

Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre

*The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19
in Late Antiquity*

Hector M. Palmore

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Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre

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The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19
in Late Antiquity

By
Hector M. Patmore



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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Judaism and Christianity share much of a heritage. There has been a good deal of interest in this phenomenon lately, examining both the common heritage, as well as the elements unique to each religion. There has, however, been no systematic attempt to present findings relative to both Jewish and Christian tradition to a broad audience of scholars. It is the purpose of the Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series to do just that.

Jewish and Christian Perspectives publishes studies that are relevant to both Christianity and Judaism. The series will include works relating to the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, the Second Temple period, the Judaeo-Christian polemic (from Ancient until Modern times), Rabbinical literature relevant to Christianity, Patristics, Medieval Studies and the Modern period. Special interest will be paid to the interaction between the religions throughout the ages. Historical, exegetical, philosophical and theological studies are welcomed as well as studies focusing on sociological and anthropological issues common to both religions including archaeology.

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This book found its genesis in a city of which it is said *fundamenta eius super montibus sanctis* and now it finds its terminus in the city to which those words were first directed. It began as a thesis for which I was admitted to the degree of Ph.D. at the University of Durham in 2008. Since then it has been significantly revised. Revisions to the materials relating to the Targum were undertaken at the Targum Institute of the Protestant Theological University of the Netherlands in Kampen. Further reworking was carried out during a stay as a Visiting Scholar at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies in the Trinity term of 2010. The remaining loose ends were tied up and the suggestions of colleagues were incorporated into the finished work during my time as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and as an Honorary Research Fellow of the Council for British Research in the Levant, based at the Kenyon Institute in Jerusalem.

The staff of the Department of Theology and Religion at the University of Durham, both academic and administrative, provided a context in which an interest became a passion, and a passion a doctoral thesis. I owe a debt of gratitude in particular to Prof Loren Stuckenbruck, Prof Walter Moberly, Prof Robert Hayward, and Dr Stuart Weeks, whose teaching and supervision inspired me.

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Throughout my doctoral studies I enjoyed membership of the community of St. John's College, Durham. To all those who helped make my time there so rewarding I offer my thanks, in particular to the Principal, Rev. Dr David Wilkinson, who was not only accommodating to my need to put the finishing touches to my thesis, but in very many other ways proved a source of sound advice and wisdom.

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corrections, as did my valued colleagues Dr Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman and Prof Riemer Roukema.

My stay at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies provided me with the necessary breathing space to complete some new elements of research and incorporate the results into this book. I am grateful to the Centre's director, Prof David Ariel, for accepting me as a Visiting Scholar for this period, and to Prof Martin Goodman, its Academic Director, for his invitation to offer a paper at the Oriental Institute. The administrative, library, and domestic staff at OCHJS offered me every necessary assistance, in particular Sheila Phillips who helped me overcome some logistical difficulties.

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In early October 2000, on the crooked staircase of Abbey House, Durham, home of the University's Theology department, Prof Robert Hayward encountered a newly arrived undergraduate in the process of choosing his courses for the forthcoming academic year. With the promise that it would be a lot of fun, and the reassurance that there was no obligation to continue beyond the first year should it not prove to be so, I found

myself enrolled for Introductory Biblical Hebrew. Nearly ten years after that meeting this book bears testament to that great scholar's infectious enthusiasm and unfailing encouragement. It is fitting therefore that it should be dedicated to Prof Hayward, with my profound thanks.

Hector M. Patmore
Jerusalem
Feast of St Ambrose, 2010

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

For just as in Adam all die,
so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

(1 Cor 15:22)

When Paul wrote these now famous words to the fledgling church in Corinth, or his equally famous address on the same theme to the Christians in Rome (Rom 5:12–17), he could hardly have imagined that his reference to Adam would have struck anyone as unexpected. The new theological significance that he ascribed to the hapless first man undoubtedly would, but the simple fact of his speaking of Adam would not, because at the time of Paul's writing Adam was the subject of much speculation within the Jewish imagination.¹

For quite different reasons, the situation would not be dissimilar in the modern Western world either, so saturated as it is in the cultural legacy of Christianity and Judaism. No Jew or Christian—not even an atheist who had never darkened the doors of a church or synagogue—would be surprised to hear talk of a man who, with the possible exceptions of Moses and Jesus, is surely the most well known of all biblical characters.

