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The Chiastic Literary Structure

of the Book of Ezekiel

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The initial impetus for this study came from William Shea: whose enthusiasm for exploring the literary structures of Scripture—especially the phenomenon of chiasmus (*e.g.* Shea 1979, 1980, 1986a, 1986b)—was contagious to many of us, his students; whose ground-breaking insights into Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48 (Shea 1981, 1982) are foundational to this research; and to whom I appreciatively dedicate this article.

Previous Study on the Structure of the Book of Ezekiel

Already in the nineteenth century, commentators frequently noted the intricate structural design of the book of Ezekiel. Rudolf Smend wrote: “The whole book is ... the logical development of a series of ideas in accordance with a well thought out, and in part quite schematic, plan. We cannot remove any part without disturbing the whole structure” (1880: xxi). Even after the cycle of critical attacks on the unity and integrity of the book during the second quarter of the twentieth century, recent Ezekiel scholars are still impressed by the literary orderliness and artistry of the book in its canonical form. Walther Zimmerli remarks: “In coming from the other prophetic books, one is struck by the impression of great order in the book of Ezekiel” (1979: 2). James Luther Mays concurs: “Among all the books of the prophets, Ezekiel’s has the clearest and most orderly arrangement” (1978: 22). Joseph Blenkinsopp expresses like sentiments: “On a first reading of the book, one gets an impression of continuity, structure, and order and of its being a well thought out whole to a much greater extent than other prophetic books” (1990: 3).

John Wevers writes similarly: "It is clear, however, that not only do the divisions of the book give evidence of literary arrangement, but that a single mind imposed some pattern (largely formal) on the book as a whole as well" (1969: 7). Moshe Greenberg's research leads him to accept the validity of his working hypothesis "that the present Book of Ezekiel is the product of art and intelligent design" (1983: 26).

Since the beginning of the Common Era, specific suggestions have been made regarding the overall structure of Ezekiel. According to Josephus, "Ezekiel ... left behind him in writing two books concerning these events" (*Antiquities* 10, 5.1). Josephus seems to be referring to the two different halves of the book of Ezekiel, chapters 1-24 dealing primarily with doom or judgment, and chapters 25-48 dealing with the consolation or hope in the destruction of Israel's enemies and the restoration of Israel and its temple.

The Babylonian Talmud apparently envisions the same bifid structure even as it explains the order of the major prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah) in some early manuscripts:

Since the book of Kings ends with doom and the book of Jeremiah is all doom, and the book of Ezekiel begins with doom but ends with consolation, while Isaiah is all consolation, you see that we place doom next to doom and consolation next to consolation (Baba Bathra 14b).

This "traditional" bifid structuring of the book still has representatives in modern scholarship (Harrison 1969: 822, 823; Brownlee 1986: xxxviii, xxxix; Keil 1976: 7; Nichol 1955: 569).

The preponderance of recent Ezekiel scholars, however, opt for a general tripartite structure of Ezekiel in its present form (Zimmerli 1979: 2; Eichrodt 1970: 21, 22; Greenberg 1983: 4-6; Mays 1978: 22; McKeating 1993: 15; Allen 1990: xiii; Fishbane 1984: 131; Zvi 1993: 93; Cooke 1936: xvii; Hals 1989: 3, 4; Cassuto 1973: 227). The three generally acknowledged sections of the book are chapters 1-24 (prophecies of judgment), 25-32 (oracles against the foreign nations), and 33-48 (prophecies of hope and restoration). There is wide recognition of numerous parallels between the first and third sections, thus yielding an A-B-A' structural pattern (Hals 1989: 3, 4; Haran 1979: 51-53; Talmon and Fishbane 1976: 138-149; McKeating 1993: 15, 16, 99-104; Wevers 1969: 3-7; Mays 1978: 22-24).

Some modern scholars subdivide the third section into chapters 33-39 (Israel's restoration) and 40-48 (The New Temple and Cult), thus arriving at a fourfold division of the book (Stalker 1968: 5-12; Wevers 1969: 1, 7-11; Feinberg 1969: 14, 15; May 1956: 64), and the first section has also been subdivided into chapters 1-3:21 (Ezekiel's call) and 3:22-24:27 (Prophecies of Doom), thus yielding five major divisions to the book (Ellison 1956: 13).

A number of recent studies deal with literary structural relationships in

various sub-units of Ezekiel, without attempting to set forth the literary structure of the entire book. For examples, Henry van Dyke Parunak (1980) analyzes the relationships of the three visions of the book called "the visions of God": Ezekiel 1-3, 8-11, and 40-48; Fishbane (1984) traces the sin-judgment theme and structure throughout Ezekiel 4-24; Tuell (1992: 20) sets forth a chiasm in Ezekiel 4-48; Talmon and Fishbane (1976) study structural elements in Ezekiel 13 and 40-43 (in linkage with 8-11); and Brownlee (1978) examines the "watchman" parable structure in Ezekiel 3 and 33.

To my knowledge, only two modern studies attempt to set forth in any detail the literary arrangement or structure of the entire book of Ezekiel. Cassuto attempts to explain the present arrangement of the book of Ezekiel in terms of Eastern (opposed to Western) methods of organization by length and by association of ideas and words (1973: 227-240). He seeks to trace the working of these principles throughout the book, focusing especially on the "criterion of association" which he sees operating in each sub-unit of the three main sections of the book. While Cassuto does point out many words, phrases, and ideas which recur in succeeding units of the book, his analysis is often far from convincing. Moreover, Cassuto's aim is to account for the present ordering of units within the three main sections of the book; he does not attempt to discover the overarching literary macrostructure of Ezekiel's prophecies.

Parunak (1978) has written the most comprehensive study of literary structures in the book of Ezekiel. Written in the rising wake of the New Literary Criticism, Parunak's study traces the rise of scholarly interest in the literary artistry of Scripture since Robert Lowth, synthesizes principles of structural analysis, and applies these principles in a relatively comprehensive surface structural analysis of the book of Ezekiel. The major strength of this study is in the surface microstructural analyses of units and sub-units of Ezekiel's prophecies, revealing numerous appearances of chiastic structure and block parallelism (which Parunak labels alternations). Parunak's brief treatment of the macrostructure of the entire book is far less satisfactory. His proposed overall literary structure is diagrammed in table 7.1.

