The Book of Prophet Ezekiel

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Estudo Bíblico Evangélico

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To the true prophets of God.

I thank the Lord for giving me His strength to overcome challenges and for showing Himself ever more present with His wisdom and revelation; above all, for helping me develop my gifts and holiness for the benefit of His work. I thank Him for the comfort of knowing that our current difficulties were also experienced by His children of the past, but all of us will have always His promise of restoration, forgiveness, and justice.

““Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezek. 47: 12)

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Notes:
• The Bible Versions used here are:
•• NIV – New International Version
•• KJV / NKJV – King James Version / New King James Version
•• NABRE – New American Bible (Revised Edition)
•• NRSV – New Revised Standard Version

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Introduction

This book is deeper study of the Book of Prophet Ezekiel, chapter by chapter. In another book I wrote in 2007, a summary of the there is only a summary of Ezekiel's ministry: https://www.searaagape.com.br/prophetthemessengerofgod.pdf

Ezekiel, son of Buzi, was a priest and was taken captive to Babylon in 597 BC, along with Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), king of Judah (Ezek 1: 1-2; 2 Chr 36: 9-10; 2 Kin 24: 14-17). His name comes from the Hebrew Yehezqe'l or Jeezquel, meaning 'God strengthens.'

History tells about three stages of the exile of Judah: 605, 597 and 586 BC.

He settled along with the exiles in the village of Tel Abib, which was located in the Nippur region, southeast of Babylon, near the Chebar (or Kebar) River (or Chebar Canal), an irrigation canal, not a natural river. Kebar (In Hebrew, כְּבָר, kebhâr – Strong #3529) means "length" or "great." In Babylonian it was called nāru kabari (Great Canal).

Tel Abib means: 'Hill of fresh grain', 'mound of new growth' or 'green ears of barley', or 'mound of ruins' or 'mound of the flood' so interpreted as the Babylonian site of the original Flood.

At 30 years old, in the 5th year of his exile, he received the call to be a prophet (Ezek 1: 1-2. In Chebar, his prophetic visions began for those who were with him in exile, trying to enliven them, saying that God would lead them back to their land. Ezekiel was called by God to be "a sign to the exiles." (Ezek. 12: 11).

The first return of the exiles to Jerusalem only occurred in 538 BC.

According to the bible, his wife died suddenly on the day that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (Ezek. 24: 1-2; 15-18; 21-24; 2 Kin. 25: 1-2): the 10th day of the 10th month (Tevet – December-January) of the 9th year of the reign of King Zedekiah (588 BC). The siege lasted more or less one year and a half (2 Kin. 25: 2-3). On the 9th day of the 4th month (Tammuz – June-July) of the 11th year of the reign of King Zedekiah, the city wall was broken through, and the king was taken captive (2 Kin. 25: 3-4; Jer. 39: 2-7; Jer. 52: 4-12). On the 7th day of the 5th month (Av – July-August) of the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC – 2 Kin. 25: 8 – 1 month after Zedekiah's exile) Jerusalem was completely devastated and burned, including the temple of the God of Israel. The death of Ezekiel's wife was also a sign of God to the people who should not grieve or mourn the exile, but to conform to the decision of the Lord. The bible doesn't say he had children.

When writing the Book of Revelation, the Apostle John had visions very similar to those of Ezekiel, such as those concerning the cherubim and the throne of God (Rev 4:2–8; Ezek 1:5–11; Rev 1:14–15; Ezek 1:26–28; Rev 4:8; Ezek 1:18; Ezek 10:12, 14, 21–22). We can identify many similar passages in the two books: the cloud of God's glory in the sanctuary (Rev 15:8; Ezek 1:28; Ezek 3:23; Ezek 8:4; Ezek 10:3-4; Ezek 43:2-5); the executioners, mentioned by Ezekiel as coming to destroy the city and mark the foreheads of the righteous (Rev 9:4; Ezek 9:4-6); the little scroll given to John to eat (Rev 10:9-10; Ezek 2:8-10; Ezek 3:1-3); Gog and Magog as the final enemies to be destroyed (Rev 16:21; Rev 20:8-9; Ezek 38–39); the Temple seen by Ezekiel, the city, and the sacred portion, bearing a strong resemblance to the structure of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:10; Ezek 40:2; Rev 21:12-13, 16-17, 21; Ezek 48:30-35); the measuring of the sanctuary (Rev 11:1; Ezek 40:3); the waters from the sanctuary (Ezek 47:1), with which Jesus identified Himself in John 7:37–38; the shepherd mentioned in Ezekiel 34 and revealed in Jesus (John 10:11, 14–15, 27–28); the river of the water of life mentioned in Ezek 47: 7-9, 12, and its resemblance to the river of life in Rev 22:1–2.

Ezekiel helps us locate the prophecy within the moment when he received it from God and, therefore, to understand to whom it was addressed and the context of that time.

His book was originally written in Hebrew, around 592-571 BC, during the time of his prophetic ministry, unlike the book of Daniel (written in Aramaic) and Ezra (written in both languages: Hebrew and Aramaic).

