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# The spaceships of the prophet Ezekiel

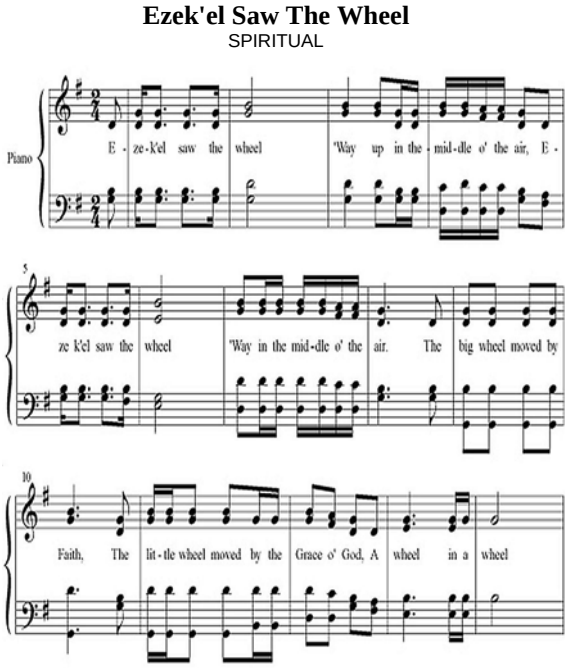
Josef F. Blumrich

*References in some holy scripture to strange machines have prompted, throughout history, speculation and conjecture in order to lend acceptable, if not rational, explanations of the phenomenon reported. Modern technical knowledge and test procedures have been used to reconstruct a model of what was seen and experienced by one of the four great Jewish prophets two-and-a-half millennia ago.*

Any thought of visits to our planet by extra-terrestrial beings is immediately stopped by the realization that existing scientific knowledge precludes that possibility. If such visits could be made at all, they would have to originate outside our solar system, and interstellar journeys would require unimaginable lengths of time. Yet this established knowledge is confronted with the wealth of mankind's myths and legends which claim the exact opposite, that "gods" came from the skies. Their appearances were frequently accompanied by fire, smoke and thunderous noise; their influence on man was, mostly, beneficial. If the source of this information is the "primitive" peoples we call it a fable; if the origin lies in religious scriptures of the more developed civilizations, we interpret the tales in a more spiritual or even holy manner.

That this attitude is unfair and wrong is manifest in at least two respects: it disregards the sincere and honest belief of the peoples who handed down the accounts, and degrades the tales to fictional stories. At its worst, the information is dismissed as the result of hallucination, the effects of drugs, or plain invention. But this attitude is also wrong and unfair with regard to man's future development because it denies even the possibility of progress in the corresponding fields of science.

Thus we seem to be at an impasse because of an apparent conflict between science and legend. Yet the way is not totally blocked: we can make progress in this very important field of knowledge once we realize that science and engineering are two separate (although not independent) activities, each with its own



