

An analysis of the motifs of defilement and holiness in light of God's actions relative to His Name, the land and the nations: An exegesis of Eze 36:20-23 within the broader context of Eze 36:17-38

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Abstract

The name of God is as constitutive of His being as His being—there is no dichotomy. The Scripture presents God as jealously guarding his name in the same way He guards His holiness. Throughout God's dealings with Israel He often demonstrated a keen interest in the influence exerted on behalf of His name especially in relation to non-Israelites. Honoring God's name is exemplified through a life of obedience. The judgment and restoration of God's people are intricately associated with the honor of His name. Defamation of God's name results not only in personal consequences to the individual but the land and those associated with it are also adversely affected. Often times as it is the case in Ezek 36 God's decision to save His people emanates from His unwavering commitment to the holiness of His name.

Key Words:

Holiness, Defilement, Profanation, Sanctuary, Name of God

The old adage “what’s in a name” is not only meant to be an ironic innuendo, it also highlights the importance accrued to a given name. In the Ancient Near East, honor, shame, reputation, expectations,¹ and one’s duty, are associated with a given name (cf. 1 Sam 25:25; Deut 7:24; 9:14; 1 Sam 24:21; Gen 35:10).² In scripture the names of God revealed pertinent aspects of His Character to humanity, and thus, it was accorded the same reverence given to God.³ Hence, the motifs of defilement and holiness quite often resonated around the name of God. In Eze 36:17-38 these two motifs are elucidated as both the dividends of honoring God’s name, and the sordid repercussions associated with its defamation, experienced by both the people and the land.⁴

There are several views that are advanced relative to God’s action in sanctifying His name, and restoring the land and clarifying His image among the nations (Eze 36:17-38). First, it is posited that the honor and glory of God was perceived by the heathens as enfeebled, therefore, in redeeming Israel He was restoring His honor both in their sight and that of His people.⁵

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- 1 Walter C. Kaiser, “שם” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2: 934.
 - 2 F. V. Reiterer, “שם” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 15:135-136.
 - 3 Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena, Bibliology, and Theology Proper*, (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947-1948; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1978), 1:262-265.
 - 4 Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, trans. James Martin, ed., Paul D. Hanson & Leonard Greenspoon (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 247f. God’s action for Him was warranted on account of His holiness. Furthermore, the act of salvation becomes an initiative that resonates as a consequence of the holiness of God. See also, Donald E. Gowan, *Ezekiel, Knox Preaching Guides*, ed. by John Hayes (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 118. Several poignant questions beckons clarification from the context of Eze 36:17-38: how can a holy God forgive and restore a sinful people whom He has allowed to be held captive, and who by virtue of their own iniquity disqualified themselves from standing in His presence? Is the fulfillment of God’s plan to restore Israel unconditional, irrespective of their impetuosity? Was the holiness of God’s name contingent upon His ability to keep Israel from falling into captivity? How was God vindicated in the redemption of Israel from captivity, or in their obedience to His command?
 - 5 C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol 9, *Ezekiel*, Daniel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 110; Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, Word Biblical Commentary 29 (Waco, TX: Word, 1990), 178-179; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with*

Secondly, some see the vindication of God's name as constitutive of His righteousness and justice.⁶ Third, a few see the action of God as a missional initiative that allows Him to ultimately fulfill His purpose of revealing himself to the world.⁷ Fourth, others argue that His actions were emblematic of the sovereign pronouncement of the plan of salvation, and the subsequent Spirit-generated obedience to God's will.⁸ Fifthly, some believe that the passage shows how God's character is exemplified through the lives of His covenant people.⁹

This study will attempt through a broad exegetical, intertextual and microstructural analysis of Eze 36:17-38 to explicate the relationship existing between Israel's defamation of Yahweh's name, His subsequent attempt to sanctify His name, and the effect of Israel profanation on the land

Introduction and Commentary, *The Anchor Yale Bible* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 729; Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol 6, ed. By Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 920; L. E. Cooper, *Ezekiel, The New American Commentary*, vol 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 315