As with all the prophetic books I have written, the Lord gave me interesting, even difficult, spiritual experiences with this book. Some passages clarified my own prophetic calling, others made me delve deeper into the spiritual world, feel the weight of darkness present in that exiled people, the intensity of God's wrath and the severity of the prophetic warning, so that a powerful spiritual transformation could occur in them. I could feel the spiritual oppression of the context in which the prophet was immersed, his responsibility and his suffering, being a living model of what the Lord was feeling and wanting to convey to His people.

His stagings, like those of Jeremiah, were not a mere theatrical performance, but an expression of his suffering and God's displeasure with a rebellious, perverse generation that deserved nothing more than His rebuke. More than that, I gained a greater awareness of the limits of God's patience and the intensity of His wrath in acts of judgment, which should truly draw people's attention today to what it means to provoke Him, despise Him, and even reject Him in His attempt at reconciliation with humanity.

Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, Micah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Malachi, and Zephaniah describe passages that can be compared to those of John and Ezekiel regarding the end times, for they all speak of a perfect spiritual restoration after the defeat of evil.

God Himself left us this hope for a future of justice, holiness, peace, stability, and protection. Therefore, the final visions of the book of Ezekiel (including the division of land among the tribes) were indeed given by God, and not by human imagination, as a way to restore divine moral values within them as a nation, using a language known to them.

Several points are relevant regarding the temple, the city, and the division of land described by Ezekiel:

• The sacred area described by Ezekiel on chapter 48 is only a 'shadow' of the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation 21: 16-17, because with those dimensions it would be impossible to build something similar in the mountains of Judea (especially in the old Jerusalem) without completely altering the geography of the land to flatten it, in order to prepare it for construction. The current Jerusalem metropolis covers approximately 126 km² (or 125.156 km²; 48.323 sq mi). The "Old City," the eastern part of the Jerusalem metropolitan area, occupies less than 1 km².

The temple itself, with dimensions of 500 cubits on each side (250 meters; with the cubit approximately 50 cm), would not be impossible to build, since Herod made a much larger esplanade for the second temple.

• Ezekiel's temple is a SYMBOL of a perfect place to worship God and to have a full relationship with Him, and the reward after so much suffering.

• The precise and meticulous measurements for the temple's enclosures and chambers are a SYMBOL of God's meticulousness and precision, putting things in their proper places, so that His people understand that every act or activity performed has importance and meaning in our lives and in His overall context for humanity.

• The city he described and the division of land among the tribes are a SYMBOL of the right of every child of God to be preserved and rewarded in the heavenly abode, where there will be room for everyone, without competition or theft of property or citizenship rights.

May the Holy Spirit be your guide and teacher in this reading!

Tânia Cristina

Chapter 1

Ezek 1 – NRSV

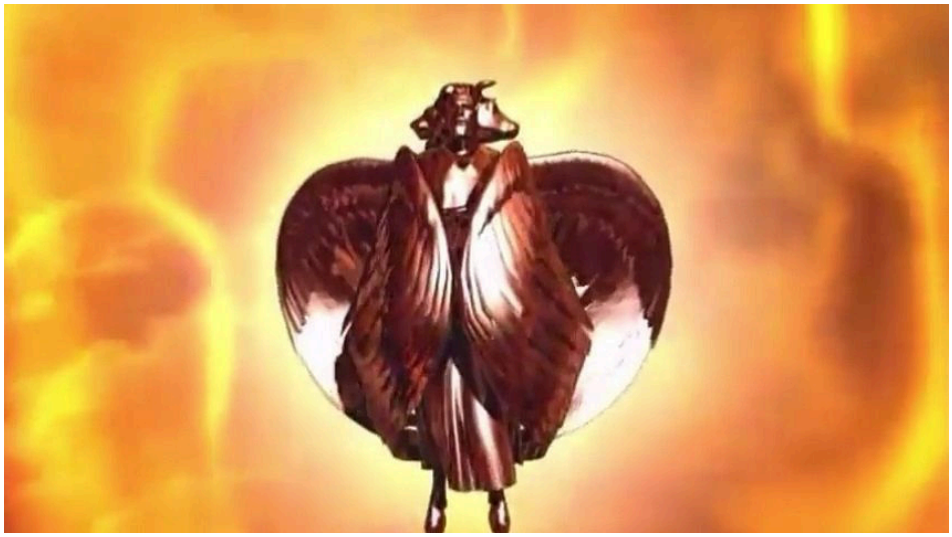
The living creatures and the glory of the Lord

1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among
the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.
2 On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin),
3 the word of the Lord came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans
by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was on him there.
4 As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around
it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming
amber [NIV, glowing metal].
5 In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance:
they were of human form.
6 Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings.
7 Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and
they sparkled like burnished bronze.
8 Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces
and their wings thus:
9 their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as
they moved.
10 As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face
of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle;
11 such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings,
each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies.
12 Each moved straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning
as they went.
13 In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals
of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and
lightning issued from the fire.
14 The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.
15 As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures,
one for each of the four of them.
16 As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like
the gleaming of beryl [NIV, chrysolite]; and the four had the same form, their construction
being something like a wheel within a wheel.
17 When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they
moved.
18 Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around.
19 When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living
creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose.
20 Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the
spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.
21 When they moved, the others moved; when they stopped, the others stopped; and when
they rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living
creatures was in the wheels.