Yet, Adam, the figure so undeniably central to both rabbinic myth-making and Christian soteriology, is conspicuously absent from the Hebrew Bible. Aside from a few disputed points where the Hebrew may be read either as 'Adam' or simply as 'man' (the two words being the same in Hebrew),² one will encounter the woeful story of Adam within the Hebrew Bible's opening chapters, but one will not meet Adam again except in a single genealogical list (1 Chron 1:1). If one were to continue reading a Bible in the Protestant tradition one would find him only once more, at the head of the genealogy of Jesus according to the Evangelist Luke (Luke 3:38), before arriving at the writings of Paul.

¹ Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism*; van Ruiten, 'The Creation of Man and Woman in Early Jewish Literature'.

² E.g. Ps 82:7; Job 31:33; Hos 6:7.

This surprising observation concerning Protestant Bibles, which follow Luther in basing themselves upon the Hebrew canon, is not so pronounced in Roman, Greek, and Slavonic Bibles, where Adam can be found in the late antique books of Tobit (8:6), Ecclesiasticus (40:1; 49:16), and in the Slavonic Bible also in 2 Esdras (3:5, 10, 21, 26; 4:30; 6:54, 56; 7:11, 70, 116, 118). But even in these contexts his absence from the great prophetic books, which dwell heavily on other foundational narratives of the chosen people Israel, such as the Exodus, and from the deep reflections on the state of man found in the wisdom literature, is vexing.

The Hebrew Bible is not, however, entirely void of possible allusions and references to the first man. There are a few scattered examples of texts that apparently describe mankind's creation (Job 15:7–9, Prov 8:22–31, Ps 8),³ yet these offer little or no connection to the famous narrative of the first chapters of the book of Genesis. A bizarre prophetic lament over the King of Tyre that appears in Ezekiel 28:11–19 is one of the few examples in the whole corpus where such a link may exist. It is this text that is the subject of the present volume.

Let us begin by setting out the text as we find it in a popular and trustworthy English translation, that of the New Revised Standard Version:

¹¹ Moreover, the word of the Lord came to me:

¹² Mortal, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre,
and say to him, Thus says the Lord God:

“You were the signet of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire, turquoise, and emerald;
and worked in gold were your settings
and your engravings.

On the day that you were created
they were prepared.

¹⁴ With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you;
you were on the holy mountain of God;
you walked among the stones of fire.

³ For examples and discussion see Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 87–203.

¹⁵ You were blameless in your ways
from the day that you were created,
until iniquity was found in you.
¹⁶ In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God,
and the guardian cherub drove you out
from among the stones of fire.
¹⁷ Your heart was proud because of your beauty;
you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour.
I cast you to the ground;
I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.
¹⁸ By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your trade,
you profaned your sanctuaries.
So I brought out fire from within you;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.
¹⁹ All who know you among the peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more for ever.

Ezekiel 28:11–19 NRSV

The reader will immediately have perceived that there exists a certain ambiguity in the text concerning the person to whom the lament is addressed. On the one hand the prophet is instructed to raise a lament over the king of Tyre, so this is clearly the text's primary referent. Yet on the other hand the imagery with which the figure is described does not fit an earthly monarch at all (e.g. "you were in Eden, the garden of God," Ezek 28:13), so the text appears to be addressing the king as though he were someone else. We are not to imagine that the king was actually in Eden, rather the lament is making use of a conceptual metaphor in which the first subject is equated with the second (e.g. *all the world's a stage, time is money, he's a loose cannon*, and so on). While the lament undoubtedly speaks *to* the king of Tyre, it also speaks *about* someone else, and it is this 'someone else' who has occupied the imagination of readers of the text for over two millennia.