- 6 Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr. *Ezekiel: Prophecy of Hope* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), 217-220.
- 7 G.A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, *The International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1970), 390; K. B. Kuschel, *Ezekiel, The People's Bible* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishers, (1986), 211. Kuschel contends that the focus here is not so much on God's covenant people as it is upon those whom God wants to reach through His people; Keith B. Kuschel, *Ezekiel, The People's Bible* Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing, 1986), 212. God's concern for the holiness of His name was not so much for the sake of Israel as it was for the witness His reputation would have among the heathens; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, vol. 22 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 728. Even though Israel flouted God's decrees in flagrant defiance, it was the influence exerted on the heathens by her recalcitrance that profaned God's name.
- 8 Bruce Vawter and Leslie Hoppe, *Ezekiel: A New Heart*, *International Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 163; Arnos C. Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible, Volume 4, Proverbs to Ezekiel* (Neptune: NJ:Loizeux Brothers, 1970), 314; Robert K. Mciver, *Ezekiel: Through Crisis to Glory, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1997), 184-185; Lamar E. Cooper, Sr. *Ezekiel, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 314-316; Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol 6, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 920f. Ralph Alexander believe that God's actions in Ezekiel was not so much about His honor as it is about Israel being restored to a right relationship with Him, and developing within them a greater sense of appreciation of benefits in their lives; Victor P. Hamilton, *Ezekiel, Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, edited by Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 582. Hamilton accedes to a Calvinistic stance; he exclaims that it is not the behavior of Israel that evokes the judgment or compassion of God, but rather the divine sovereign purpose.
- 9 Charles L. Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel: The Glory of God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 208-209.

and surrounding nations. Methodologically, it will first seek to intertextually interface the motif of holiness in Ezekiel with the Pentateuch and the other parts of scripture, so as to establish the broader picture of holiness and defilement. Finally, a microstructural analysis of Eze 36:17-38 relative to motifs of holiness and defilement will be undertaken.

In Ezekiel, Israel's defilement is associated with their conduct, actions and attitudes (36:17,18),¹⁰ a theme that is explicated throughout the Prophets.¹¹

The Pī'el forms of טָמָא¹² and חָלַל¹³ occurs mostly in Leviticus and Ezekiel where the emphasis pertains to actions that are in open defiance to establish norms, or that bring open reproach to the offended.¹⁴ Quite often these actions tarnish both the character of the offender, the offended, and the land in which the defilement occurs (see Jer 2:7). While it easy to rationalize iniquity implicating the offender and offended, its ubiquitous nature is seen in the fact that its defilement can extend even to the land.¹⁵

10 Defilement in Ezekiel is denoted by two principal verbs, טָמָא (36:17-18), and חָלַל (36:20-23). As an adjective the primary emphasis of טָמָא pertains to persons, things or food ascribed as cultically unclean and thus religiously and ceremoniously unfit (see Lev 5:2; 7:19,21; 10:10; 11:4-8, 26; 47; 13:15,36,44,35,51; 14:40,41,44,57; Num 9:7,10; 18:15; 19:13,15,17,19; Deut 12:15,22; 14:7,8,10,19). The Niphal חָלַל is also used in Eze 21:4,9; 25:3; Isa 48:11; Eze 7:24; 20:9,14,22; 22:16,26

11 see Isa 35:8; 52:1,11; 64:5; Jer 19:13; Lam 4:15; Eze 4:14; 22:5,10,26; Hos 9:3; Amos 7:17; Hag 2:13,14).