22 Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal [NIV, ice], spread out above their heads.
23 Under the dome their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body.
24 When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings.
25 And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings.
26 And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form.
27 Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around.
28 Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

Ezekiel was standing by the Kebar River when he saw a stormy wind coming out of the north and a great cloud with brightness around it and fire, through which came the likeness of four living creatures. The stormy wind, the cloud and the fire were figures known to the Israelites since the time of Moses, for YHWH often manifested in the form of events of nature, such as the cloud that covered them at the day and the pillar of fire that protected them at night. The important thing is that the wind described symbolized the presence of the Holy Spirit emanating from the throne, from the North (since the North in the bible refers to God's throne), with power and holiness (fire). At Pentecost, His presence was described as a violent wind (Acts 2: 2).

He also says that the four living creatures (which were angels) had a human appearance, for he mentions hands and face of man, however, their faces were not only of a man; on one side, they looked like a lion, on another with an eagle and on another with an ox. The fact that they look in four directions at the same time signifies omniscience, full awareness.



They had four wings (Ezek 1: 6; Ezek 10: 21) and four human hands on their four sides. Two wings covered their bodies, and they moved in all four directions. Their glow was described as the color of burnished brass or as hot coal, like torches; the fire ran brightly through them and from de midst of the fire went forth lightning, something very similar to the divine manifestation on Mount Sinai. This meant a God of power, a fearsome and awesome God, who had the ability to purify the souls of men as fire purifies gold and that was worthy of respect.

What he saw were cherubim (Ezek 10: 12; 15; 20).

Cherubim (in Hebrew kerühbïm, plural of 'cherub' = heavenly, celestial) are celestial beings and in the book of Genesis it is written that they had the responsibility to guard the way to the tree of life [symbol of Jesus] in the garden of Eden, as were placed over the Ark of the Covenant to protect the sacred objects stored in it, which is summarized in a function of watchfulness and worship. In other words, they are guardians of the throne of God. Perhaps, therefore, Ezekiel describes them in the midst of so much fire (= power and holiness of God).

It also indicates a class of angels with great strength of knowledge, wisdom and divine light and that reflect the reflect the beauty, power and holiness of God. Therefore, it is said that they are knowledgeable of the divine mysteries ('full of eyes').

The cherubim had four faces: like a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.

The cherubim, with their four faces, reflect the different attributes and character of God (Intelligence, royalty, authority and spiritual power, provision, majesty, spirituality. All of this makes Him worthy of worship):

The face of man symbolizes the intelligence and the free will, given by God to man.

The lion symbolizes royalty, authority, strength, leadership, spiritual power.

The ox symbolizes physical strength, supply, provision, wealth, abundance, and worship of God (it was used in sacrifices).

The eagle symbolizes the majesty, the ability to see far and dominate the space, to reach great heights (spirituality), and renewal, part of its process of physical renewal after forty years of age, very similar to the work of renovation of the Holy Spirit in us.

Ezekiel also says that the legs of the cherubim were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot. This means the correct walking (straight), with authority, power and privilege given to them to be in obedience and service to God and protect His holiness and His glory through their constant worship to Him. The calf symbolizes the worship (the calf was a clean animal to be used in sacrifices to the Lord) and spirituality, the separation from earthly things, because the calf has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed (Lev. 11: 2-3).

Among them was fire and lightning. The creatures moved as fast as flash of lightning. Beside each of them was a wheel. The wheels were as bright as beryl ('tarshish'), a clear, bright golden color, possibly corresponding to amber or golden jasper. Their appearance was like a wheel within a wheel, allowing movement in all four directions. Their rims were full of eyes all around, following the movements of the living creatures, which were cherubim (Ezek 10: 20). This means that the cherubim constituted a kind of divine chariot (Ps. 18: 10; 2 Sam. 22: 11).

"The chariot of God" or "chariot of fire" is symbol of the God's authority and power, His majestic presence in all His glory in favor of His children, as Elisha saw when Elijah was caught up (2 Kin. 2: 12) or as Elisha's servant saw when he prayed for the Lord to

open his eyes to see the protection of the angels of God around him during the war against the Syrians (2 Kin. 6: 17).

The message that Ezekiel's vision sought to convey with the cars (chariots) was directed primarily to the Jews taken into exile, that is, the presence of God was there with them. The Jews believed that the Lord was only present in the temple, through the Ark of the Covenant; however, the prophet reveled to them that God moved spiritually, where His people went, as He had done in the past, in the desert. Ezekiel also says, "I heard a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings", which corroborates the idea that the Lord is accompanied by an army of angelic beings as His messengers and warriors.

Above the cherubim there was something like a dome, shining like crystal [NIV, ice]. The sound of the cherubim's wings was like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army.

From above the firmament, Ezekiel heard a voice and saw a throne, like the brilliance of a sapphire, and on the throne was a figure like that of a man.

The celestial being was like glowing metal, with a great radiance like fire. The splendor all around was like the brilliance of a rainbow.

