mays et al (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000), 588.

⁵ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22; New York: Doubleday, 1983); and *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997).

⁶ Ellen F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Bible and Literature Series 21; Sheffield: Almond, 1989).

⁷ For reviews of critical scholarship, see Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "Ezekiel Among the Critics," 9-24, and Risa Levitt Kohn, "Ezekiel at the Turn of the Century," *Currents in Biblical Research* 2 (2003): 9-32.

⁸ Wilson, "Ezekiel," 588.

⁹ Margaret S. Odell, "Genre and Persona in Ezekiel 24:15-24," in *The Book of Ezekiel: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Margaret S. Odell and John T. Strong (SBLSS 9; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 195-220, esp. 208-14.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*, JSOTSup 115 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), especially chs. 2-4; and Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991).

¹¹ See, for example, Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 8-11; and Karl S. Freedy and Donald B. Redford, "The Dates of Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian, and Egyptian Sources," *JAOS* 90 (1970): 462-485.

¹² M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the 8th-7th Centuries B.C.E.*, (SBLMS 19; Missoula MT: Scholars, 1974), 65.

¹³ Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 67-70, and idem, "Judah under Assyrian Hegemony: A Re-examination of *Imperialism and Religion*," *JBL* 112 (1993): 407.

¹⁴ Nadav Na'aman, "The Kingdom of Judah under Josiah," *Tel Aviv* 18 (1991): 35.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-41.

¹⁶ The historiographical issues were recently addressed in the European Seminar on Methodology in Israel's History (Berlin, July 2002), which convened during the joint meeting of the European Association of Biblical Studies and the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. The essays presented in that seminar will be published under the title *Good Kings/Bad Kings: The Kingdom of Judah in the Seventh Century* (Continuum, forthcoming). I am grateful to the editor, Lester L. Grabbe, for making the essays available to me.

¹⁷ Cogan, "Judah Under Assyrian Hegemony," 412.

¹⁸ Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 10; Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2002), 68.

¹⁹ Mark J. Boda, "From Dystopia to Myopia: Utopian (re)visions in Haggai and Zechariah 1-8," 1-4 and notes. Presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Antonio, November 2004.

²⁰ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Sippar Cyliner of Nabonidus," in *The Context of Scripture: Monumental Inscriptions from the Biblical World*, 3 vols., ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Leiden, 2000), 2:310-13, esp. 311 n. 2. In addition to internal evidence of the borrowing of Assyrian conventions, the Sippar Cyprus and cylinders both explicitly report that Nabonidus and Cyrus saw the foundation deposits of Assurbanipal. For the Cyrus Cylinder, see *COS* 2.124.

²¹ M. Dandamaev, "Assyrian Traditions during Achaemenid Times," in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting (Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 41-48, esp. 44, as cited by Boda, "From Dystopia to Myopia," 3.

²² Cf. Peter Machinist, "The Fall of Assyria in Comparative Ancient Perspective," in *Assyria 1995*, 179-95.