12 see Lev 11:44; 18:28; 20:13; Eze 5:11; 9:7; 18:11,15; 20:26; 22:11; 23:17,38; 33:26

13 see Lev 18:21; 19:8,12,29; 21:6,9,12,15,23; 22:15,32; Eze 7:21,22; 20:13,16,21; 20:24,39; 22:26; 23:38,39; 24:21

14 Israel for the most part, engaged in the profanation of God's name that resulted in their eventual servitude. By offering their children to Molech (Lev 20:3), handling holy gifts with unholy hands (Lev 22:2), unfaithfulness to the commandments (Lev 22:23), repeated idolatry (Eze 20:39), and their unrelenting apostasy and captivity (36:21, 22; 39:7; 43:7,8; Amos 2:7) God's name and its character was vilified. Yet, in Ezekiel 36:17-27 God bases His redemption of Israel upon the holiness of His name.

15 Scripture is replete with examples of nefarious actions that resulted in grueling implications on the land. The land was often defiled through disobedience (Lev 18:28), sacrificing children to Molech (Lev 20:3; 2 Kgs 23:10), bloodshed (Num 35:33,34), and the unburied corpse of a flagrant sinner (Deut 21:23). Defilement that pertained to the land instinctively affected the sanctuary (Num 19:13,20; 2 Kgs 23:8; 2 Chron 36:14; Psa 79:1; Jer 7:30; 32:34). Apart from the repugnance of Israel's acts of defilement to God, the already marred land was further plunged into oblivion. The defilement of the land while it accrues a literal connotation; in Ezekiel it appears mainly as symptomatic. The scripture posits the land as subject to defilement and exploitation. For instance, a leprous person was to be isolated both from people and also the camp so as to avoid contamination (Lev 13:46; Num 5:3). Also in Gen 34:10 Hamor offered land in exchange for Dinah's defilement by his son Shechem so as to pacify the gravity of his iniquitous actions (34:27).

The verb הלל is used to denote the profanity of the land (Eze 7:22), against God (Eze 13:19), God's name (20:39; 36:20-23; the Sabbath (Eze 20:13,16,21,24; 22:8,26; Amos 2:7; Mal 1:12), the sanctuary (Eze 23:38,39; 24:21; 44:7; Dan 11:31; Zeph 3:4; Mal 2:11), human beings and their prowess (Eze 28:7,9,16), and the covenant (Mal 2:10).¹⁶ While Israel's profanation cast aspersion God's character and His sovereignty, it most adversely impacted upon their status as His holy people, and the institutions that facilitated communion and harmony with Him (such as the Sabbath, sanctuary, covenant). Moreover, the usage of the Pi'el forms of הלל in conjunction with שם,¹⁷ attest to the act of profanity involving not just a mere mental ascent, but also corroborative actions.¹⁸

The nominal construction שם קדש / שם קדש occurs substantially throughout scripture, especially in Ezekiel.¹⁹ The repeated connotation apart from ascribing of honor to God's name (1 Chron 16:29), pertains to an injunction against its sacrilege (see Lev 20:3; 21:1; 22:2).²⁰ The general sense in which the expression שם קדש found in Eze 36 pertains to the indulgence of behavior that recriminated and castigated the character of God (36:20-22).²¹

16 In the Pentateuch the overarching sense in which the Pi'el form of הלל occurs pertains to that of cultic defilement that religiously disqualifies the offender to stand in the presence of God (Exo 20:25; Lev 19: 8,12,29; 21:6,9,12; 22:2,9,15,32; Num 18:32), actions of open defiance against the will of God (Exo 31:14; Lev 18:21; 19:8).

17 Another interesting aspect of defilement is elucidated by the Pual form of הלל (used only Ezekiel). Whereas its lexical range includes the meaning of defilement as is used in Eze 36:23, the alternative rendering "to pierce, put to death, slain" in 32:26 can also contextually be used in 36:23. This implies that the actions of Israel not only defiled the name of God was (as indicated by the Pi'el), or the land, but its influence was nullified among the nations which proverbially speaking is "as good as dead." Therefore, in some ways God's action of sanctifying His name was a reversal not only from the sacrilegious to the sacred, but also from its "death to life." In this context the need to sanctify His name was both a redemptive and theological necessity

18 According to scripture God's name is profaned through children sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:3), swearing falsely (Lev 19:12), unholiness (Lev 21:6; 22:2), disobedience to God's commands (Lev 22:32; Jer 34:16); disrespecting His dwelling place (Psa 74:7), immorality (Amos 2:7), gifts and idols (Eze 20:39), loss of His land (Eze 36:20). When הלל is used together with יהוה it is most times in reference to profaning God's name (Eze 20:39; 36:22), His Sabbath (Isa 56:6), the sanctuary (Eze 24:21), sacrifices offered to Him (Lev 19:8).