There is little debate among commentators surrounding the identity of the first subject, the King of Tyre. Most accept the view that Ezekiel had an actual historical figure, probably Ithobaal (or Ethbaal) II, who ruled over Tyre between 887 and 856 BCE,⁴ in his sights, though some have found the lack of personal details and allusions to particular political policies to be of such a type that the lament could have been aimed at any Tyrian king.⁵ It may also be the case that the king of Tyre is intended to represent the city-state or the people of Tyre as a whole.⁶ The primary addressee is, however, of secondary interest. The really interesting question is, To whom or to what is the king of Tyre being compared?

A reader taking in hand the lament in the translation of the New Revised Standard Version given above could be forgiven for assuming that this question could be dealt with rather swiftly. That the text speaks of Adam seems irrefutable. “*You were in Eden, the garden of God*” (Ezek 28:13) we read. Can this be other than the translation of Adam into Eden of which Genesis 2:8 speaks: “*the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed*” (NRSV)? The figure of the Ezekiel text is placed “*with an anointed cherub as guardian*” who later drives him out from the Garden (NRSV Ezek 28:14, 16). Surely this is none other than the cherubim who are stationed at the east of the Garden to guard the way back to the tree of life (Gen 3:24)? One might note other features too, such as the onyx stone, present in both settings (Gen 2:12; Ezek 28:13). Indeed, most study Bibles will provide the reader with these cross-references. Yet the situation is not so straightforward.

A reader of the King James Version, which despite its many and well known failings remains the inerrant Word of God for many to this day, by contrast may find it difficult to understand why there is talk of Adam at all. After all Adam was created as a man and not as a cherub as the text of the KJV unequivocally states of the character in Ezekiel’s lament: “*Thou art the anointed cherub that covers,*” (KJV Ezek 28:14) and later “*I*

⁴ On whom see Aubet, *The Phoenicians and the West*, 46–51, 56.

⁵ E.g. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 390; Ellison, *Ezekiel*, 110; Williams, ‘The Mythological Background of Ezekiel 28:11–19?’, 60–61.

⁶ Allen accepted the identification of Ethbaal II as the addressee of the lament, arguing that he represented the city-state as a whole, Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 93. Others saw the king as figurative, but rejected to specific identification with Ethbaal II, e.g. Habel, ‘Ezekiel 28 and the Fall of the First Man’, 516; Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 313; Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 191; Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 197. Cf. Yaron, who argued that at times the lament was addressed to an individual, while at other times to the people of Tyre as a whole, Yaron, ‘The Dirge over the King of Tyre’, 45–49.

will destroy thee, O covering cherub" (KJV Ezek 28:16). The impression that this text cannot possibly be speaking of Adam would have been further exaggerated for the reader of the Bishops' Bible (1568), upon which the KJV is based, in which we find that not only is the figure a cherub as in the KJV, but the reference to Eden—present in the KJV—is absent altogether. Instead we read "*Thou hast ben in the pleasaunt garden of God (sic)*" (BISHOPS' Ezek 28:13). Might the reader of the Bishops' Bible not be justified in connecting this casting down of an anointed cherub with the fall of Satan, of which Jesus speaks: "*I sawe Satan as it had ben lyghtnyng, fallyng downe from heaven (sic)*" (BISHOPS' Luke 10:18).⁷ We will return to these opposing translations shortly, but before we do it will be useful to sketch out briefly the dominant mode in which the scholarly world has dealt with Ezekiel's perplexing text in order to set this study in its wider scholarly context.

THE PRE-HISTORY OF THE TEXT

Undoubtedly the reason why Ezekiel 28:11–19 has inspired so much interest is its apparent similarities to the account of Adam in Eden from Genesis 2–3. Critics have recognized these similarities both in the general shape of the two texts (e.g. perfection prior to punishment) and in certain common features (e.g. Eden, garden, presence of the cherub—and more tenuously the figure's wisdom⁸ and royalty,⁹ and the precious stones¹⁰). On this basis it has become widely accepted that a relationship exists between the text of Ezekiel and the famous story of Genesis.