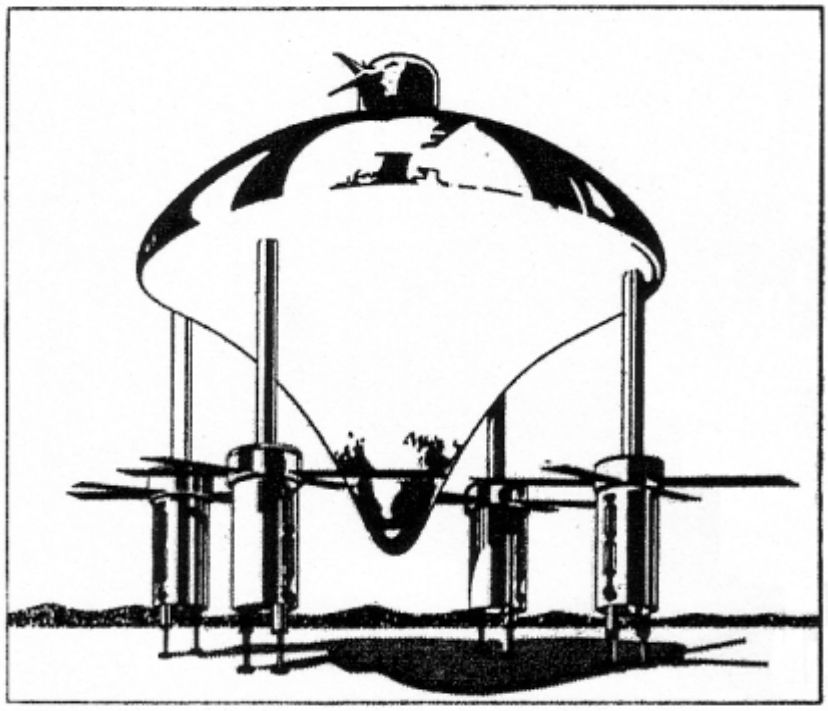


*Fig. 1. Artist's reconstruction of spaceship seen by Ezekiel, viewed from a distance of about 60 metres.*

area of significance. We must acknowledge the present inability of science to help formulate answers to the question of extraterrestrial visitors, while realizing that engineering and industrial technology have not been introduced to the controversy. The participation of engineers becomes an unconditional requirement in the evaluation of configurations and phenomena implying visits from other worlds. Here it is only natural that our fledgling knowledge concerning space flight emerges as a contributor of prime significance.

■ **My interest is aroused.**

My own involvement in the subject of extra-terrestrial visitors began with a vehemently negative attitude. Having worked as an aeronautical engineer since 1934–first in the design and analysis of aircraft, then for the past fifteen years in the design and development of both launching vehicles and spacecraft–I was firmly entrenched in the camp of those who declare visits from outer space to be an impossibility.

It was in this frame of mind that I began to read Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?* His claim that the prophet Ezekiel had encounters with spaceships prompted me to read the biblical book of Ezekiel carefully with the intention of proving von Däniken wrong. By the time I had got to verse 7 of the very first chapter, however, I found myself interpreting a description of the landings legs of some kind of flying vehicle: "Their legs were straight. and the soles of their feet were round and they sparkled like burnished bronze." Having designed and tested such structures myself, I could not deny that it was possible to read in this a direct, yet simple, technical description.

The contrast of that evidently clear passage with the quite hazy pictures sketched by the rest of the chapter made me realize that the prophet could not have known what it was he had seen, or could not have understood it. I realize the necessary consequences of this: the prophet could only describe his encounters with space vehicles and their crews in the terms available to him–with words and comparisons familiar to him and his contemporaries

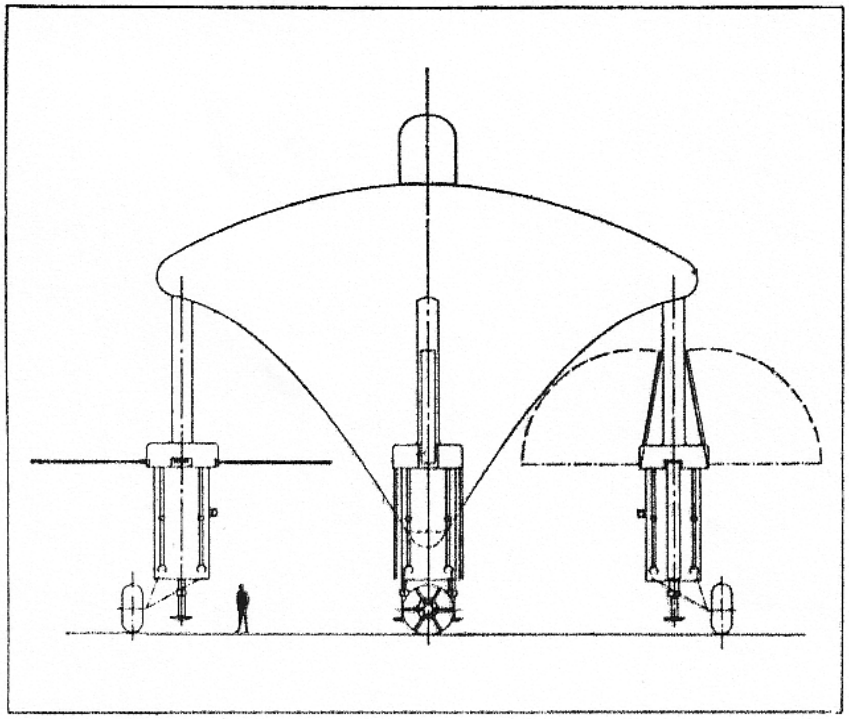


*Fig. 2 Engineering depiction of the spacecraft shown in Figure 1.*

So I began taking Ezekiel seriously, in an engineering sense.