Although Parunak attempts to explain the balance of this macrostructure, in so doing, he has to redefine the term "balance" almost to the point of special pleading. Parunak's excellent surface microstructural work in Ezekiel is simply not matched by a convincing macrostructure of the book. To Parunak's credit, he does not insist that his macrostructure of Ezekiel is the last word. In his discussion of the theory of structural analysis, he rightly points to the principle of concurrence, in which several different structural patterns may be superimposed on each other (1978: 75, 76).

One specific weakness of Parunak's study is his treatment of Ezekiel 1-11. By dividing Ezekiel 1-11 into three different sub-sections, Parunak is not able to recognize key areas of correspondence in the book.

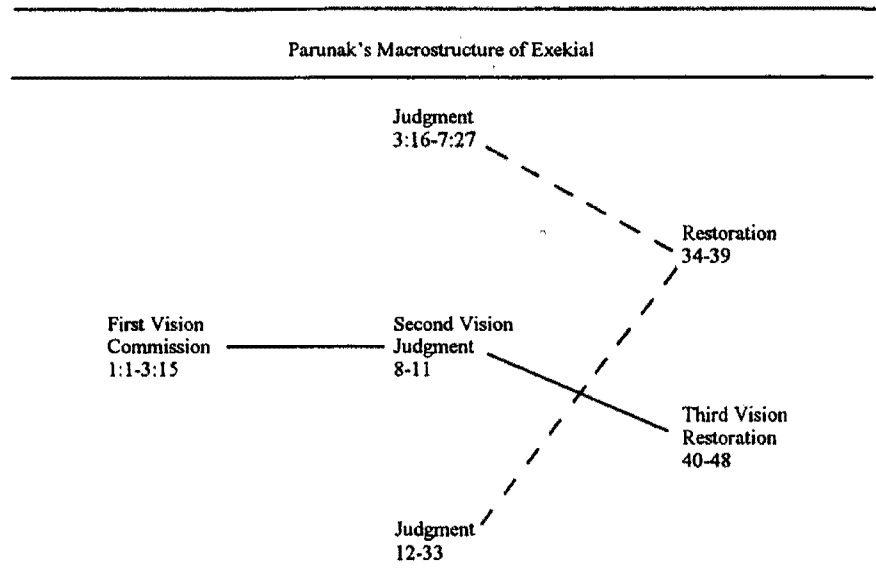


Table 7.1. Parunak's literary structure (after 1978: 118, table 4).

The special contribution of Shea to the discussion of literary structure in Ezekiel comes in his recognition of Ezekiel 1-11 as a discrete literary unit which balances the book's concluding section of Ezekiel 40-48. Various scholars have pointed out the balancing relationship between the units of Ezekiel 1-3 and 40-48 (e.g. Taylor 1969: 14, 15), and other scholars have noted the balancing relationship between the units of Ezekiel 8-11 and 40-48 (e.g. McKeating 1993: 102), but to my knowledge Shea is the first to show how the whole of Ezekiel 1-11 is integrated as a single literary unit and to recognize that this whole unit matches and counterbalances the unit of Ezekiel 40-48 at the end of the book.

The Chiastic Literary Structure of Ezekiel

The chiastic literary structure of Ezekiel: an overview. My own research on Ezekiel's literary structure began as a result of reading Shea's analysis of the opening and closing matching sections of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48), as mentioned above (and to be detailed below). The hypothesis presented itself that if Ezekiel 1-11 was the counterbalance to Ezekiel 40-48, perhaps these sections formed the outer members of a detailed chiastic structure that encompassed the whole book. Further study testing this hypothesis has revealed that the prophecies of Ezekiel not only have a general A-B-A' chiastic

pattern as widely recognized, but also appear to be arranged in a much more detailed chiasmic literary macrostructure. Not only do the opening and closing sections of the book (Ezekiel 1-11, 40-48) parallel each other, but other sections of Ezekiel's prophecies follow an intricate chiasmic pattern. The Oracles of Judgment (Ezekiel 12-23) are the chiasmic counterbalance of the Oracles of Restoration (Ezekiel 34-39). Ezekiel 24 and 33 are pivotal in the chiasmic arrangement of the book: in Ezekiel 24 the fate of Jerusalem is sealed as the city is besieged, and in the chiasmic counterpart Ezekiel 33, word reaches Ezekiel that Jerusalem has fallen. In the transition between these two pivotal chapters and the events they describe (the siege and fall of Jerusalem), the prophet's attention is turned to the fate of Israel's surrounding neighbors, and the oracles of judgment against the nations (Ezekiel 25-32) are presented in two corresponding parts. Finally, in the chiasmic center of the book of Ezekiel, the cosmic curtain is pulled back, as it were, and God reveals to Ezekiel the cosmic judgment upon the Fallen Cherub who stands behind the scenes of human affairs (Ezek 28:11-19). Table 7.2 gives a schematic overview of this structure.

The Chiastic Structure of Ezekiel

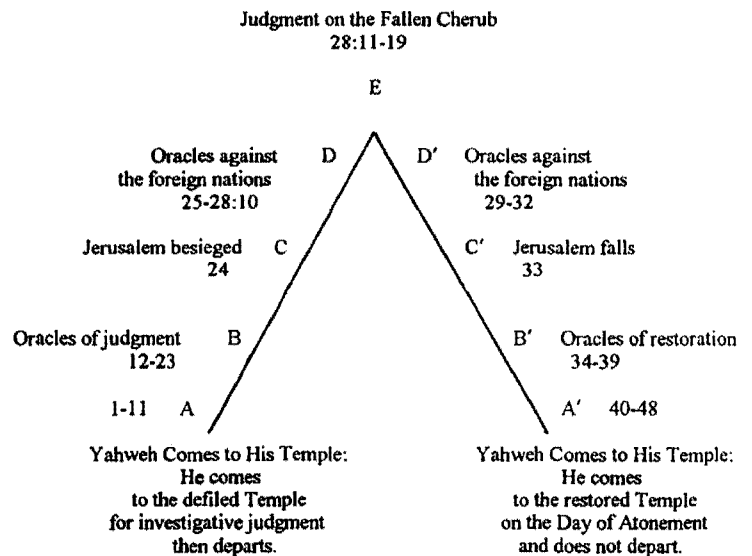


Table 7.2. A schematic overview of the book of Ezekiel.