While some scholars have postulated a direct textual dependence of Ezekiel on the narrative of Genesis,¹¹ the commonality between the two texts has more frequently been explained by the view that the authors had made use of a common legend, drawn from the mythical traditions of the ancient Near East, which concerned itself with the origins of the human race. Some scholars pointed to particular mythical traditions from

⁷ On the English language translations mentioned here, see Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 338–47, 427–50, 738–43. A digital facsimile of the complete Bishops' Bible (in various printings) can be viewed at <http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> (20 July 2010).

⁸ Implied by Adam's naming of the animals.

⁹ The description of the figure as a "seal" (סֹדֶה, Ezek 28:12) may indicate royalty (cf. Jer 22:24; Hag 2:23). Adam reflects this royal status because he was given dominion over the animals. See Callendar, 'The Primal Human in Ezekiel and the Image of God', 180–86.

¹⁰ Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 123.

¹¹ E.g. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 197; Biggs, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 87; Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 96; apparently also Pohlmann, *Hesekiel: Kapitel 20–48*, 392.

neighbouring cultures that are reflected in both texts,¹² while others were content to speak more generally of material drawn from the common cultural milieu, whether drawn from Mesopotamia or Canaanite culture,¹³ or from a “native Hebrew tradition.”¹⁴

Yet while these two texts share a number of common elements, they also differ in several important respects. There is no woman or serpent in the Ezekiel text, for example; the events take place on the Holy Mountain in Ezekiel, yet there is no mention of a mountain in Genesis; Ezekiel’s lament condemns the figure to complete and immediate annihilation, whereas Adam is banished from the garden to a life of hard toil. In the minds of many scholars these dissimilarities were more convincingly explained by assuming that a distinct myth lay behind Ezekiel’s lament, than by the view that the discrepancies were the result of material having undergone a process of ‘demythologizing’ as it was being cast into the Genesis narrative,¹⁵ that both writers had used the source material freely,¹⁶ or that these features were simply the imaginative invention of the prophet.¹⁷ The most substantiated of these was the suggestion of Pope (1955) that the deposition of the head of the Ugaritic pantheon, El, by the storm god, Baal, was the story at the root of the Ezekiel text;¹⁸ less substantiated arguments attempted to connect the text explicitly with Tyre by suggesting that an old myth concerning the Tyrian god *Melqart* lay in the background.¹⁹

¹² E.g. John Van Seters identified a Neo-Babylonian mythical text in the tradition of Atrahasis as the sources; Van Seters, ‘The Creation of Man and the Creation of the King.’ Fauth compared both to the paradise-garden found in the Rash Shamra texts; Fauth, ‘Der Garten des Königs von Tyros bei Hesekeel vor dem Hintergrund vorderorientalischer und frühjüdischer Paradiesvorstellungen’. Müller pointed to similarities between both texts and the Gilgamesh Epic (in particular the precious stones); Müller, ‘Parallelen zu Gen 2f. und Ez 28 aus dem Gilgamesch-Epos’.

¹³ Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 315, 313; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 35–40; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 90–91; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 394, 392.

¹⁴ McKenzie, ‘Mythological Allusions in Ezek 28 12–18’, 322 cf. 327. Also May, ‘The King in the Garden of Eden: A Study of Ezekiel 28:11–19’, 169. Cf. Callendar, ‘The Primal Human in Ezekiel and the Image of God’.

¹⁵ E.g. Herrmann, *Ezechiel*, 182; Neiman, ‘Eden, the Garden of God’; Cooke, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 315, 313.

¹⁶ E.g. Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 394, 392.

¹⁷ As suggested by Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 96; perhaps also Biggs, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 87–88, although he is unclear.

¹⁸ Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, esp. 82–105; a view supported by Yaron, ‘The Dirge over the King of Tyre’, in which he argues that Ezekiel used the El myth (as described by Pope) but incorporated elements of Gen 2–3. Cf. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, 172.