19 See Eze 20:39,40; 36:20-23; 39:7,25; 42:13,14; 43:7,8; 44:8; 46:19; 44:24; 46:20

20 The expression שם קדש as is used in scripture relates either to a warning against profaning God's name (Exo 30:36; Lev 20:3; 22:2), ascribing adoration/honor to God's name (1 Chron 16:10,35; 29:16; Psa 33:21; 88:21; 1-3:1; 105:3, 106:47; 145:21).

21 In a survey of the verbs that govern the name of YWH it was found that there are more verbs

God, in Ezekiel (especially Eze 36) takes an apologetic stance in defense of the profaning of His name. He [God] prior indicated (Eze 20:9-22) that it was because of His name that Israel was brought out of Egypt (vs 9), or spared from His wrath in the wilderness, despite their callous disregard for His will (14, 22). Although swearing not to allow them to see the promise land (vs 15), yet, He allowed them to enter (vs 28). Again, although allowing them to go into exile due to their disobedience (vv 23-27), He is about to redeem them (36:21) on account of Holy name (cf. Num 14:11-23).

In Lev 22:32 Israel was admonished if they refrain from profaning God's name He will be sanctified among them, and concomitantly they would be sanctified. Similarly in Ezekiel 36:23, the verbs *חלל* and *קדש* are used, except that Ezekiel acts like the reversal to the dictum in Leviticus, in that, God's name is profaned by His people, but sanctified by Him. Nonetheless, in either case, the repercussions of profanity remained the same- a diminished status of His people, and the land and relationships with others are tarnished. Therefore, by profaning the name of God, they essentially excoriate their standing as a "holy people," while also casting reproach on the covenant faithfulness of YHWH to fulfill what He has promise.²²

that expresses God's ideal for His people with respect to their positive attitude towards His name. Individuals are encouraged to *קרא* "call" (Gen 4:26; 2 Sam 22:4), *ברך* "bless" (Job 1:21; Gen 9:26), *זכר* "remember" (Psa 20:7; Deut 8:18), *ירא* "fear" (Psa 102:15; Deut 6:2), *הלל* "praise" (Psa 113:1; 1 Chron 16:4), *כבד* "glorify" (Isa 24:15), *אהב* "love" (Isa 56:6; Deut 6:5), *בטח* "trust" (Isa 50:10; Psa 4:5), *חסה* "seek refuge" (Zeph 3:12; 2 Sam 22:31). On the contrary the verbs prohibiting transgressing God's name include: *נקב* "blaspheme" (Lev 24:11; 2 Kgs 19:6), *חלל* "profane" (Lev 18:21; 20:3), *נקב* "curse" (Lev 24:11; Psa 74:10,18), *טנא* "defile" (Eze 43:8), and *ביה* "regard with contempt" (Mal 1:7). The stronger emphasis on affirmative actions towards the divine appellation is indicative of God's expectation from His people in their relation to Him. See Deepati Vera Prasad, "Šem YHWH and it Being Taken in Vain in Exo 20:7," PhD Diss., (Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, 2010), 144, 145, 164, 165.