A-A' (Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48): Yahweh comes to His temple. The following summarizes Shea's insights regarding the unity of theme, structure, and focus in Ezekiel 1-11; the relationship between this material and Ezekiel 40-48 (1981: 12-24); and some points not presented by Shea.

According to Ezek 1:1, 2, Ezekiel's ministry began in July 592 BC, only some 3 1/2 years before the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, which started in January 588. Thus Ezekiel gave God's last warning message to Judah just before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Commentators have rightly recognized that the vision of Ezekiel 1 concerns the glory of God, but they have only incidentally noted the emphasis on motion involved in the vision—the wings of the living beings (1:6, 8, 11, 14) and the four wheels of the divine chariot throne, all in intense intentional and directional movement (1:15-21). God is going somewhere. Where? Already in Ezek 1:4 there is a hint, since the storm-cloud chariot comes from the north, implying that He is heading to the south.

What is implicit in Ezekiel 1 becomes explicit in Ezekiel 8-11. In Ezek 8:1 we have another dateline, this time coming some 14 months later than the first vision (*i.e.* September 591). Ezekiel is taken in vision to Jerusalem, to the temple, and the glory of God which He had seen in his vision is there (Ezek 8:4). Ezekiel 9:3 reveals more specifically that God had taken up residence in the Most Holy Place of the Jerusalem temple, presumably for most if not all of the interluding 14 months since Ezekiel began his ministry (Shea does not point out that according to Ezek 3:12, 13, 23, the glory of Yahweh appears to have remained in Babylon with Ezekiel at least during the seven-day period of his commissioning., but from the reference to the glory of Yahweh in Ezek 8:4 and 9:3, with the strong implication that He had taken up residence in the Jerusalem temple for a special work, it appears that the glory of the Lord must have moved on to Jerusalem shortly after Ezekiel's call vision.) At the end of this extended residence, He is now preparing to leave.

Why had God come to the temple if His presence was already manifested there by the shekinah glory resting over the ark of the covenant between the cherubim in the Most Holy Place? Shea points out the evident answer: He came to do a special work, and that work is the subject of the chapters between the visions of Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 8—namely, judgment. Following the description of Ezekiel's call in Ezekiel 2, 3, four chapters are devoted to a series of indictments against Judah and prophecies of judgment. Chapter 8 is the climax of indictments, in which Ezekiel is brought in vision to witness the abominations done in Jerusalem. Shea summarizes:

Yahweh sat in judgment upon His people in His temple for some 14 months, according to the datelines connected with these visions, the contents of the visions themselves, and the nature of the messages given to Ezekiel during the interval between the two visions (1981: 287).

Confirmation for this conclusion regarding God's work in the temple comes in Ezekiel 9, where the result of the investigative/trial judgment is seen. The professed people of God are divided into two classes, those who really serve Him (these receive a mark or "T" (tāw), the last letter of the alphabet, perhaps signifying the faithful remnant), and those who did not really serve Him (these are in line for execution; Ezek 9:4-6). The fact that the two groups, righteous and wicked, are differentiated in Ezekiel 9 implies that the decisions regarding this *executive* judgment were drawn up, while God was residing in the Most Holy Place during the previous 14 months—engaged in an *investigative* judgment. In Ezekiel 9, God brings an end to this trial phase of judgment, closes probation on Judah, and proceeds to the verdict and sentence—to the executive judgment.

Ezekiel 9-11 describes the details of God's departure from His temple. According to these chapters, God departs in stages. He leaves His place between the golden cherubim in the Most Holy Place and moves to the threshold of the temple (Ezek 9:3; 10:3, 4), then moves from the threshold and stands over the living cherubim of his waiting celestial chariot (Ezek 10:18), then moves to the East gate of the temple enclosure (Ezek 10:19), and finally moves away from the city to the East and pauses over the Mt. of Olives (Ezek 11:22, 23). Thus, as Shea puts it,

The vision covering chapters 9 through 11 is a reciprocal of the vision given in chapter 1. In chapter 1 Yahweh came to His temple for a work of judgment, and in chapters 9-11 that work of judgment completed, He departs from His temple and city (1981: 289).

In other words, chapters 1-11 are one structural unit, displaying the movement of God to His temple for judgment and away from the temple as His work of judgment is complete.

After a brief review of the evidence in Daniel that the glory of God was still in the east some 70 years later, Shea suggests a crucial, but overlooked, connection between Ezekiel 1-11 and the final nine chapters of the book. The central theme of Ezekiel 40-48 is the restoration of the temple and the return of the glory of God to it. The dateline of these chapters (Ezek 40:1), reckoned according to the fall-to-fall calendar, which Shea elsewhere shows is to be preferred (1991: 130-135; cf. Zimmerli 1983: 345, 346; Cooke 1951: xviii; McKeating 1993: 71; Greenberg, 1983: 11), is the tenth day of the seventh month, or Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement, which that year fell on October 22 573 BC). Therefore,

this vision of the cleansed and restored temple was given on the day of atonement, when the first temple was cleansed ritually during the services. On the day when the first temple was to be cleansed ritually, Ezekiel saw in vision the second temple restored, cleansed, and purified (Shea 1981: 291).

While Shea does not explicitly state as much, he seems to tacitly imply that this Day of Atonement cleansing/restoring activity of Ezekiel 40-48 constitutes a thematic counterpart to the work of investigative judgment in Ezekiel 1-11, since according to Leviticus 16 and 23 (and recognized in later Jewish literature) the Day of Atonement was both a day of cleansing/restoring and a day of judgment.¹ Thus Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48 are linked not only by the coming/departing of the glory of the Lord, but by complementary Day of Atonement themes.²

Shea concludes his study with the following summary:

Thus the visions of God and His glory given to Ezekiel and Daniel center on His temple and His relationship to it. In Ezekiel 1 He is seen coming to His temple from the north to take up His work of judgment there. In Ezekiel 10 He is seen leaving His temple to the east 14 months later, having completed that work of judgment. ... Then He is finally seen by Ezekiel (40:1) on the day of atonement returning from the east to His temple, which ultimately was to be reconstructed (1981: 291).