Ezekiel had a vision of God's glory and His throne as a sapphire, whose color is blue (Ezek. 1:26-28 cf. Ex. 24: 9-10). In fact, the sapphire described in the Bible refers to lapis lazuli, which is also blue in color [Source: J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995].

When Ezekiel saw it, he fell on his face, and heard the voice of someone speaking.

God showed His power and majesty to the prophet so that he could better understand his calling as a watchman among his people, an unbelieving people who had been taken into captivity because of their rebellion and idolatry and who needed to know their God and return to worshiping Him in holiness.

Chapter 2

Ezek 2 – NIV

Ezekiel's call and the scroll

1 He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you."
2 As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.

After Ezekiel saw the glory of God above the heavens, His voice spoke to him, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you."

The expression 'Son of man', in Hebrew is 'ben adam,' meaning 'human being' or 'son of Adam' ('adhãm = red man, mankind, which comes from the same Hebrew root 'adhãmã and means earth, to remind man of his origin: Gen. 2: 7; Gen. 3: 19). The title is God's habitual way of addressing the prophet throughout this book, probably used to emphasize the separation of the divine and the human.

The Spirit of the Lord entered the prophet and gave him strength to stand up, so that God could speak to him.

'The Spirit', in Hebrew, is written as Ruach, meaning 'wind, breath,' that is a vital power, coming from God, which enabled the prophet to hear the divine word (cf. Ezek 8: 3; Ezek 11: 1, 24), such as the 'breath of life' (Gen. 2:7), the spark of life (or physical and intellectual animation) granted by God to man (Adam).

3 He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day.
4 The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says.'
5 And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.
6 And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briers and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or be terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people.

Ezekiel was sent to the children of Israel, who had rebelled against God, and were worshipping other gods.

They were hard-hearted and stubborn, and resisted the exhortations of the prophets who preceded him, but God told him to speak His word, even if they didn't want to listen. In any case, they would know that a prophet of God had been among them.

When the Lord told him, 'though briers and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions,' this meant that the prophet should be prepared for bitter opposition.

7 You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious.
8 But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious people; open your mouth and eat what I give you."
9 Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll,

[10] which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe.

As for Ezekiel, God was warning him not to be rebellious like them; on the contrary, to be an example of obedience to that people even in the midst of suffering.

Then, He told him to eat what He was giving him. Ezekiel looked and saw a scroll, written on both sides, but what was in it was only words of lament and mourning and woe.

The scroll that the prophet was about to eat (Ezek. 2: 8-10; Ezek. 3: 1-3) is very similar to what John ate (Rev. 5: 1; Rev. 10: 2; 8-11), namely, the prophetic words of God to the people through the prophet (Ezek. 3: 4-27).

The words of God were harsh, filled with words of lament and mourning and woe, but in his mouth they were sweet. They were sweet because of his obedience and submission to God's will, but soon he would feel their weight and the responsibility of his mission.

This meant that the prophet had to internalize and absorb God's word in order to transmit it, and more than that, to be in the same 'spirit of the prophecy,' that is, to accept its character, the anointing of authority that God would pour out upon him so that he could release it through his mouth and accomplish what the Lord intended.

Chapter 3

Ezek 3 – NIV

[1] And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the people of Israel."
[2] So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat.
[3] Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

The act of eating the scroll signifies that Ezekiel had to receive, internalize, and 'digest' the Word of God before he could be a messenger of that word to the house of Israel. In fact, he didn't eat a physical scroll, but in a vision, just as happened with John, Ezekiel received God's empowerment to absorb His word and transmit it to that people. More than that, he would have to 'taste' the prophetic word that was to come, understand the meaning, the reason, and the weight of the prophecy.

Ezekiel ate the scroll, and despite the harsh and strong words, difficult to digest,' he saw written there, the scroll tasted as sweet as honey in his mouth. Although his ministry was difficult to fulfill, this description suggests that he was in perfect agreement with God and that, through his obedience to Him, he would be able to accomplish his mission. In other words, he delighted in His will.

The commissioning of the prophet

[4] He then said to me: "Son of man, go now to the people of Israel and speak my words to them.
[5] You are not being sent to a people of obscure speech and strange language, but to the people of Israel—
[6] not to many peoples of obscure speech and strange language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you.
[7] But the people of Israel are not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for all the Israelites are hardened and obstinate.

The Lord commanded him to go to the house of Israel, his countrymen who were with him in exile, and proclaim His word to them. He was not being sent to the Gentiles, but to the Jews themselves who, for centuries, had rejected the words of the prophets. By rejecting His prophets, they rejected Him. And the Lord asserts that they would not listen to him. Nevertheless, he should speak and warn, as the watchman that he was.

[8] But I will make you as unyielding and hardened as they are [KJV: Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads].
[9] I will make your forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious people."
[10] And he said to me, "Son of man, listen carefully and take to heart all the words I speak to you.
[11] Go now to your people in exile and speak to them. Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says,' whether they listen or fail to listen."

Israel was in rebellion and rejecting God. But the prophet needed a much greater empowerment from God to accomplish his mission and not to suffer so much from the rejection and severe opposition of those people. The words he had to preach to them were harsh, and he still had to withstand their fury so as not to be hurt as well.