Because I had to rely on translations, I used six different Bibles, ranging in time from early in the last century to 1972, edited by Jewish, Roman Catholic, and Protestant translators. Besides these, I used two highly detailed biblical commentaries.

My application of aircraft (specifically, helicopter) and spacecraft engineering principles to the reports of the prophet resulted in the penetration of Ezekiel's visual descriptions, and the replacement of these by known structural configurations. The final result is shown in the accompanying illustrations. There we see a quasi-conical main body, supported by four helicopter units, which carries the command capsule atop its rounded upper portion. We should consider that Ezekiel first saw this vehicle at a distance of about 1,000 metres at the moment the nuclear engine fired, probably with some white clouds of condensation (because of the engine's "chilldown" phase) shooting past the craft's main body.

In these fiery, dynamic surroundings Ezekiel notices the moving rotors, see the landing legs and mechanical arms attached to the helicopter units. His first reaction is to compare the helicopters with man-like figures, but he then finds in the term 'living creatures' an expression of admirable vagueness to reflect his uncertainty. During final descent and landing, Ezekiel observes the protective covers of the helicopter's gear mechanisms, which he is able to describe best by comparing them with human faces. He notices the red-hot radiator–glowing coals–(Chapter 1, Verse 13) covering part of the lower central body; the prophet is fascinated by the wheels which, in their basic form, are the only element he recognizes and thus describes in great detail.

The visual description of the wheels has been misinterpreted in numerous paintings and texts. Yet no one has ever taken seriously the functional description which indicates that the wheels could move, in any direction, without being turned or steered. The latter has led me to develop a precise engineering inter-pretation, and for which patent was granted

*Eze, 1:13. "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning."*

# United States Patent [19]

**Blumrich**

[11] **3,789,947**

[45] **Feb. 5, 1974**

[54] **OMNIDIRECTIONAL WHEEL**


[75] Inventor: **Josef F. Blumrich,** Huntsville, Ala.

[73] Assignee: **The United States of America as represented by the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration,** Washington, D.C.



[22] Filed: **Apr. 17, 1972**

[21] Appl. No.: **244,519**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** ..... **180/79.3,** 301/5 P

[51] **Int. Cl.** ..... **B62d 5/02**

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 180/79.3, 6.2, 7 R, 8 F; 301/5 P



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*Primary Examiner*—Kenneth H. Betts
*Assistant Examiner*—John A. Pekar
*Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—L. D. Wofford, Jr. et al.



[57] **ABSTRACT**

The apparatus of the invention consists of a wheel having a hub with radially disposed spokes which are provided with a plurality of circumferential rim segments. These rim segments carry, between the spokes, rim elements which are rigid relative to their outer support surfaces, and defined in their outer contour to form a part of the circle forming the wheel diameter. The rim segments have provided for each of the rim elements an independent drive means selectively operable when the element is in ground contact to rotatably drive the rim element in a direction of movement perpendicularly lateral to the normal plane of rotation and movement of the wheel. This affords the wheel omnidirectional movement.