Many of the pivotal points made by Shea find substantiation in recent studies of these sections of Ezekiel. For example, the analysis of the movement of the glory of God from the Most Holy Place of the earthly temple to the waiting celestial chariot-throne, is confirmed by the detailed linguistic research of Moshe Greenberg (1984: 195-198; cf. Alexander 1986: 786).

Again, the structural analysis of the "visions of God" in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1-3, 8-11, and 40-48) by Parunak (1980: 61-74) and others shows the close interrelationships among these chapters. Tuell speaks of the "interconnected network of three visions (Ezekiel 1-3, 8-11, 40-48), which stand as milestones of Ezekiel's ministry, and as key points in the structure of his book" (1992: 19). Similarly, McKeating indicates that Ezekiel 40-48 "balance the earlier complex of chapters 8-11," and concludes that "these three great visions (Ezekiel 1, 8-11, 40-48) form a major structural element of the book of Ezekiel" (1993: 102).

Talmon and Fishbane provide numerous parallels to show that,

this future vision (Ezekiel 40-48), with which we are here concerned, effectively balances the vision of the Temple in Ezekiel 10-11. Thus, whereas in Ezekiel 10-11 Ezekiel describes the destruction of the city and temple because of the sins of the populace, Ezekiel 40-48 present a new architectonic and political plan for the restoration (1976: 139).

Later in their study they show how,

this patterned and structural arrangement reflects a deliberate attempt to link and balance these pericopae (Ezekiel 8-11; 40-43:12), and thereby integrates Ezekiel's final vision within the larger framework of his prophecies (*ibid.*).

Taylor (1969: 14, 15), Haran (1979: 51, 52), and Wevers (1969: 7) also recognize the close connection between the first two and the last vision of Ezekiel.

Parunak in particular also reveals the pervasive theme of covenant lawsuit (equivalent to Shea's investigative judgment) in Ezekiel 8-11 (1980: 66-69). He summarizes the basic elements of the classic *rîb* (רִיב) or covenant lawsuit: (A) convocation of trial, (B) accusation by interrogation, (C) indictment, (D) declaration of guilt, (E) declaration of doom, and (F) promise of salvation for the faithful. Then follows a demonstration of how Ezekiel 8-11 contains all of these basic elements, arranged in a chiasmic structure. My own analysis of Ezekiel 5, 6 reveals a similar pattern (using lawsuit terminology/elements which parallel the suzerainty treaties): preamble (Ezek 5:5a), historical prologue (Ezek 5:5b), indictment (Ezek 5:6, 7), sentence of covenant curses (Ezek 5:8-17, citing the covenant curses of Leviticus 26), and witnesses (Ezekiel 6—even the mountains as witnesses are corrupt, cf. Micah 6:1, 2).

The major implications of Shea's study for the structure of Ezekiel are two-fold: (1) Ezekiel 1-11 constitutes a unified structural whole, with the coming and departure of the glory of God (Ezekiel 1, 9-11) forming an inclusio around the covenant lawsuit (investigative judgment) activity of God in the Jerusalem temple; and (2) Ezekiel 1-11 is structurally interlinked with its counterbalancing section at the end of the book (Ezekiel 40-48).

While the parallelism between the Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48 is sufficiently clear from evidence set forth by Shea and others, there also appears to be an even more detailed block parallelism (or panel structure) between these two sections of the book. My analysis is still tentative, but may account for the somewhat unusual ordering of materials in Ezekiel 40-48 that is often noted by commentators.³ Note the point-for-point parallels as seen in table 7.3.

B-B' (Ezekiel 12-23, 34-39): oracles of judgment and restoration. Many scholars who argue for a bipartite or tripartite division of the book of Ezekiel recognize some general correspondence (or reversal) between the oracles of judgment and the oracles of restoration. For those supporting the bifid structure, this correspondence (or reversal) includes the whole of Ezekiel 1-32 on one hand and Ezekiel 33-48 on the other as comprising the judgment and restoration sections respectively; and for those supporting the tripartite (A-B-A') structure the correspondence/reversal is between Ezekiel 1-24 and 33-48. Thus James Luther Mays observes: "There is a correspondence between certain units in the first [Ezekiel 1-24] and third [Ezekiel 33-48] parts which gives the two the effect of a balanced relationship" (1978: 23). He goes on to illustrate this correspondence within the matching sections we have labeled B and B': "The revelation of the history of Israel's sin in the past (Ezek 20:1-44; see also chapters 16 and 23) is answered by the announcement of a new salvation history in the future (Ezek 36:16-38)" (1978: 23). This general correspondence/contrast between the theme of judgment in chapters 12-23 and

1. Dateline: Unique double-dating "The hand of the Lord was upon him" "Visions of God" (1:1-13)	1. Dateline: Unique double-dating "The hand of the Lord was upon me" "Visions of God" (40:1, 2a)
2. Glory of God comes from the North (to the South)—(1:4a)	2. Ezekiel looks (from the North) to the South (40:2b)
3. Description of cultic entities: Cherubim and chariot-throne (1:4b-26a)	3. Description of cultic entities: the New Temple and its chambers (40:3- 42:20)
4. Coming of the glory of the Lord (1:26b- 28a)	4. Coming of the glory of the Lord (43:1-9)
5. Ezekiel falls on his face and is lifted up by the Spirit (1:28b-2:2)	5. Ezekiel falls on his face and is lifted up by the Spirit (43:3, 5)
6. Commissioning of Ezekiel (2:3-3:27)	6. Recommissioning of Ezekiel (43:10, 11; <i>cf.</i> 40:4)
7. Indictments for breaking covenant Stipulations: abominations of false worship at the Temple (4-8)	7. New covenant stipulations: "the law of the Temple" for proper worship (43:12- 46:24)
8. Divine glory pauses at the threshold of the Temple, then moves to the East (9:1- 11:13; especially 9:3; 10:4, 18, 19)	8. Healing water (symbolizing the divine presence) comes from under the threshold of the Temple and flows to the East (47:1-12)
9. Promised restoration of the Land (11:14- 21)	9. Borders of the restored land (47:13- 48:29)
10. Departure of the glory of God from the city (11:22-25)	10. God does not depart: the city is named "The Lord is there" (48:30-35)

Table 7.3. Panel structure of A-A': Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48, Yahweh comes to His temple.

the theme of restoration in chapters 34-39 is sufficient basis to juxtapose these two sections of Ezekiel as counterbalancing members (B-B') of the overarching chiasmic structure of the book.