Thus, God promised to clothe Ezekiel emotionally and intellectually to deal with the rejection of that people. His face and forehead would be as hard as theirs. Nothing they could do or say would affect him; on the contrary, he would know how to respond and how to act. If they were hard in their rebellion, God would make him harder in his courage and integrity, in his faith in Him. The word would not come from the mouth of a man, but from the mouth of God ("Thus says the Lord God").

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound as the glory
of the Lord rose from the place where it was standing. Masoretic Text: "may the glory
of the Lord be praised from his place"; KJV: "Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his
place."
13 It was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against each other and
the sound of the wheels beside them, a loud rumbling sound.
14 The Spirit then lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness and in the anger
of my spirit, with the strong hand of the LORD upon me [KJV: "So the spirit lifted me
up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of
the LORD was strong upon me"].
15 I came to the exiles who lived at Tel Abib near the Kebar River. And there, where they
were living, I sat among them for seven days — overwhelmed [NIV, 1984], or deeply
distressed [NIV, 2011] or KJV: "Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that
dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished
among them seven days."

In verse 15 it is written that the prophet came to the exiles who lived at Tel Aviv near the Kebar River, but in truth he was already there, for it was there that the vision began, it was there that the glory of the Lord appeared to him and he saw the cherubim. This can be understood in the following way: The prophet was there in the spirit, in the presence of God, in a state of ecstasy, we might say, but perhaps reluctant to leave and begin his difficult mission. Then the Spirit of the Lord 'lifted him up' (Ezek 3:12,14), and he began to pay attention again to what was around him; first the cherubim, moving their wings, then the noise of the wheels and the sound of voices of praise, like a great roar saying, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD." They were there the whole time, but Ezekiel's attention was completely focused on the voice of the Lord and the calling he was being given. In the last stage (v. 14), the Spirit 'lifted him up' and brought him back to his earthly reality, and he said that he went in bitterness, in the heat [anger] of his spirit.

The Word of God was sweet to Ezekiel (Ezek 3:3), but he soon experienced some bitterness in fulfilling his calling. Regardless of the cause, Ezekiel was bitter, angry.

'Bitterness' in this Hebrew text is 'mar or marah' (מָר, Strong #4751), from 'marar', which means: bitter (literally or figuratively); bitterness, or (adverbially) bitterly; angry, bitter, bitterly, bitterness, chafed, discontented, great, heavy.

'In the heat of my spirit' or 'in the anger of my spirit' – 'heat' or 'anger', in the Hebrew text is 'chemah' (חֵמָה, Strong #2534) or 'chemac' (Dan. 11:44), originating from yacham, which means: heat; figuratively, poison (from its fever), anger, hot displeasure, furious, furiously, fury, heat, indignation, poison, rage, wrath.

Perhaps he was feeling the weight of the judgment he would have to announce, the deplorable spiritual state of the people, and yet having to be sustained by the Lord so as

not to back down. Or perhaps he was feeling the bitterness of his seemingly frustrating calling, and the wrath of God Himself toward the sins of His people. His spirit was attuned to God's will, and therefore, to His feelings as well.

Then, in verse 15, the Bible says that he sat there among them for seven days, astonished.

'Astonished' as written in KJV, in Hebrew is 'shamem' (שָׁמַם, Strong #8074), a primitive root, meaning: to stun (or intransitively, grow numb), i.e. Devastate or (figuratively) stupefy (both usually in a passive sense); make amazed, be astonied, astonish, astonishment), (be, bring into, unto, lay, lie, make) desolate, desolation, be destitute, destroy (self), (lay, lie, make) waste, wonder.

So, 'deeply distressed', 'overwhelmed' or 'astonished' means stunned, bewildered, confused, amazed, desolate; a bit different from angry or bitter. Therefore, the vision Ezekiel had, the revelations he received, and the responsibility of the position he would have to fulfill left him as if 'out of his mind,' needing time 'to get his head straight', something quite understandable considering the intense prophetic visions these men of God had. Anything similar happening to any human being would profoundly affect the spirit. It was a time for reflection and observation.

Moreover, the seven days of silence among the captives show that the prophetic word could not have been uttered hastily, but by a man who was broken, impressed, and prepared before God, fully understanding the harsh reality of his people.

Ezekiel's Task as Watchman

16 At the end of seven days the word of the Lord came to me:
17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.
18 When I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn them or speak out to dissuade them from their evil ways in order to save their life, that wicked person will die for [or 'in'] their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.
19 But if you do warn the wicked person and they do not turn from their wickedness or from their evil ways, they will die for their sin; but you will have saved yourself.
20 Again, when a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, and I put a stumbling block before them, they will die. Since you did not warn them, they will die for their sin. The righteous things that person did will not be remembered, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.
21 But if you do warn the righteous person not to sin and they do not sin, they will surely live because they took warning, and you will have saved yourself."

After seven days, he heard the voice of the Lord appointing him as a watchman among His people. A watchman warns the people of something to come. That was also the duty of the prophet. This was a great responsibility, because the sin of omission on his part would bring bad consequences for everyone, including himself.