¹⁹ Bevan, ‘The King of Tyre in Ezekiel XXVIII’, 500–505; Mackay, ‘The King of Tyre’, 239–58; Dus, ‘Melek Šör–Melqart?’, 179–85; cf. de Vaux, ‘The Prophets of Baal on Mount

The extent to which the mythological background was able to explain the overall shape of the lament remained, however, open to question. An argument such as that of Pope presupposes that the structure for the lament—the idea of a glorious state leading to destruction—is adopted from the mythological sources from which the lament is drawn. Yet others have preferred to see the issue in reverse, arguing that the overweening pride and apparent self-apotheosis of the king of Tyre, induced by delusions of invincibility and prosperity, is what gives the lament its structure into which the mythical language has been incorporated.²⁰

A secondary problem associated with such a comparative approach in the case of Ezekiel 28:11–19 is that only a small number of the scholars to whom we have just referred make use of a myth actually known from extant sources. The majority, by contrast, rely on reconstructing the myth from biblical or other ancient Near Eastern sources: an approach that runs the inherent risk of circular reasoning. Yet even where the putative background myth is known from extant sources the question nonetheless arises as to how similar the myth must be to the Ezekiel text for a connection between the two to be considered convincing. Does the myth need to account for particular details in the lament, or just the overall shape? And what imagery needs to be explained as myth, and what is simply derived from the primary addressee (e.g. is royal imagery drawn from myth or from the king?), or from the prophet's imagination? For example,

Carmel," 242–51; Morgenstern, "The King-God among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanyes," 152–55. Gaster connected the text with the myth of Prometheus, the Titan who famously stole fire from Zeus, though this cannot be thought plausible. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament*, 622–23. Less plausible still is the work of Widengren who explained every detail of the Ezekiel text using a 'myth' that he had synthesised from Israelite, Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Phoenician, and Ugaritic myths, Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im Alten Testamentum und im Judentum*, 26–33; Widengren, 'Early Hebrew Myths and Their Interpretation,' 165–170.

²⁰ E.g. "All diese mythischen Züge untermischt Hes[ekiel] mit den persönlichen des Tyrerkönigs als Personifikation der Krämerseele [petty-mindedness], die er sich nicht ohne Unrecht denken kann" Bertholet, *Hesekiel*, 103. Also Fohrer, *Ezechiel*, 162; Corral, *Ezekiel's Oracles Against Tyre*, 159; Hals, *Ezekiel*, 200. Greenberg shared the view that the lament is a political tale given a mythical colouring, but he insists the mythical motifs stemmed from Israelite tradition, drawing primarily on the motifs of Eden and the Jerusalem Temple mount, motifs that, as Newsom (1984) pointed out, are essentially mutually reinforcing. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37*, 592; Newsom, 'A Maker of Metaphors—Ezekiel's Oracles Against Tyre,' 161–62. On the praxis of imagery see Levenson, "The Mountain of Ezekiel's Vision as Mount Zion" (7–24) and "The Mountain of Ezekiel's Vision as the Garden of Eden" (25–36) in his *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48*; Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,' 19–25; Himmelfarb, 'The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, the Book of the Watchers, and the Wisdom of ben Sira,' 63–78, esp. 64–66. Cf. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 110.

Van Seters advocates a myth that contains the elements of creation and kingship but nothing of the king's fall from favour or setting in and expulsion from paradise, which he consigns to "Ezekiel's own invention."²¹

In pointing out some of the limitations and weakness of this approach, I do not wish in any way to disparage it. Research that concerns itself with setting the text within the context of ancient Near Eastern imagery and mythology, and assessing the extent to which this cultural locale has exerted an influence over the shape and message of Ezekiel, provides us with valuable information about what may lay behind the text. On what historical sources did Ezekiel draw? What cultural influences exerted themselves on Israelite prophecy in the first half of the sixth century BCE? These continue to be questions of the utmost importance.

INTERPRETATIONS

However, while acknowledging the intrinsic value of such a contextual approach, one must equally acknowledge that it deals only with a relatively short, if important, period of the text's history, namely the earliest stages of its formation. It is only in the Modern period that what stood immediately 'behind' any given biblical text began to exert an influence in any significant way over how people have understood the text. For the majority of the text's history its audience has been oblivious to these cultural or textual influences that might, centuries earlier, have shaped it. Rather, the text was read, heard, and interpreted in the form that lay before its audience, and often within a theological framework that would have been as alien to the text's original author as it is to modern critical scholarship. How the text has been read deserves our attention.