But is there any more detailed evidence of the chiasmic relationship between the two sections? I have found little awareness in the scholarly literature of any purposeful arrangement of the various oracles. John Wevers' remark is typical:

The restoration oracles themselves, chapters 34-39, evidence no obvious arrangement. ... It is evident that though a common theme does obtain in chapters 33-39, no clear principle of arrangement can be fully traced (1969: 4, 5).

However, after a preliminary closer look at the relationships between the oracles of judgment and the oracles of restoration, I propose that there may be evidence of an intricate chiastic connection between these two sections. It appears possible that key aspects of the restoration oracles are deliberately ordered in reverse parallelism (*i.e.* in chiastic relationship) with the judgment oracles. Table 7.4 summarizes the tentative results of my research.

Although some of the suggested parallels are thematic, not linguistic, and thus inherently more open to interpretation, even these thematic correspondences are impressive. Most noticeable are the four Messianic passages in these sections (Ezek 17:22-24; 22:17-22; 34:23, 24; and 37:24, 25)⁴ which occur as two pairs, each in precise chiastic placement to counterbalance each other.

There are a number of precise linguistic correspondences in chiastic parallel in these sections, but the most impressive of these linguistic parallels are the ones that only occur within Ezekiel between these sections, as a *chiastic parallelism*. For example, the “flooding rain” (*gešem šōteq*, שׁוֹטֵף וְגֶשֶׁם) and “great hailstones” (*‘abnê ‘elgābîš*, אֲבָנֵי אֶלְגָּבִישׁ) only occur in Ezekiel in Ezek 13:11, 13 and 38:22; the divine fury upon the false prophets in Judah will fall upon Gog in the time of eschatological reversal. Again, although covenant terminology appears a number of times in Ezekiel, the expression “everlasting covenant” (*b’rît ‘ōlām*, בְּרִית עוֹלָם) is used only in chiastic parallelism in these sections (Ezek 16:60; 37:26).

The most convincing evidence of linguistic parallels is when several terms and expressions recur together in a structural clustering. The best example of such parallel terminological clustering in these sections of Ezekiel comes in chapters 20 and 36. Here we find a whole series of terms, phrases, and clauses that in this combination are found only in these two chapters.⁵

In summary, Ezekiel’s Oracles of Judgment (Ezekiel 12-23) are certainly in general chiastic parallelism with the Oracles of Restoration (Ezekiel 34-39), and there is considerable evidence that the latter are structured in a detailed chiastic repetition or eschatological reversal of the former.

C-C’ (Ezekiel 24 and 33): Jerusalem besieged and Jerusalem falls. Joseph Blenkinsopp (1990: 5) rightly argues that in Ezekiel “chapters 24 and 33 are structurally crucial in the arrangement of the material.” He notes how the first half of the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1-24) focuses upon disaster, while the last section (Ezekiel 34-48) focuses upon well-being, and then further explains why chapters 24 and 33 play such a crucial role in the book:

Marking this transition from disaster to well-being are the pivotal chapters 24 and 33 which bracket the great turning point of the fall of Jerusalem:

Chapter 24 announces the beginning of the siege and chapter 33 the news of the city's capture. Both also refer back to the prophet's call, and the loss of speech announced in 24:25-27 (cf. 3:24-27) comes to an end with the arrival of the messenger in 33:21-22 (Blenkinsopp 1990: 5).

Some scholars have placed Ezekiel 24 and 33 together with sections of the book that precede or follow,⁶ but the pivotal importance of these chapters appears to warrant recognizing them as separate chiasmic members (C-C') of Ezekiel's overall chiasmic structure.

Furthermore, the content of these chapters sets them apart from either the oracles of judgment or restoration. Whereas the oracles of judgment warn of

Chapter	Oracles of Judgment (12-23)	Chapter	Oracles of Restoration (34-39)
12	Judah goes into captivity (sign action 12:1-7, 18) Fall by sword (12:14) Gentiles know (12:16) Land desolate (12:19-20)	38-39	Return from captivity (promised 39:21-29) Fall by sword (39:23) Gentiles know (39:23) Return to land (39:26, 28)
13	Divine fury upon false prophets with "flooding rain" and "great hailstones" (13:11, 13)	38-39	Divine fury upon Gog with "flooding rain" and "great hailstones" (38:18, 22)
14	Four judgments upon Jerusalem—sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence (14:12-23)	38-39	Same judgments (or counterparts) upon Gog—sword (38:21), pestilence (38:22), and wild beasts gorging on the host of God at <i>YHWH</i> 's sacrificial meal (39:17-20)
15	Fire consumes desolate vine of Jerusalem (15:1-8)	38-39	Fire consumes Magog and allies and weapons (39:6, 9, 10)
16	Unfaithfulness to divine covenant: Jerusalem's defilement by spiritual adultery (16:1-59) "everlasting covenant" (16:60)	37 ^B	Faithfulness to divine covenant: "They shall not defile themselves any more . . ." (37:23) "everlasting covenant" (37:26)
17	Covenant-breaking rebellion of Judah's princes (17:1-20) Israel scattered (17:21) Messianic allusion: high cedar (17:22-24)	37 ^B	Covenant-obedience of restored, reunited Israel (37:15-24) Israel gathered (37:21) Messianic reference: New David (37:24, 25)
18	Call to receive a new spirit, turn, and live (18:31, 32)	37 ^A	Call for dry bones to receive the spirit, revive, and live (37:1-14)

