Chs. 12–24 is a collection of prophecies picturing the certainty of doom and destruction for the city and nation, which “vary greatly in form, style, length, and subject” (Block 1997: 360). The whole block is framed by two sign-acts (12:1–16; 24:15–27). As examples of variety, there is a grouping related to true and false prophecy (12:21–14:11), a detailed defence of God’s justice in his treatment of the ‘righteous’ and ‘lawless’ across generations (ch. 18), and two extended metaphors, portraying Jerusalem as Lord’s fondling bride who subsequently goes whoring after other gods (ch. 16) and Samaria and Jerusalem as sisters who insatiably whore after other nations in political alliances (ch. 23). The previous date given was August 592 (8:1), and there are just two dates in chs. 12–24: August(?) 593 (20:1; B does not state a month) and January 588, the beginning of the Babylonian siege (24:1). There is thus steady movement towards destruction and the completion of judgment.

While major thematic differences and speech formulae are clues to division positions, variety in divisions in this block is still evident in that the 13 Latin chapters are 21 Greek chapters (two of the Latin chapter divisions do not coincide with the Greek), and 20 major sections (two of the Latin chapters and five of the Greek chapters start within major sections).

[12:1–16] 6 The Exile Dramatized

The first section is introduced by καὶ ἐγένετο λόγος κυρίου πρός με λέγων, also at the start of vv. 8, 17. It enacts escape, soon explained as portraying the futile efforts of the ruler, Zedekiah (vv. 12–13, unnamed throughout Ezekiel)—amazingly, the captor is Lord.

[12:1–6] 6.1 The Sign Commanded

Immediately the obtuse nature of the people is the focus. The language echoes that of Deut 29:3(4): ὀφθαλμοὺς βλέπειν καὶ ὀτια ἀκούειν (‘eyes to see and ears to hear’) occurs there in a description of the rebellious wilderness period, also the time when Ezekiel says the ‘embittering’ began
(see on 2:3; 3:27). Because (διότι) the people continue as an ‘embittering house’ (twice), the judgment of captivity in exile is certain. To make sure the people have the chance to ‘see’ as well as ‘hear’ Ezekiel is to pack ‘in their sight’ ready for captivity. (At the end of v. 3 P967 has ὅτι, suggesting that as the people see Ezekiel’s actions they will recognise their ‘embittering’.)

ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ‘in their sight’ occurs four times in the sub-section and again in the next. In vv. 3 (twice), 7 (and in the other instances, 20:9; 21:28; 37:20; 38:16) the phrase comes after the action, and so this is likely to be so also in vv. 5, 6. This position has been adopted in the translation, against the traditional verse divisions (which follow MT). What is unexpected is the digging through the wall, a picture of escape from the siege, and then the enigmatic being carried concealed and covering of the face.

6.2 The Sign Enacted

In B Ezekiel’s obedient enactment is highlighted as a separate paragraph. The phrase κατὰ πάντα ὥσα ἐνετείλατό μοι (MT has no ‘all’) is evidence of the seriousness of the action, echoing the πεποίηκα καθὼς ἐνετείλω μοι spoken by ‘the man’ in 9:11. The command of God is being effected in its entirety.

6.3 The Sign Explained

Lord does not leave the sign for Ezekiel to work out; as with previous sign-acts (4:1–17; 5:1–4, 11–17) its meaning is given to him. This time the people’s response is mentioned, they are curious (the use of a plural verb with a singular collective subject is common, Conybeare §48, Cignelli and Pierri 2003, §6).

In giving Lord’s interpretation, B starts with a striking affirmation, ‘Lord is the ruler and leader in Jerusalem’, the second κύριος best seen as the subject of the phrase, rather than a repeated title. The hexaplaric Q follows B with the nominatives but A follows MT with εἶπον τῷ ἄρχοντι καὶ τῷ ἀφηγουμένῳ ἱεροσαλήμ (so also Hauspie 2002: 72). Ziegler, followed by NETS, in omitting the second κύριος (earliest evidence is xi CE; P967 is not extant) understands the syntax as ‘The ruler and the leader are in Jerusalem’. This reading suits the context (cf. v. 12), however the text of B remains and is naturally interpreted as a statement about Lord. The dative, ‘to the whole house of Israel’ is then linked with the following