22 The hand of the Lord was on me there, and he said to me, "Get up and go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you."
23 So I got up and went out to the plain. And the glory of the Lord was standing there, like the glory I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown.

He went down to the plain and again saw the glory of the Lord, and he fell on his face.

[24] Then the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet. He spoke to me and said: “Go, shut yourself inside your house.
[25] And you, son of man, they will tie with ropes; you will be bound so that you cannot go out among the people.
[26] I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious people.
[27] But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ Whoever will listen let them listen, and whoever will refuse let them refuse; for they are a rebellious people.”

God warned him about their resistance (“they will tie you with ropes”). The resistance of the people restricted and hindered the free exercise of speech. Who hasn’t felt this yet? We feel it when someone hears the word of God with joy, or when there is an invisible barrier preventing it from being received.

As a prophet, he would have to speak. And this seems a contradiction to what is written now, since God himself would prevent him from speaking, without being able to rebuke the people: “I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them, for they are a rebellious people.”

This means that he could not speak his own words, but God’s words to them. He could not rebuke them on his own; only when the Lord told him what to say: “But when I speak to you, I will open your mouth and you shall say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says.’ Whoever will listen let them listen, and whoever will refuse let them refuse; for they are a rebellious people.”

The prophet not only says what God wants, but also speaks only when God commands.

The prophet’s isolation in his house and his silence, in themselves, were already a message to be conveyed to the people: “Go, shut yourself inside your house.” It could signify God’s condemnation and the feeling of powerlessness that would come upon Israel without a word from the prophet, illustrating His silence towards His people, as happened again during the 400 years of silence of the Intertestamental Period, after the death of the prophet Malachi.

And the Bible itself gives the answer: “for they are a rebellious people.”

Since Israel had no regard for the Word of God, then they would hear nothing more; that’s why the Lord told Ezekiel to remain silent. The comment by some scholars that the prophet spent seven to eight years without saying anything is unreasonable. The whole episode of this 'total' silence must have lasted a few days, and afterwards Ezekiel would only speak what the Lord commanded him and when He commanded him, because the ears of His people were hardened to rebuke, correction, and understanding of God’s reasons for the judgment that was to come.

When God stops speaking, rebuking, and teaching, it is a bad sign. It is one of the most severe symbols of His displeasure. And this does not favor the sinner; on the contrary, it is a way of abandoning him to his own fate, to condemnation. The prophet Hosea wrote something very similar in relation to Ephraim, who rejected the word of God, trying to lead them away from idols, “Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone!” (Hos. 4: 17).

Ezekiel’s experience is also a lesson for us, when the Lord makes us silent instead of continuing our attempt to convince someone of his (her) error. When someone rejects our word as servants of Christ, he (she) is not rejecting us, but God (“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” – Lk. 10: 1). Therefore, He Himself will defend Himself from the affront. This

liberates us and teaches us to be simply sowers of His word than to insist on striking stone with our hoes. We spread the word of God and fly away like doves, letting the earth itself bear fruit, as Jesus taught us ("For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." – Mk 4: 28). The only sin we must not commit as watchmen is omission.

Chapter 4

Ezek 4 – NIV

The siege of Jerusalem symbolized

[1] "Now, son of man, take a clay tablet ['block of clay', or 'tile' in other translations], put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it.
[2] Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it.
[3] Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the people of Israel.

Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, also staged his prophecies. This is what God told him to do regarding the siege of Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1-17), which would happen 7 ½ years later. Ezekiel was deported to Babylon in 597 BC. This prophecy was delivered in 592 BC. The exile ended in 538 BC.

Since verse 12 states "Eat the food as you would a loaf of barley bread; bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel," we can conclude that not only should the 'unclean' bread be eaten in a place where the people could see it, but also the symbolic siege should take place where the prophet could be seen, not necessarily in the city square, but probably in an open space in front of his house. Otherwise, the stagings would be useless. They would have to be observed by a large number of people.

Ezek 4: 1-3: The prophet was to take a block of clay *[or clay tablet or tile]* and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. He was to make a kind of model, erecting siege works against it, building a ramp, and placing battering rams around it and building the enemy camps.

Then he should take an iron plate [or iron pan or griddle] and place it as an iron wall between him and the city; he would set his face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, serving as a sign for the Israelites. According to Warren Wendall Wiersbe (1929–2019, Baptist clergyman, Bible teacher, writer, and lecturer), this iron plate or iron pan was the type of utensil that priests used in the temple to prepare grain offerings (Lev. 2: 5; Lev. 6: 21; Lev. 7: 9), that is, flour mixed with olive oil and salt, without yeast or honey, which were also part of burnt offerings and peace offerings (along with a libation). These offerings were a voluntary act of worship and dedication to God for His goodness and provision, as the oil symbolizes joy. The Bible often translates it as 'griddle' or 'frying pan.'

The iron wall represents the separation between God and His people, because of their sins and the hardening of their hearts. He would not intervene and rescue Jerusalem in the coming siege, nor would he look upon them with approval and blessing anymore.

The tile or block of clay or clay tablet mentioned in the text was a soft clay tablet, baked to make it durable, like those the Babylonians used for writing purposes.