- 22 The expression *ליהיה קדש* is used sixteen times in scripture referring to the sabbath (Exo 16:23; 31:15), High Priest (Exo 28:36; 39:30); house dedicated to God (Lev 27:14), land sold at Jubilee (Lev 21:21, 23), tithe (27:30,32), Israel (Deut 26:19; Ezra 8:28); vessels and offerings to God (Ezra 8:28; Zec 14:21), spoils of Tyre (Jer 23:18), devastation of Jerusalem (Jer 31:40), Levite's possession (Eze 48:14). In scripture the Sabbath, tithe, God's people, the High Priest, among others, are demarked as *קדש* "holy to the Lord." In Deut 26:18,19 God promises to make for Israel *ולשם* "a name," *עם קדש* "holy people," as well as praise and honor, providing that they are obedient to His commands. This seems as periphrastic way of telling Israel that He wants them to bear His *קדש שם* "holy name" (cf. Exo 19:6) and participate in His divine prerogatives of honor and praise. This implies that Israel in being holy, Israel epitomizes the very name of God.

A closer look at the syntactical microstructure of Ezekiel 36:17-38²³ further explicates the central axiom of Ezekiel 36. The preponderance of the qatal forms²⁴ over the wayyiqtol²⁵ suggests that the author is merely providing background details relative to the thrust of the theme.²⁶ The qatal and wayyiqtol forms in Ezekiel 36:17-38 syntactically can denote actions that are either, or altogether stative, sequential, or even consequential.²⁷ All of these nuances though different are not necessarily mutually exclusive to the other. The use of the Pi'el יטמאו "defile" (vs 17), טמאווה (vs 18), ויהללו "profane/defile" (vs 20), חללוהו (vs 21), חללם (vs 22), and חללם (vs 23), describes the frequentative aspect of Israel's profanity, as well as the facticity of the state incurred as result of actions.²⁸ In order words, Israel's actions were both habituated and also emanated from inherent disposition (Eze 36:17, 20).²⁹

On the contrary the use of the wayyiqtol forms in reference to God's activity appears to be emphasizing the consequential aspect of God's wrath and pity

23 Ibid., 196. The temporal modifier וַיְהִי (36:16) often marks the recollection of past events, as well as the beginning an independent narrative unit. For more uses on the verb וַיְהִי B eginning narrative unit see Eze 25:1;26:1;30:1;31:1;32:1;34:1;35:1

24 Examples of the qatal forms in Eze 36 are: הִקָּה (vs17), טמא "to pour," טמא "to defile" (vs 18), שפט "judge" (vs 19) בוא "to enter/go" (vs 20), חלל "to profane" (vs 21), נחך "to give" (vs 28), בנה "to build," נטע "to plant" (vs 36). See John H. Dobson, *Learn Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 45; see also Practico and Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew*, 129. For usages of the Qal see Eze 36:17-22,28,33-37, and the Pi'el see 36:17,18,20-23,36. The perfect is used eight times in the first person, twice as second person and seventeen as third person. The Qal and Pi'el occupy the predominant usage (19x and 7x respectively), with the Niphal and Hiphil being used once.

25 Some of the wayyiqtol forms in Exe 36 include: טמאו (vs 17), שפך (vs 18), פוץ "to scatter," רה "to scatter" (vs 19), חמל "to spare" (vs 21). See, Oliver Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in the Classical Hebrew Prose*, trans. by W.G.E. Watson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 35-45; see also D. Practico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 129. The lexical range of the future can incorporate the aorist, perfect, pluperfect, and futuristic perfect tenses.

26 D. Practico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 129. The lexical range of the future can incorporate the aorist, perfect, pluperfect, and futuristic perfect tenses; see also Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 85, 86.

27 Ibid., 55,84-86. In a sense Israel's action of going into captivity fits the cognomen of proleptic future, having not yet occurred, yet, its fulfillment is certain (v 20).

28 For more on stative and fientive verbs, see John Lyons, *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1968), 350.

29 Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 44,45.

on His name (see 36:18,19,21,23).³⁰ His actions stemmed from a logical consequence of Israel's frequent recalcitrance, and not as a constitutive part of His being.³¹ Israel's profanation apart from being frequentative,³² it had immense consequence upon God's name, the land and other nations.³³ Thus in sanctifying His name God shows a commitment to His covenantal fidelity, the spiritual wellbeing of His people, and witness of the nations.