Chapter	Oracles of Judgment (12-23)	Chapter	Oracles of Restoration (34-39)
19	Luxurious vine (of land of Jerusalem) becomes uprooted and withered (19:10-14)	36 ^a	Desolate land becomes replanted and like the Garden of Eden (36:35, 36)
20	Rebellion against YHWH's "statutes and judgments" (20:1-32; esp. vv. 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24) "I will ...gather you" (20:34, 41) "hallowed in you" (20:41) "you will remember your ways" (20:43) "you shall loathe yourselves" (20:43) "for my name's sake" (20:44)	36 ^a	"I will cause you ... to walk in my statutes, and you will keep my judgments" (36:27) "I will gather you" (36:24) "hallowed in you" (36:23) "you will remember your evil ways" (36:31) "you will loathe yourselves" (36:31) "for my holy name's sake" (36:22, 44)
21	"Son of man set your face toward Jerusalem ... and prophesy against the land of Israel" (21:2) Israel becomes desolate through the divine sword (21:3-25)	35-36 ^a	"Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it" (35:2) Mount Seir will become desolate (35:2-15) The desolate places of Israel will be repopulated (36:1-15)
	Messianic allusion: "Overthrown ... until He comes whose right it is" (21:25-27)	34 ^b	Messianic reference: "My Servant David" (34:23, 24)
22	Sins of leaders (princes): cruelty/bloodshed (22:1-14) "I will scatter you" (22:15) "I will gather you in my anger" as silver and dross in the furnace (22:17-22)	34 ^a	Sins of leaders (shepherds): cruelty/bloodshed (34:1-10) "I will deliver them from all the places where they were scattered" (34:12) "I will gather them ... as a shepherd seeks out his flock" (34:12, 13)
23	Abominations of two harlot sisters (Samaria and Jerusalem): defiled by lovers (23:1-49) (cf. 24:3-14, filthiness/lewdness)	cf. 33 ^b	Abominations of Judah (33:23, 24): "defile one another's wives" (33:26, 29)

Table 7.4. B-B': Ezekiel 12-23 and 34-39, chiasmic parallels between Ezekiel's oracles of judgment and restoration.

judgment to come, in Ezekiel 24 and 33 the judgment is presented as a historical reality. Ezekiel 24:1, 2 records that on the day that the siege of Jerusalem began (*i.e.* January 15, 588 BC), Ezekiel was informed of this fact by the word of the Lord, and was told to write down the name of the day. Ezekiel 24:3-14 relate and interpret the parable of the boiling pot. Ezekiel 24:15-25 predicts the death of his wife on the same day and the divine command that he not mourn her death, as a sign to the exiles; and Ezek 24: 26, 27 indicates that Ezekiel would be dumb until he received word of Jerusalem's fall. All of these elements emphasize that the doom of Jerusalem is sealed; after this chapter there is therefore no need to warn Israel of coming judgment. In Ezekiel 24, the oracles of judgment upon Judah have reached historical fulfillment, and the focus of Ezekiel's messages is shifted elsewhere—first to the oracles against the nations during the transition period between the siege and fall of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 25-32).

Chapter 33 forms the chiasmic counterpart to chapter 24. Ezekiel is recommissioned as watchman (Ezek 33:1-20; *cf.* 3:16-21). According to Ezek 33:21, 22 the messenger reports to Ezekiel that Jerusalem has fallen (January 8, 585), and Ezekiel's tongue is loosed so that he is no longer mute, in fulfillment of what was predicted in Ezekiel 24. After once more rehearsing the cause of Judah's ruin (Ezek 33:23-33), the prophet enters a new phase of ministry, delivering the oracles of hope and restoration to those in exile (Ezekiel 34-39, discussed in the previous section).

D-D' (Ezekiel 25-28:10 and Ezek 28:20-Ezekiel 32): oracles against the foreign nations. Parunak has engaged in detailed microstructural analysis of the various sub-units of the oracles against the foreign nations, but unfortunately, he failed to explore the interrelationships between the two halves of this section, and thus overlooked the block parallelism (or alternation, in his terms) that unites them. We have outlined the corresponding panels of the oracles against the foreign nations in table 7.5.

A few comments on these correspondences are in order. In panels *a* (Ezekiel 25) and *a'* (Ezek 28:20-26), we find parallel judgment oracles against nations of the Levant, Israel's near neighbors. Both sections begin with no dateline, but with the identical introductory formulas: "The word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, set your face toward ... and prophesy against ...'" (Ezek 25:1, 2; 28:20, 21). Then follows the stock phraseology of the execution of judgment. Panel *a* introduces the series of Levantine nations that are involved; panel *a'* concludes the Levantine series with the consequent implication: restored Israel would no longer be disturbed by the briars and thorns of neighbor nations who despised them, but would dwell securely after God has executed judgment upon these Levantine nations (Ezek 28:24-26). This brief mention of Israel's restoration appropriately appears at the commencement of the second half of the overarching chiasmic structure of the book, the half emphasizing restoration hope.

a. Oracles against first four Levantine nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (25)	a'. Oracles against last Levantine nation: Sidon (with implications for Israel) (28:20-26)
b. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A): introduction (26:1-6)	b'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A): introduction (29:1-16)
c. Babylon as agent of divine judgment on Tyre (26:7-11)	c'. Babylon as agent of divine judgment on Egypt (29:17-30:19)
d. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A'): restatement (26:12-18)	d'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A'): restatement (30:20-26)
e. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B): Tyre descends to the Pit (26:19-21)	e'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B): Pharaoh and Egypt descend to the Pit (31:1-18)
f. Lamentation (<i>qináh</i>) for Tyre (27)	f'. Lamentation (<i>qináh</i>) for Pharaoh and Egypt (32:1-16)
g. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B'): prince of Tyre descends to the Pit (28:1-10)	g'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B'): Egypt and Pharaoh descend to the Pit (32:17-32)

Table 7.5. D-D': Ezekiel 25-28:10 and Ezek 28:20-Ezekiel 32, oracles against the foreign nations; block parallelism (panel structure).

Panels *b* (Ezek 26:1-6) and *b'* (Ezek 29:1-16) constitute the introductory oracles against the two nations that will occupy the stage throughout the rest of this section, namely, Tyre and Egypt. Both panels begin with a dateline (Ezek 26:1; 29:1), and include the divine threat, "Behold, I am against you" (Ezek 26:3; 29:3). The introductory oracle against Tyre is given in the same format as the other oracles against the Levantine nations, thus setting up the reader for a surprise that additional oracles against Tyre follow. The introductory oracle against Egypt is also surprising, since it comprises the only oracle in which a foreign nation will be gathered again after being desolated and scattered.