**5 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures**

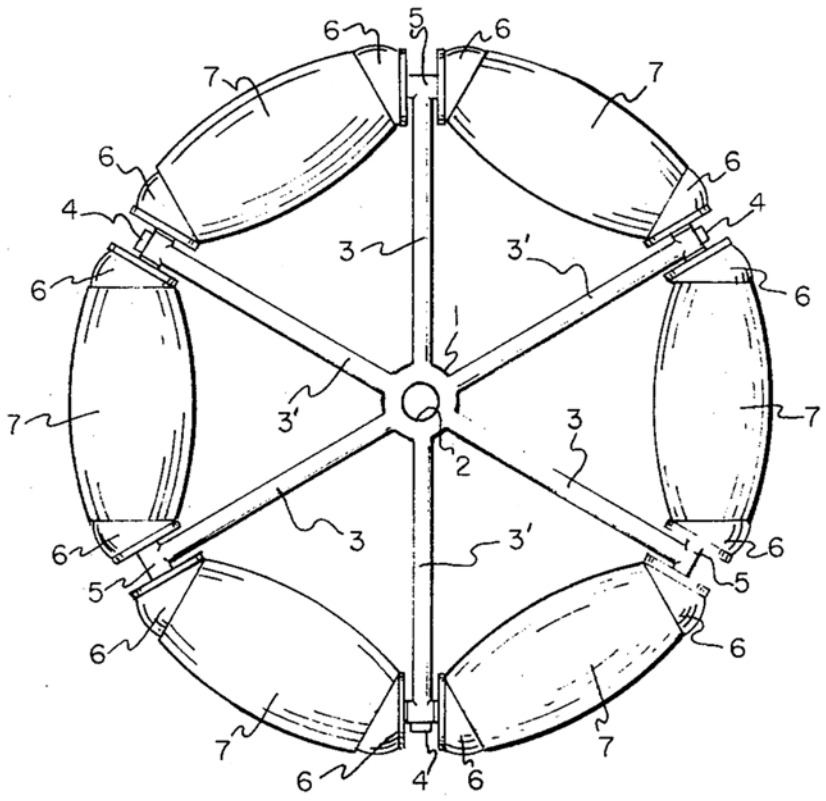


FIG. 1 is a pictorial elevation view of an embodiment of the wheel of the invention, showing the disposition of the rim segments supporting the circumferential rim elements.

*Fig. 3. Patent awarded earlier this year to the author for his invention of the omnidirectional wheel.*

by the United States Patent Office no. 3,789,947, Feb. 5, 1974. A particularly gratifying application of this interpretation, incidentally, would be to facilitate considerably the mobility of wheelchairs for the physically handicapped.

## ■ Prototype, analytical research

Ezekiel ends his technical description with comments on the command capsule and on the commander himself. The amount of detail he includes is astounding. It is significant that the prophet describes features which are of little engineering importance but which, to the eye, carry the same weight as true structural elements. The quasi-conical shape of the spacecraft's central body--ideally suited to permit its combination with the helicopters, and thus a most important feature of the vehicle--is an existing engineering product. It was developed at the Langley Research Center of NASA, and has been studied analytically and in a series of wind-tunnel tests. (see Fig. 4)

After establishing the general configuration of the spaceship, I made an analytical investigation although the configuration appeared to be structurally and functionally sound, its feasibility could be proved only if weights, dimensions, performance and other basic characteristics turned out to be within reasonable limits. The analysis was performed parametrically, that means dimensions, weights and performance were varied in steps over a wide range of possibilities. From the first crude calculation to the final detailed analysis, the results left no doubt of the vehicle's feasibility: they reveal a general technology of spacecraft construction not far beyond our current, most advanced capabilities. The only element we are incapable of building is the nuclear reactor within the propulsion system. Although this would be a fission reactor, it would require a specific impulse,[1] of at least 2,000 seconds against the about 900 seconds of today's nuclear engines. It is reasonable to assume, however, that we could have this capability within a few decades if we were to invest enough effort in its development.

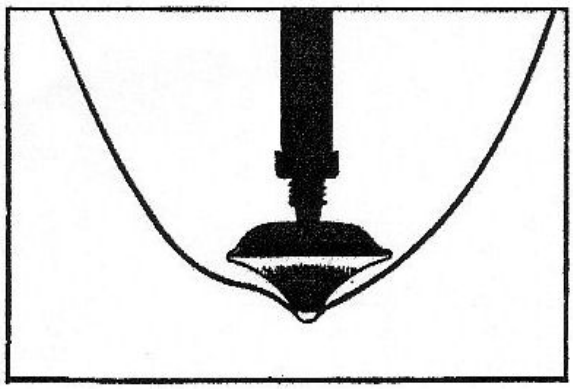

*Fig. 4. Sketch made from a Schlieren photograph of a test model of 'Ezekiel's spaceship' as tested in the wind tunnels of NASA's Langley Research Center during the late 1960s. It is possible to change the profile of the lower part of the main body, if desirable, to accommodate the helicopters.*