Whereas the provenance and fruition of the action indicated by *qatal* and *wayyiqtol* are predominantly past, the effects may perpetuate axiomatically as a state of being, becoming the inevitable terminus of actions.³⁴ Thus, by implication God's act of pouring out His wrath and scattering was upon the totality of an "enduring act"³⁵ which threatened His sovereignty in the world. Whilst the second and third person plural is used most cases to refer Israel's profanity (except in 36:35 where *ישב* is used in reference to the city being rebuilt),³⁶ the first person is used only in reference to God's actions of judging, giving land, planting back the desolate, speaking, pouring out His wrath, scattering Israel, and having pity on His name.³⁷ God's actions here are not only punitive, but also palliative-the end is restorative. Interestingly God is engaged in seven activities/actions, indicative of the completeness or totality of His involvement in restoring the status of His people, the nations, the land, and by implications His name.³⁸

30 Ibid., 88.

31 The only exception is the usage of the Hiphil and niphil to refer to His scattering of Israel (Eze 36:20). The Hiphil often takes a double object one that is the causative object and other the object of the verbal idea, in Eze 36:19 it seems reasonable to assume that whereas Israel sin might have precipitated God's action, the true object of the verbal idea is that of the nations (cf. Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 39,40, 49,50).

32 Ibid., 44,45; Waltke and O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Syntax*, 363,364.

33 Ibid

34 John Adam, *Studies in the Hebrew Text* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 50-54.

35 J.D. Wignkoop, *Manual of Hebrew Syntax*, trans. from the Dutch by C. Van Den Biesen (London: Luzac, 1897), 38.

36 See Eze 36:17,18,19, 20,21,35

37 See Eze 36:18,19,21,28,36

38 The use of the Hiphil *יפציח*, based on Qal transitive takes a double object one that is the causative object and other the object of the verbal idea, in Eze 36:19 it seems reasonable to assume that whereas Israel's sin might have precipitated God's action, the true object of the verbal idea is that of the nations

Unlike the qatal and wayyiqtol forms, the yiqtol³⁹ and weqatal⁴⁰ occurs forty times in Eze 36:17-38 (14 and 26 times respectively).⁴¹ In these, twenty-two times in the first person God speaks to Israel, nine times Israel is referred to in the second person, and four times in the third person to the land and nations respectively. The frequency of God as the subject in first person in comparison to the second and third persons suggest that there is stronger focus on the action of the doer than on what is expected from beneficiaries of God's actions. Furthermore, the usage of the yiqtol forms is typical when the emphasis is placed on the doer.⁴² The action to be performed is regarded as either future, customary, progressive, or even contingent.⁴³ This implies that God's actions of cleansing His people (36:25), giving a new heart (36:26) and Israel's walking in His statutes (36:27), are to be understood as events that are both future and circumstantial.⁴⁴ It can further be extrapolated that the materializing of what God does on behalf of His name, while a guarantee, it is subject to certain conditions being fulfilled.

The weqatal forms not only typifies actions that are sequential and consequential, but also, those that are apodictic,⁴⁵ emphatic, imperatival,⁴⁶ and prophetic.⁴⁷ Thus, the proclamation by God of sprinkling clean water, and cleansing His people (36:25), removing their heart of stone (36:26), saving, and multiplying (36:29), while futuristic, its certitude is absolute. Moreover, the preponderance at which the first person is used relative to the actions

39 Some of the yiqtol forms used include: טהר "to cleanse" (vs 25), נתן "to give" (vv 26,29), הלך "to walk" (vs 27), לקח "to take" (vs 30), ידע "to know" (vs 32), עבד "to work" (vs 34), שאר "to be left" (vs 36), דרש "to seek" (vs 36), רבה "to multiply" (vs 37)

40 The following are some of the weqatal forms used: קדש "to be holy" (vs 23), ידע "to know" (vs 24), זרק "to sprinkle," טהר "to be clean," (vs 25), כור "to take away" (vs 26), עשה "to do" (vs 27), ישב "to dwell" (vs 28), יצע "to save," קרא "to call," רבה "to multiply" (vs 29), זכר "to remember," קוט "to feel disgust" (vs 31)