Panels *c* (Ezek 26:7-11) and *c'* (Ezek 29:17-30:19) focus upon Babylon, the agent of divine judgment upon Tyre and Egypt. Commentators have speculated as to why in the series of six dated oracles against Egypt, only this oracle (Ezek 29:17-30:19) appears out of chronological sequence—actually coming some 16 years after the fall of Jerusalem, but a ready reason is at hand when it is recognized that while Babylon is briefly alluded to in other oracles against Egypt, this oracle details the role of Babylon as the agent of divine judgment, and thus is placed precisely in the position paralleling the spotlight

upon Babylon in the sequence of Tyre oracles, even though the oracle was actually delivered at a later time.

Panels *d* (Ezek 26:12-18) and *d'* (Ezek 30:20-26) provide a restatement of major points emphasized in the introductory oracles against these two nations, thus forming inclusios with panels *b* and *b'* respectively. With regard to Tyre, in panel *d* there is a return to the picture presented in panel *b*: a more comprehensive view of many nations (not just Babylon) successively coming up against Tyre ("as the sea causes its waves to come up," Ezek 26:3), resulting in destruction of city walls (Ezek 26:4, 12), making her like the top of a rock (Ezek 26:4, 14) and a place for spreading nets (Ezek 26:5, 14). Panel *d* supplements the description of panel *b* by depicting the trembling and lamentation of the "princes of the sea" over Tyre's fall (Ezek 26:15-18).

With regard to Egypt, panel *d'*, dated by the text to some 3 1/2 months later than panel *b'*, restates major points and phraseology of the former, in particular concerning Egypt's scattering. The exact same sentence appears once in panel *b'* and twice in panel *d'* ("I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries," Ezek 29:12; 30:23, 26). Both panels emphasize the breaking of the power of Egypt, and the result (repeated twice in each panel) that "they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek 29:9, 16; 30:25, 26).

Panels *e* (Ezek 26:19-21) and *e'* (Ezek 31:1-18) both describe the destruction of the respective foreign nations, and in particular emphasize their descent into the Pit (grave, *bôr*, בּוֹר), into the "lowest parts of the earth" (Ezek 26:20; 31:16, 18) "with those [other nations] who descend into the Pit" (Ezek 26:20; 31:16). Then follows in panels *f* (Ezekiel 27) and *f'* (Ezek 32:1-16) extended and highly metaphorical lamentations (*qinah*, קִינָה, Ezek 27:1; 32:2) over the respective nations.

Panels *g* (Ezek 26:1-10) and *g'* (Ezek 32:17-32) conclude the oracles against the foreign nations with another metaphorical description of descent into the Pit. Both the prince of Tyre and Egypt/Pharaoh are castigated for pride over their wisdom/beauty (Ezek 28:2-6; 32:19) and consigned to die by the death of the circumcised, slain by the sword (Ezek 28:7, 8, 10; 32:20, 21, 31, 32). Panel *g'* describes seven "famous nations" (Ezek 32:18) with whom Egypt and Pharaoh will lie in the Pit: Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, the princes of the north, and the Sidonians. Noteworthy is the mention of the Sidonians last on the list, thus corresponding to panel *a'*, the oracle against Sidon in Ezek 28:20-26, and forming an inclusio around the oracles against Egypt in this section.

In summary, we find the oracles against the foreign nations divided into two blocks of material that unfold in parallelism with each other. Following an initial focus upon Levantine nations in panels *a* and *a'*, there is an extended series of judgment oracles against Tyre within a single time frame that may be subdivided into six panels (*b-g*), and these six panels correspond respectively

to six dated oracles against Egypt (panels *b-g*).

E (Ezek 28:11-19): judgment on the fallen cherub. José Bertoluci (1985) has provided a penetrating analysis of Ezekiel 28. Bertoluci evaluates the various scholarly interpretations, and sets forth persuasive evidence that in this chapter there is a movement from the local, historical realm of the earthly “prince” (*nāgîd*, נגיד) in Ezek 28:1-10, to the heavenly realm of a cosmic “king” (*melek*, מלך), the supernatural ruler of Tyre, in Ezek 28:11-19. Bertoluci’s conclusion, reaffirming the historic interpretation of this passage, is accepted in the discussion that follows.

Here at the chiastic heart of the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 28:11-19, member E), the language is no longer applicable to an earthly ruler, though there are numerous parallels with the descriptions of the “prince” of Tyre and Pharaoh of Egypt, especially in Ezek 28:1-10 and 31:1-18). In contrast with the earthly *nāgîd* of Tyre, who proudly claims to be god but is proven to be but a sinful mortal, “the prophet voluntarily ascribes superhuman qualities to the king of Tyre, describing him in terms suggesting that he is a member of the divine council, and even calling him a *kerûb*, 28:14” (Parunak 1978: 373).

The shift from the earthly “prince” (*nāgîd*) to the cosmic “king” (*melek*), who is the ultimate ruler, is the same shift we find in 1 Sam 8-13. In the latter narrative, God calls Saul the “prince” (*nāgîd*) of Israel, and Himself the one who reigns as king (*mlk*; 1 Sam 8:7; 9:16; 10:1; 13:14). The book of Ezekiel may reflect this same shift when God calls Zedekiah the “prince” (*nāsi*, נשי) of Judah (Ezek 12:10) and Himself the “king” (*melek*) of His people (Ezek 20:33). Parunak suggests the relations of “angelic mentor and human pawn” in Ezekiel 28, and points out that a similar theology appears to be behind Daniel 10 (albeit with reversed terminology), where “the earthly *melek* of a country is set alongside an angelic *sar* (רש), whose heavenly conflicts with angelic mentors of other nations determine the course of events on earth” (Parunak 1978: 372, 373).

Parunak’s well-founded theological insights are not matched by a similar enlightened literary-structural perception with regard to these verses. After such detailed and thorough microstructural analysis of much of the book, he makes no literary analysis of Ezek 28:11-15, averring that this section “does not suggest any strong structural patterning” (1978: 376). What Parunak fails to notice is that Ezek 28:12-15 are in intricate chiastic parallel with Ezek 28:16-19. Here at the heart of Ezekiel’s prophecies is one of the most striking chiastic microstructures of the whole book. The structure in table 7.6 emerged independently in my research, and is confirmed by the almost identical analysis of Bertoluci (1985: 229).