The over-all result, then, is a space vehicle technically feasible beyond doubt and very well designed to suit function and purpose; its technology is in no way fantastic but, even in its extreme aspects, lies almost within our own capabilities of today. The results indicate, moreover, that Ezekiel's spacecraft operated in conjunction with a mother vessel orbiting the earth. We have no point of firm reference for an exact determination of the dimensions of the landing craft, but we can approximate these within the range I investigated analytically. The illustration at the top shows the shape and proportions. The diameter of the central body would be about 18 m (59 ft.), that of the rotor of a helicopter unit would be 11 m (36 ft.), total weight from the time of lift-off from the earth for the return flight to the mother ship would be 100,000 kg (110 tons), the engine's specific impulse would be 2,080 seconds, and the craft would carry two or three passengers.

With these conclusions, I had to declare defeat; I wrote to Erich von Däniken, explaining that my attempt to refute his theory had resulted in a structural and analytical confirmation of a major part of his hypothesis. Determining the form, dimensions and functional capabilities of what Ezekiel saw makes understandable a number of passages in his text that are otherwise meaningless; it also aids considerably in separating the prophetic or visionary parts of Ezekiel's book from those concerning encounters with spaceships. (I confined my study to the latter.) Being an engineer, I am not qualified to investigate the non-engineering portions.

1. Specific impulse is the measure of the kilograms of thrust produced for each kilogram of propellant consumed each second; it is expressed in seconds. –Ed.

# Who was Ezekiel, what did he see, and where?

Ezekiel had four encounters with spaceships, occurring over a period of twenty years. The first took place in 592 B.C., five years after Ezekiel and about 8,000 other Jews had been deported to Babylonia. Married and 30 years old at the time, Ezekiel was a priest and came from an upper-class family. When he saw the spacecraft for the first time the experience was overwhelming and left him in severe shock. In the first chapter of his book he tells us most of what we can learn of the craft's structure and function. Although he tells us later that he was picked up aboard the spacecraft near Tel-Abib where he lived and was later returned there, he has little recollection of the flight itself. Completely overcome by the experience, he flies 'in bitterness in the heat of my spirit' (Chapter 3, Verse 14).

The second encounter follows within a few months. Its description is brief and fragmentary (Chapter 3. Verses 22–4).

In his account of the third experience one year after the first (Chapters 8–11 ), Ezekiel narrates a fascinating event culminating in what seems to be a maintenance or repair operation on the spacecraft. A mechanical arm (see Fig. 5) reaches from a helicopter unit toward the red-hot area at the lower tip of the main body (Chapter 10, Verse 7). hands a 'hot' part of some kind to a member of the crew on the ground who had been ordered to take a position near one of the helicopters. The crewman carries away the hot pan. A comparison of the temple Ezekiel describes with a plan of Solomon's Temple (still standing at that time) shows that Ezekiel's description is of another temple, but where?

The same question is raised by the fourth encounter, twenty years after the first (Chapter 40). Ezekiel's arrival at a large complex of buildings proves to have been scheduled because he is awaited by a man wearing clothing similar to that of the ship's commander and who takes the prophet on an extended tour through the temple. The report of this encounter, as well as the Book of Ezekiel, ends abruptly and must be considered as a fragment.

Nowhere in these episodes do we find contradiction, neither in the repetition of the vehicle's description nor in the events related to the space vessel. There is also complete agreement between my engineering reconstruction, based on present-day advanced technical knowledge, and the biblical words.

## ■ Whom did Ezekiel meet?

Ezekiel was surely a man of high intelligence, gifted with rare powers of observation. He had the incredible ability to keep his intellect unimpaired by the emotional turmoil caused by the first encounter. Yet he was in a condition of shock by the time he observed the commander of the vessel. Ezekiel wrote that it took him seven days to recover from the experience. One could therefore expect him to say that he had seen God, and that God spoke to him, yet he compared the figure of the commander to that of 'Adam' or 'man' and very soberly says 'one spoke to me'. Never in all his encounters with the commander and other members of the crew does he show any reverence.