41 Oftentimes in Hebrew in the narration of a series of future events, the imperfect tense is used initially followed by the perfect tense prefixed by the waw conversive, see E. Kautzsch (ed), *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 132,133

42 Jacob Winegreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 75,76.

43 Arnold and Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 58,59

44 Ibid., 56-59, 88,89

45 Ibid., 88,89.

46 Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in the Classical Hebrew Prose*, 82,83.

47 S.R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in the Hebrew: And Some other Syntactical Questions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 116.

of God, and in comparison to what is expected from Israel and the nations, suggest that God is doing far more comparatively for His people than what was done in the profanation of His name. The table beneath further illustrates this.

| First Person | Second Person | Third Person |
|---|--|--|
| I will sanctify... (vs 23) | You will be clean (vs25) | The land shall be tilled (32) |
| I will take you from... (vs 24) | You will keep my Judgments (vs27) | The waste cities shall be rebuilt (vs33) |
| I will gather together... | You will walk in my statues | The waste cities shall be filled (vs34) |
| I will bring... | You will do my ordinances | The nations will know (vs23) |
| I will sprinkle ... (vs 25) | You will dwell in the land (vs 28) | They will say (vs 35) |
| I will cleanse... | You will be my people | They will a know (vs 36) |
| I will give a new heart (vs 26) | You will remember your former ways | They will know (38) |
| I will give my spirit | You will be regretful | |
| I will take away away the heart of stone | You will not receive any reproach (vs30) | |
| I will give a heart of flesh | | |
| I will do this... (vs 27) | | |
| I will be your God (vs 28) | | |
| I will save (vs 29) | | |
| I will not give famine | | |
| I will call to the grain | | |
| I will multiply the grain | | |
| I will multiply the fruit of the tree (vs 30) | | |
| I will cause to be inhabited (vs 33) | | |
| I will do it (vs 36) | | |
| I will be sought (vs 37) | | |
| I will multiply | | |

In column 1 the first person is used seven times in the yiqtol, and fifteen in the weqatal. The regnant usage of the weqatal forms as was mentioned is indicative of the consequential and apodictic basis upon which the actions of God are based.⁴⁸ This means, that whereas God promises to sanctify His name, to change the status of His people, and restore the land, its fulfillment though certain on His part, yet its reality is contingent upon the actions of the people. The second column enumerates God's desire for His people, which is predicated on what He promises (column 1). The incidence of the weqatal

48 Niccacci, *The Syntax of the Verb in the Classical Hebrew Prose*, 59, 89,90,94.

forms serves to consolidate the apodictic tenor of the divine dictum, while still affirming its consequentiality. Finally, the usage of the weqatal in the third person referring to the land and the nations suggest that its fulfillment is dependent both upon Israel's faithfulness, and God's commitment to His promises. Although sanctifying His name, the result benefits His people, the nations and the land. Thus, His act of sanctifying His name is more for the benefit of restoring, than merely affirming His identity.

Theological Application & Conclusion

Holiness as is shown in Ezekiel 36 is all about God's reversal of the havoc wrought by the sins of His people upon themselves, the land, and the nations. Holiness therefore, is highlighted as the redemptive and restorative aspects of God. The act of sanctifying His name is not an attempt by God to affirm His identity, but rather, its a restoration of His character in the lives of His people, the redemption of His creation, and clarification of His persona to the nations.

For instance, in Exo 20:7 Moses ask God for His name (מה-שמו),⁴⁹ having been given ample evidences that God was the one speaking to Him.⁵⁰ The use of the interrogative pronoun מה with שם in the question of Moses appears to be an idiomatic expression meant to highlight "circumstances rather than the person."⁵¹ The Israelites no doubt had a cognitive knowledge of God, however, haven't spent over four hundred years in Egypt,⁵² they needed to

49 see Vera Prasad, "Sem YHWH and it Being Taken in Vain in Exo 20:7," 69-75.

