

Ezekiel 37:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

Analysis

The phrase "**The hand of the LORD was upon me**" (hayetah alai yad-Yahweh, הַיְתָה אֵלַי יַד־יְהוָה) describes divine empowerment for prophetic ministry. This expression appears repeatedly in Ezekiel (1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1), indicating moments when God seized the prophet for supernatural revelation. The "hand" (yad) represents God's power, authority, and control—not merely inspiration but sovereign direction of the prophet's experience and message.

The phrase "**carried me out in the spirit of the LORD**" (vayotzi'eni beruach Yahweh, וַיּוֹצֵאֲנִי בְרוּחַ יְהוָה) describes visionary transportation—whether literal bodily relocation or spiritual vision is debated, but the experience was real and authoritative. The "spirit of the LORD" could refer to God's Spirit or to a prophetic trance state produced by the Spirit. Either way, this was supernatural revelation, not human imagination. Ezekiel was passive—God initiated, directed, and controlled the entire experience.

The image of the "**valley which was full of bones**" (biq'ah vahi mele'ah atzamot, בִּיקְעָה וְהִיא מְלֵאָה אֲצָמוֹת) presents a shocking scene of mass death. The Hebrew biq'ah (בִּיקְעָה) denotes a broad valley or plain, emphasizing the vast extent of the carnage. The bones weren't recently deceased bodies but ancient, dried remains—utterly dead, beyond any human hope of restoration. This vision symbolized Israel's spiritual condition in exile: nationally dead, scattered, hopeless, with no apparent possibility of revival. Yet God brought Ezekiel here not to mourn but to

witness resurrection—demonstrating that what is impossible with humans is possible with God. This vision anticipates the greater resurrection Christ accomplishes, bringing spiritual life to those dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-5) and ultimately bodily resurrection of all believers (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Historical Context

This vision came to Ezekiel during the Babylonian exile, approximately 586-571 BCE, after Jerusalem's destruction. The exiled community believed Israel's national existence had ended—temple destroyed, land lost, Davidic monarchy interrupted, people scattered. The phrase "our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off" (Ezekiel 37:11) captures their despair. They saw themselves as the dry bones—nationally dead with no prospect of restoration.

The valley of bones may reference battlefields where slain armies lay unburied (a horrifying disgrace in ancient Near Eastern culture), or metaphorically represent Israel's spiritual death in exile. Ancient Near Eastern literature contains no parallel to this vision—resurrection of the dead was not a common theological concept in surrounding cultures. Egypt believed in afterlife but through preservation of the body; Mesopotamian afterlife was shadowy existence in the underworld. Israel's developing theology of bodily resurrection (Job 19:25-27; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2) found vivid expression in Ezekiel's vision.

The vision served multiple purposes for exiled Israel:

1. it promised national restoration—return to the land and reestablishment as God's people
2. it demonstrated God's power over death itself
3. it assured them that circumstances appearing humanly hopeless remained under God's control
4. it anticipated spiritual regeneration through God's Spirit (37:14), partially fulfilled in the return from exile but ultimately fulfilled in the new covenant through Christ.

The vision has encouraged believers throughout history facing apparently dead situations—God specializes in resurrection.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What apparently dead areas of your life—relationships, ministries, hopes—need you to trust God's resurrection power rather than accepting human hopelessness?
2. How does understanding this vision's dual application (national restoration and spiritual resurrection) inform your reading of Old Testament prophecy?
3. In what ways does Ezekiel's passive reception of this vision teach us about dependence on God's initiative in spiritual revelation and transformation?
4. How does this valley of dry bones vision illuminate your understanding of spiritual death and God's regenerating work in salvation?
5. What encouragement does this passage offer to believers in contexts where the church or Christian witness appears to be dying?

Interlinear Text

הַיְדֹתָ הַ	עָלַי	יָד	יְהוָה הַ	וַיֵּצֵא נִי	
H1961	H5921	The hand	of the LORD	was upon me and carried me out	
		H3027	H3068	H3318	
בְּרוּחַ	יְהוָה הַ	וַיְנִיחַ נִי	בֵּת וְ	הַבִּקְעָה הַ	וְהָ יָא
in the spirit	of the LORD	and set me down	in the midst	of the valley	H1931
H7307	H3068	H5117	H8432	H1237	
מְלֵאָה הַ	עֲצָמוֹת:				
which was full	of bones				
H4392	H6106				

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 3:22 (References Lord): And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

Ezekiel 1:3 (References Lord): The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

Ezekiel 33:22 (References Lord): Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

Acts 8:39 (Spirit): And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

Jeremiah 8:2 (Parallel theme): And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.

Ezekiel 40:1 (References Lord): In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither.

Ezekiel 8:3 (Spirit): And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

Revelation 1:10 (Spirit): I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Jeremiah 7:32 (References Lord): Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

Ezekiel 11:24 (Spirit): Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.

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