In this study we want to give attention not to the pre-text history of the text, what lies 'behind' it, but to the post-text history. In other words, we are concerned with the question, once the text had been written, how was it understood? Our aim, therefore, is to trace something of the history of the text's interpretation. In this book we want to tell the story of how this lament was interpreted among its earliest communities of readers. In particular we will be concerned with the differing ways in which the central figure of the lament has been re-imagined, or 'refigured', in different communities and in different periods.

²¹ Van Seters, 'The Creation of Man and The Creation of the King', 340.

We begin our story with the starkly differing interpretations of the text to be found in rabbinic Judaism and nascent Christianity from the period (roughly) between the destruction of the Second Jewish Temple in 70 CE and the collapse of the Roman empire following Alaric and his Visigoth's ruthless sacking of Rome in 410 CE and the eventual deposition of the last western emperor, Romulus Augustus, in 476 CE (an event that typically defines the end of classical Antiquity). This period is marked as much by developments within both traditions as by these external events: the decisive formative effect of the closure of the Babylonian Talmud or the succession of council following that of Nicaea (325 CE) is hard to overstate.

Debating and interpreting the text in this period, the classical rabbinic authorities with which we shall deal believed the text to be speaking about Adam, the first man. The Church Fathers, for the large part engaged in fierce battle against the forces of heterodoxy, read the text rather differently. For them the text spoke not of Adam, but of Satan, a figure that is almost as absent from the Hebrew Scriptures as Adam. The contrast between the two interpretations of the text could hardly be greater.

TEXTS

By pre-empting our results in this way, the reader will have noticed that the two tendencies observed in the differing English translations cited above, are also evident among Jewish and Christian interpretations of the passage dating from late Antiquity. Returning to those alternative translations then, the reader may well wish to know which is correct. Which most accurately translates the text of Ezekiel 28:11–19? In a certain sense they all do.

The problem lies not with the translators *per se* but with the texts they translate and with the lexical and syntactical difficulties attending upon them. The NRSV accurately translates a *textus mixtus*, that is to say a Hebrew text that has been emended according to the best available insights of modern text-critical scholarship. At certain points it adopts the reading of the Septuagint (in particular the reading “*With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you*” Ezek 28:14 NRSV), the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible that served as the Old Testament of the early Church and remains to this day the Old Testament of Greek speaking congregations in the Orthodox Church. The King James Version and the Bishops' Bible translations, on the other hand, stand much closer at

these points to the Hebrew text that is accepted as authoritative within rabbinic Judaism, though both owe a debt to earlier English and other European translations of the 16th century. The Bishops' Bible's "*pleasaunt garden of God*" probably owes something to the reading of the Vulgate, the Latin translation that served as the Bible of the Western Church for most of its history.

That this single text can produce such differing translations is a result not only of the considerable lexical and syntactic difficulties with which the translator of Ezekiel 28:11–19 is faced, but also with a much profounder problem of deciding which text one ought to be translating. Up until this point I have spoken rather loosely of '*the text*', but in truth no such thing as '*the text*' of Ezekiel 28:11–19 exists.

Ezekiel's prophetic ministry was carried out either exclusively in Babylon²² or partly in Palestine²³ and is probably to be dated to the twenty-two years from the fifth year of Jehoiachin's exile (i.e. 593–571 BCE), as the book of Ezekiel describes (1:2; 29:17). The oracles against Tyre probably date from around the time of siege of Jerusalem (c. 586 BCE). The oracles of the prophet were then adapted into written form and arranged into a complete written work, a process with which the prophet himself may well have been involved.²⁴ If a single textual form were achieved at this point, nothing remains of it. Our principal witnesses to the text are the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text, of which our earliest complete manuscript dates from over one and a half millennium after this date, and ancient translations of the Hebrew, the most important of these being the Septuagint, a Greek translation prepared in the first half of the second century BCE. These witnesses to the text differ dramatically.

