

**EZEKIEL 5:5-17 AND THEODICY: A THEOLOGICAL
INVESTIGATION OF THE CHARACTER
OF GOD**

Name of researcher: Paul Onyango Wahonya
Name of faculty adviser: Jiří Moskala
Date completed: August 2011

The question of the character of God has been an issue of contention among many biblical scholars, particularly when considering the severe punitive actions that he unleashes upon humanity from time to time. This contention makes it imperative to reexamine the biblical corpus to ascertain its portrayal of YHWH's character in the light of his harsh and severe judgments.

The exegetical examination of Ezek 5:5-17 in the context of Ezekiel 1–24 has revealed that YHWH is a God who upholds the terms of the covenant. When his people breach the covenant stipulations, as the Israelites did, he takes appropriate disciplinary measures, some of which may be unprecedented, to register his disapproval of the people's sins. What this implies is that his punishments, although they are painful and may cause intense suffering, are deserved and justified because of the Israelites' persistence in the worship of idols and other abominable practices. Furthermore, YHWH, unlike some of the ANE gods, whose punishments are based on flimsy and baseless reasons, metes out judgments based on weighty matters, such as moral and cultic violations.

Despite the severe judgments unleashed on the Israelites, the book of Ezekiel reveals that God is still loving, gracious, and merciful. This is based on the actions he takes, such as calling the Israelites to repentance, offering them a new heart, a new spirit (spiritual transformation), and being present with them even in exile.

After the introduction in chapter 1, chapter 2 of this dissertation explores the challenges to the character of God as reflected in Ezek 5:5-17. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 respectively examine the basis, the function, and the nature of YHWH's retributive judgment on the people of Israel in Ezek 5:5-17 within its context. Chapter 6 investigates theodicy in Ezek 5:5-17 within its context. This chapter elucidates the implications that YHWH's retributive justice has on his character. Chapter 7 looks at the intratextual and intertextual relations Ezek 5:5-17 has with the rest of Ezekiel and other sections of the OT. Chapter 8 offers a comparison of the character of Israel's God with the gods of the ANE. Chapter 9 synthesizes the findings of the entire study.