50 The evidences suggest that Moses was not asking God for a mere name to be called, first, God introduced Himself to Moses as the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Exo 3:6); second, the burning bush was indicative of a theophanic manifestation (3:2); thirdly, the verb קרב "draw near" used with the negative particle אל (3:5) is used repeatedly in the context of the people drawing near to YHWH or His presence (see Exo 16:9; 40:32; Lev 9:5,7,8; 16:1; Num 18:22; Deut 5:23,27), finally, Moses was assured that the ground upon which he was standing was ארמת-קדש "holy ground"

51 Bruce K. Waltke and Michael P. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Syntax* (Wino Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 320

52 The Exodus experience parallels in many ways the present experience of the Israelites in Babylon who probably was asking the same questions of their predecessors- what is the name of this God who promise our forefathers that He will protect them? In Eze 20:9,14 God reminded Israel that they were delivered from Egypt and brought into the promised land in spite of their reproach and absolute disregard to the name of God (20:21,22), yet for the sake of His name He fulfilled His promise. Having failed to learn from the past Israel now finds herself destitute and helpless as captives in Babylon, and God is about to perform another stupendous act again for the sake His holy name. As in the other instances, God's

be assured of God's "essential quality and nature."⁵³ Moses' question focalize on whether the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had the adeptness and rectitude to deliver Israel from Egypt after allowing them to remain so long in subjection.⁵⁴ Most importantly, it was aimed at explicating the condition of Israelites⁵⁵ and Egyptians.⁵⁶

Also, in Gen 32:28 God ask Jacob his name not due to ignorance, but rather to accentuate the new status in his relationship with God (Gen 32:30).⁵⁷ Finally, in Isa 7:14 the Messiah is prophesied called Immanuel "God with Us," however, the New Testament He is called "Jesus" (Matt 1:20-21). It seems Isaiah was concerned with the life and mission of the Messiah-one who is to reveal the character/name of God (John 17:6).⁵⁸ A similar parallel is at work in Ezekiel 36, God is about to reveal who He is, through His act of redemption.

In Eze 36:17-38, holiness is not presented within the nominal connotation of "otherness," rather, it entails a sustainable relationship between God and His creation.⁵⁹ God's concern for His relationship with His people, the nations, and even the land resonates as the central focus of Ezekiel 36. Through sanctifying His name, God reasserts His enduring covenantal faithfulness and the certainty of His promises, while equally emphasizing the conditionality of its actualization in the lives of his people. The notion that God unconditionally bestows covenantal benefits to people, without any regard to their covenantal obligation, is disputed in Ezekiel 36.

The definitive message therefore of Ezekiel 36:17-38 revolves around God's unwavering commitment to salvation, in spite of Israel's incessant perversity and noncompliance. Just as He demonstrated His mercy in their Egyptian bondage and during the wilderness sojourn on account of His holy name, God was again about to demonstrate that His dealings with man is never

action was elicited as result of spiritual destitution of His people.

53 Ferederick B. Meyer, *Devotional Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), 51

54 Vera Prasad, "Šem YHWH and it Being Taken in Vain in Exo 20:7," 75.

55 *Ibid.*, 74; see also Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Exodus* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1952), 29.

56 see John I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC, vol. 3 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1987), 38.

57 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC, vol. 2 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1994), 296; see also Herbert C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* [Leupold on the Old Testament] (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), 2:878

58 Rober Kyser, John, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1986), 256.

59 Ida Glaser, "The Concept of Relationship as a Key to the Comparative Understanding of Christianity and Islam," *Themelios* 11/2 (1986): 57 (57-60).

dependent on human worthiness, but rather on His commitment to the restoration of His image in fallen man and the witness to the nations of His sovereignty. God's sanctifying of His name thus is an attempt to salvage any possibility of the nations being saved, as well as His people being reinstated into covenant relationship.