Past scholarship on the book of Ezekiel has tended to focus on restoring the text to its 'pristine' form, or at least to a form much nearer the 'original' by emending the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text, which is generally considered to have become seriously corrupt through accident and deliberate alteration. In reconstructing the text in this way scholars have given

²² E.g. Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 6; Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, Intro xxiii–xxiv; Fohrer, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel*, 8–26, 240f; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, Intro. xx; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 15; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: a Commentary*, 7–9; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 24–25. Some argue that his ministry was exercised exclusively in Palestine, e.g. Hertrich, *Ezechielprobleme*, esp. 124–30; Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1–19*, Intro. xxiii–xxv.

²³ E.g. Bertholet, *Hesekiel*, 12–17; Auvray, 'Le Problème Historique du Livre d'Ézéchiél', 519; Robinson, *Two Hebrew Prophets*, 75–79; May, 'The Book of Ezekiel', 57–58; Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 106 n. 20.

²⁴ For an overview of scholarship see Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 7–16.

priority to the Septuagint, believing it to witness an earlier form of the text into which fewer corruptions have crept. This has been and remains the dominant *modus operandi* of scholarship on the text,²⁵ even if scholars have differed in their views of how each of the textual witnesses ought to be weighed in the process of reconstruction.²⁶

Walther Zimmerli, in his important and influential commentary on Ezekiel, took this reconstructive approach to its logical extreme. He believed not only that a better text could be recovered (principally on the basis of the Septuagint), but also that it was possible to recover the spoken word of the prophet. He believed that fixed units “first minted in oral delivery” could be separated from the editorial layers subsequently added by Ezekiel himself and his ‘school’ in a process of “updating of tradition” by identifying metrical or rhythmic sections, which he took to be the “unaltered deposit of spoken address” on the principle that “rhythm is for the ear, and not for the eye.”²⁷ Yet Zimmerli did not limit himself to those parts where rhythm or metre were already present, but drastically revised the text (including Ezek 28:11–19, which he considered “badly disturbed”) in order to restore the putative metre where it was lacking.²⁸

Zimmerli’s contribution was doubtless novel, but it was also highly speculative,²⁹ and may be subjected to the same criticism as other reconstructive approaches, namely that judgements as to when a text is in

²⁵ Following in particular the lead of Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, Intro. xl–xli (and throughout his commentary), who built on the earlier work of Cornill, *Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel*, Prolegomena, esp. 12, and in the body of the commentary. Among the most important commentators are, Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 30, 156f; Pohlman, *Das Buch des Propheten Hesekiel (Ezechiel) Kapitel 1–19*, 41, 389–90; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 11–12; 389–90.

²⁶ Jahn (1905) gave absolute priority to the Septuagint, Jahn, *Das Buch Ezechiel auf Grund der Septuaginta hergestellt*, Vortwort iii–vi. Greenberg, famously, to the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text, Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 19. Cf. Allen, who gives the Masoretic Text a more favourable assessment than most, Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, Intro. xxiii; Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, Intro. xxviii. Cf. Van Dijk, who attempted to “prove the soundness of the standard Hebrew text” by using lexical and syntactical insights from comparative Canaanite and Semitic studies to resolve “manifold obscurities and problems.” van Dijk, *Ezekiel’s Prophecy on Tyre (Ez. 26,1–28,19)*, Preface. His analysis, however, is inconsistent and frequently relies of speculative textual emendation. For a critique, see Kessler, review of ‘*Ezekiel’s Prophecy on Tyre (Ez. 26, 1–28, 19): A New Approach*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 20 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1968), by H. J. van Dijk’, 213–16.

²⁷ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 68, 71.

²⁸ A comparable, though less radical, approach was taken by Fohrer, who revised the MT based on LXX, then revised the resulting *textus mixtus* based on his own insights to recover the “ursprünglichen Text des prophetischen Wortes.” Fohrer, *Ezekiel*, Einleitung vii.

²⁹ Brownlee pointed out that the itinerant nature of the prophet’s ministry makes it probable that individual oracles were repeated on many occasions, and were therefore

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