[4] "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the people of Israel upon yourself [Or upon your side]. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side.
[5] I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the people of Israel.

The prophet would lie on his left side for 390 days, symbolizing the 390 years of sin of the house of Israel; then, Ezekiel would lie on his right side for 40 days, symbolizing the 40 years of sin of the house of Judah. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact dates as a basis for counting these years. Many hypotheses have been made, but none are satisfactory or coherent for Israel and Judah. These years does not fit into any precise known time period in the history of Israel.

As I wrote above, we can conclude that not only should the 'unclean' bread be eaten in a place where the people could see it, but also the symbolic siege should take place where the prophet could be seen, not necessarily in the city square, but probably in an open space in front of his house. Or perhaps he did this (to lie on his left side and his right side) at night in his bed, or for several hours each day, and then, while the public watched, he ate a small portion of the bread.

6 "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the people of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.
7 Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her.
8 I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege.

After 390 days, he should lie down on his right side, with his arm uncovered, and prophesy more forty days against Jerusalem, which was under siege, with his face turned toward it, bearing the sin of the house of Judah, for that was the number of years of their sin.

"Turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem and with bared arm prophesy against her." – In this prophecy, Ezekiel demonstrated that the strong arm of God's judgment [the right arm] against Jerusalem would be active and unrestrained; the strongest arm, the one most ready to act, will be uncovered, naked and outstretched, as if ready to strike and kill.

"I will tie you up with ropes so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have finished the days of your siege."

The ropes around the prophet (v.8) symbolized the siege of Jerusalem (coinciding with some years of Jeremiah's prophetic period [626-585 BC], when Jerusalem was besieged for 1 ½ years by Nebuchadnezzar – Jer 39:1-2: from the 10th month of the 9th year of Zedekiah to the 9th day of the 4th month of his 11th year of reign). The prophet's inability to move because of the ropes represented the confinement of the inhabitants of Jerusalem during the siege, that is, God's unalterable decree (the siege and capture of Jerusalem). The ropes could also mean that those under siege would be captured and bound, just as Ezekiel was. Nebuchadnezzar means "(May) Nabu protect the crown prince," or "Nabu watch over my heir" or "Nabu protect the right of succession" or else "Nabu protect the boundary."

Just as with the scroll that he ate in vision, which should not be interpreted literally, and as God prevented him from speaking ("I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth so that you will be silent and unable to rebuke them", Ezek 3:26), these ropes here were not physical ropes, but the limitation that God would bring to him, preventing him from leaving his place during the time of the staging.

In fact, Ezekiel remained motionless only for part of each day, as he still had to prepare his meals.

Then the Lord explains what his food should be (Ezek. 4: 9-15).

9 “Take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them in a storage jar and
use them to make bread for yourself. You are to eat it during the 390 days you lie on your
side.
10 Weigh out twenty shekels *[about 8 ounces or about 230 grams]* of food to eat each day
and eat it at set times.
11 Also measure out a sixth of a hin *[about 2/3 quart or about 0.6 liter]* of water and drink
it at set times.
12 Eat the food as you would a loaf of barley bread; bake it in the sight of the people, using
human excrement for fuel”.
13 The LORD said, “In this way the people of Israel will eat defiled food among the
nations where I will drive them.”
14 Then I said, “Not so, Sovereign LORD! I have never defiled myself. From my youth
until now I have never eaten anything found dead or torn by wild animals. No impure
meat has ever entered my mouth”.
15 “Very well,” he said, “I will let you bake your bread over cow dung instead of human
excrement”.
16 He then said to me: “Son of man, I am about to cut off the food supply in Jerusalem.
The people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in despair,
17 for food and water will be scarce. They will be appalled at the sight of each other and
will waste away because of [Or away in] their sin.

Ezek. 4: 9-17 can be summarized in a few words: the bread of God’s wrath and the famine period experienced by Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege of 1 ½ year (Jer. 39: 1-2). Verse 9 speaks of the ingredients used in preparing the bread: wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet (a grass whose ears serve as food) and spelt (a type of wheat of inferior quality). This means that there would be a period of such great famine that it would be a joy to eat anything, such as grains and even grasses.

Verses 10-11 say that Ezekiel should eat 20 shekels (equivalent to 230-240 grams) of bread and drink one-sixth of a hin of water per day (1 hin = approximately 3.47 to 4 liters of water, therefore 500-600 ml of water). This meant that just as the prophet would eat and drink sparingly, the people would also eat and drink little, anxiously due to the distress of the siege (v.16-17 – cf. Ezek 12:18-20). As mentioned above, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for 1 ½ years until he completely invaded and burned it.

The bread he ate should be small, like a barley loaf, and he was to bake it in the sight of the people, using human excrement for fuel.

As a priest, Ezekiel told the Lord that he had never eaten anything unclean. Then the Lord gave him cow dung instead of human excrement to prepare his bread.

This would show how the people of Israel would eat their unclean bread among the nations to which the Lord would drive them. Since they rejected the food and the blessing from God and took pleasure in idolatry, feeding themselves with food consecrated to idols, then they would eat the ‘unclean bread’ before the nations, even because they made no distinction between the food of the Jews and the food of the Gentiles.