The information conveyed by Ezekiel leads us to conclude that he came in contact with part of an expeditionary force; there are unmistakable suggestions of rank, formal communication and organization. This, combined with the assumption that extraterrestrial civilizations too would have to have economic control of activities they undertake, leads us to surmise that–even for financial reasons–Ezekiel cannot have been the sole purpose and target of the enterprise.

With such notions, however, I obviously begin to leave the territory of provable engineering affirmations. For several reasons, I conclude that Ezekiel's encounters with spaceships and his prophecies do not coincide in time. He could have seen the space vessel on one day and have had his prophetic experiences

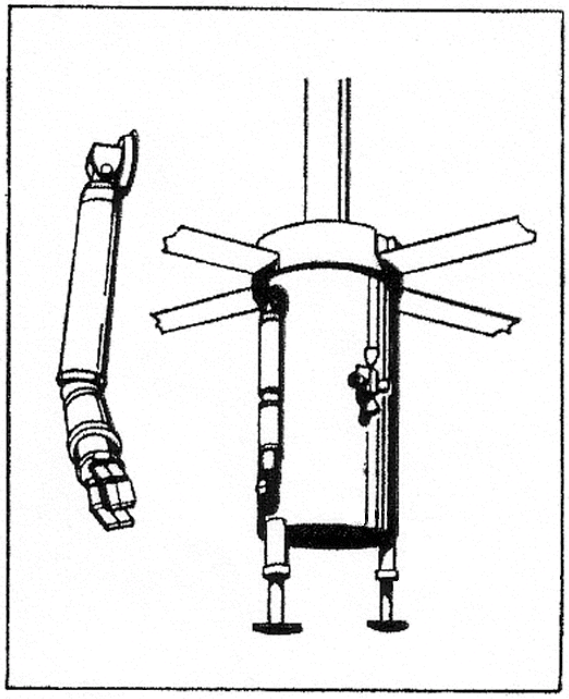

*Fig. 5. Details of mechanical arm and control rockets, both housed in each of the four helicopter units.*

months or even years later. Yet the commander spoke to the prophet. We know from the history of the biblical Book of Ezekiel that it was edited some time after it had been written. Several points of my engineering investigation show that editing to have been done with complete honesty and truthfulness, although the lack of knowledge of what Ezekiel really meant becomes evident in some places. We are justified to assume, consequently, that some of the commander's sayings may be contained in what we now consider as Ezekiel's visions and prophecies. It would be of very great interest, of course, to have these non-technical parts of the book of Ezekiel searched accordingly. Since his revelations were written down long before the advent of flying machines or rockets, the only way man could interpret Ezekiel's enigmatic statements was through religion and, especially, mysticism.

The application of engineering knowledge leaves no voids in the text's interpretation, nor does it require any force to achieve agreement. Attempts to explain the same phenomena by vision, hallucination, or psychological or astrological effects requires one to accept a long series of coincidences. These would be necessary indeed, to substantiate the congruities which I have established technically.

Today's established position concerning visitors from beyond the earth can be summed up by the statement: 'We do not know where they came from and how they arrived here, so they cannot have been here'. With time, the evidence will grow into a more understandable pattern, so that we can then declare: 'They were here, so they must have come here'. Advanced technology provides a means to make progress in this field, and I hope to stir enough interest in other engineers (not only design and structural specialists) to perform similar studies. And we cannot work for long without the support of scientists–physicists, archaeologists and ethnologists. What is needed foremost is open-minded cooperation, and I plead for that.

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■Josef F. Blumrich

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*A native of Steyr, Austria, engineer Blumrich is the holder of patents on numerous inventions. Until recently the author was chief of the Systems Layout Branch at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. In earlier years, he developed the structural design of the Saturn V booster and participated in the design of Skylab. He has left NASA in order to spend his full time on research concerning extraterrestrial visitors in ancient times. He wrote the book* Da tat sich der Himmel auf (The Spaceships of Ezekiel *in its English version) based on original research described in the above article. Address: 2721 Briarwood Drive, Huntsville AL 35801 (United States of America).*

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