With swift brush strokes and exquisite literary artistry, Ezekiel’s lamentation depicts the fall of the celestial covering cherub from fullness of wisdom and beauty (Ezek 28:12b) and blameless perfection (*tamîm*, תמימ),

Ezek 28:15) to injustice (*ʿawlāh*, עוֹלָה, Ezek 28:15b), abundance of slander (not “trade,” see Davidson 1996: 31-34), violence, sin (Ezek 28:16), pride, corruption and defilement (Ezek 28:17). Bertoluci rightly points out that “The sin or rebellion of the Cherub is the climax of the passage” (1985: 230). Flowing from this climax is the divine judgment upon the fallen cherub: expulsion from the holy mountain of God, exposure, destruction by fire, and eternal annihilation (Ezek 28:16-19). By placing the judgment of the fallen cherub at the very apex of the whole book, Ezekiel appears to emphasize that the ultimate responsibility for earthly affairs is in the cosmic realm, and the angelic mentor(s) of earthly rebels will also ultimately be judged.

Conclusion

To sum up our study, macrostructural analysis of Ezekiel reveals a chiasmic arrangement for the book as a whole, with the schematic arrangement of A-B-C-D-E-D'-C'-B'-A' (table 7.2, above). The matching members of the overarching chiasm alternate between panel writing (Members A-A' and D-D') and chiasmic arrangements (Members B-B' and E), intersected by a pivotal inclusio (Members C-C'). If panel writing sections equal *a*, chiasmic sections equal *b*, and inclusio equals *c*, then the matching sections of the book form the schematic arrangement *a-b-c-a-b'*.

The literary structure of Ezekiel enhances the theological movements in the book. The major focus of Ezekiel upon judgment/restoration is grounded in the motif of covenant lawsuit/Day of Atonement in the literary arrangement (A-A'), which finds further development in chiasmically corresponding oracles of judgment and restoration (B-B'), making a pivotal transition at the Siege and Fall of Jerusalem (C-C'), then looking beyond Israel to the judgment oracles against her neighboring nations (D-D'), and reaching the chiasmic apex with the cosmic judgment upon the Fallen Cherub (E).

Notes

1. The cleansing/restoration is explicit: Lev 16:19 describes the cleansing from the uncleanness of Israel, and Lev 25:9-17 reveals that the Jubilee of restoration came every 50 years at the time of the Day of Atonement. The investigative/executive judgment is implicit: Lev 23:29, 30 implies both trial and execution of judgment for those who do not afflict their souls, or for those who work, on the Day of Atonement. Later Jewish sources make explicit what is implicit in Scripture, and the Day of Atonement (along with New Year's Day) becomes the Day of Judgment (on New Year or Rosh Hashanah mankind's destiny is inscribed, and on Yom Kippur it is sealed; see Talmud *Rosh Hashanah* 16a, 16b). For a convenient summary of ancient and modern Jewish references to the Day of Atonement as a day of judgment, see Neufeld and Neuffer 1962: 61-64.

2. Shea (1982: 13, 24) also sees a typological link between the final judgment upon Judah (which he calls the microcosm) and the final judgment upon the world described in Daniel 7 (the macrocosm). If the typological link between Ezekiel 1-11 and the final judgment is valid (and the reference to Ezekiel 9 in Revelation 7 and 14 appears to confirm this connection), then it is interesting to note that the two parallel visions of Daniel 7 and 8 seem to coincide with the two parallel sections of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-

48). Just as in Ezekiel there is the investigative/trial judgment (Ezekiel 1-11) matched by the restoration of the sanctuary (Ezekiel 40-48), so in Daniel the vision of chapter 7 ends with an investigative/trial judgment (Dan 7:9, 10, 13, 14, 21, 22) while the parallel vision of chapter 8 ends with the restoration of the sanctuary (Dan 8:14). These two aspects of the Day of Atonement complement each other thematically and counterbalance each other structurally in both Daniel and Ezekiel.

3. Note, e.g. the comment of McKeating (1993: 101): "The overall pattern of these chapters (40-48) is thus a somewhat untidy one." My analysis of the block parallelism between Ezekiel 1-11 and 40-48 does not preclude other structural and thematic constraints upon the ordering of materials in these sections. For example, the order of the three main sections in Ezekiel 40-48 follows the order of similar materials in the Torah of Moses. The description of the temple form (Ezek 40:3-42:20) parallels Exodus 25-40; the temple procedures and cultic worship elements (Ezek 43:12-46:24) parallels the material in the book of Leviticus; and the description of the boundaries of the land (Ezek 47:13-48:29) parallels Numbers 34 (for further parallels with the work of Moses, see McKeating 1993: 102; Parunak 1980: 72; and Levenson 1976: 37-49). Again, there may be literary-structural considerations within these larger blocks, such as the chiasmic structures of Ezekiel 1-3 and 8-11 analyzed by Parunak (1980: 61-69), and the concentric (chiasmic) structure of Ezekiel 40-48 outlined by Tuell (1992: 18-20). Thus, more than one thematic or structural feature may be interlocking or overlapping in the overall compositional design of Ezekiel.

4. Some scholars tend to deny the Messianic character of one or more of these passages that have traditionally been regarded as referring to the Messiah (for an exegetical defense of the Messianic interpretation of all four of these passages, see E. W. Hengstenberg (1970: 697-715); James Smith (1993: 361-372)).

5. It should also be noted that, as indicated in the last section of table 7.4, Ezekiel 23 has parallels with Ezekiel 33^a (especially Ezek 33: 23, 24, 26, 29); although for reasons explained in the next section, we treat chapter 33 as a separate part of Ezekiel's macrostructure.

6. So, e.g. Parunak (1978: 158) places these two chapters together with the oracles against the nations as an inclusion to the central section of the book that thus spans chapters 24-33. Allen (1990: xxiii) suggests that Ezekiel 33 may be a "self-contained chiasmic introduction to chapters 34-37, but cites another scholar's proposal that chapter 33:1-20 is a recap of Ezekiel 1-24. A case could also be made that these two chapters continue the extended chiasmic parallels in members B-B' discussed in the preceding section. We have already noted in the previous section that the chiasmic parallel to chapter 23 is a block of verses in 33^a (see table 7.4).

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