And the Lord added that He was about to cut off the food supply in Jerusalem. The people will eat rationed food in anxiety and drink rationed water in despair.

Chapter 5

Ezek 5 – NIV

God's Razor of Judgment

1 "Now, son of man, take a sharp sword and use it as a barber's razor to shave your head
and your beard. Then take a set of scales and divide up the hair.
2 When the days of your siege *[the symbolic siege of the prophet]* come to an end, burn a
third of the hair with fire inside the city. Take a third and strike it with the sword all
around the city. And scatter a third to the wind. For I will pursue them with drawn sword.
3 But take a few strands of hair and tuck them away in the folds of your garment.
4 Again, take a few of these and throw them into the fire and burn them up. A fire will
spread from there to the whole house of Israel.

Afterwards, the bible describes another staging. This chapter 5 of Ezekiel shows the fate of the people of Jerusalem.

After the symbolic 430-day siege, God told the prophet to take a sharp sword and use it to shave his head and his beard. For a Jew, hair and beard symbolized dignity, identity, and social standing. Shaving them was a sign of shame. Similarly, Jerusalem would be treated like a defeated man, stripped of honor and subjected to public humiliation.

Ezekiel was to weigh the hairs on a set of scales, showing that God's judgment is just.

A third of the hair was to be burn with fire inside the city he had built. This means that some would die of hunger or burned in the city that would be taken by the Babylonians.

Another third should be struck down with the sword outside the city, symbolizing the Israelites killed by the Babylonian sword.

And the other third would be scattered to the wind, symbolizing the Israelites scattered among the nations. And He would pursue them with drawn sword.

This means that some would be spared, while others would be killed far from their homeland.

From that last third, the prophet was to keep a few strands of hair and tuck them away in the folds of his garment.

And still to take a few of these and burn them in the fire, meaning that the remnant would undergo purifying trials.

A fire would spread from there to the whole house of Israel. This foreshadowed the final judgment and total destruction upon Jerusalem and all its people, for continued rebellion would bring widespread destruction.

The causes of the siege of Jerusalem

5 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: This is Jerusalem, which I have set in the center
of the nations, with countries all around her.
6 Yet in her wickedness she has rebelled against my laws and decrees more than the
nations and countries around her. She has rejected my laws and has not followed my
decrees.
7 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: You have been more unruly than the
nations around you and have not followed my decrees or kept my laws. You have not

even [Most Hebrew manuscripts; some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac You have] conformed to the standards of the nations around you.
8 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself am against you, Jerusalem, and I will inflict punishment on you in the sight of the nations.
9 Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again.

After the staging with the sword, the Lord explains the reasons for the siege of Jerusalem.

He placed it in the midst of the nations, but His own people sinned more than the surrounding Gentiles.

Because of the desecration of the temple with idolatry and rebellion against His commandments, God would execute His judgment.

10 Therefore in your midst parents will eat their children, and children will eat their parents. I will inflict punishment on you and will scatter all your survivors to the winds.
11 Therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your vile images and detestable practices, I myself will shave you; I will not look on you with pity or spare you.
12 A third of your people will die of the plague or perish by famine inside you; a third will fall by the sword outside your walls; and a third I will scatter to the winds and pursue with drawn sword.
13 "Then my anger will cease and my wrath against them will subside, and I will be avenged. And when I have spent my wrath on them, they will know that I the Lord have spoken in my zeal.
14 "I will make you a ruin and a reproach among the nations around you, in the sight of all who pass by.
15 You will be a reproach and a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the nations around you when I inflict punishment on you in anger and in wrath and with stinging rebuke. I the Lord have spoken.
16 When I shoot at you with my deadly and destructive arrows of famine, I will shoot to destroy you. I will bring more and more famine upon you and cut off your supply of food.
17 I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the Lord have spoken."

God foreshadows the horrors of the siege, with cannibalism and the scattering of the people.

He also mentions His four judgments: famine, plague, the sword, wild animals (Ezek. 5:17).

This would shame them before the wicked.

Chapter 6

Ezek 6 – NIV

A prophecy against the mountains of Israel

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 “Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel; prophesy against them
3 and say: ‘You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign Lord. This is what the Sovereign Lord says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: I am about to bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places.
4 Your altars will be demolished and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will slay your people in front of your idols.
5 I will lay the dead bodies of the Israelites in front of their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars.
6 Wherever you live, the towns will be laid waste and the high places demolished, so that your altars will be laid waste and devastated, your idols smashed and ruined, your incense altars broken down, and what you have made wiped out.
7 Your people will fall slain among you, and you will know that I am the Lord.
8 “‘But I will spare some, for some of you will escape the sword when you are scattered among the lands and nations.
9 Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me—how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices.
10 And they will know that I am the Lord; I did not threaten in vain to bring this calamity on them.

Ezekiel prophesies against the Mountains of Israel, that is, against the idolatry of Israel, since it was on the mountains (‘the high places’) that idolatrous sacrifices were made.

The Lord would bring the sword and destroy the high places, demolish the altars of sacrifice and smash the altars of incense.

The idolaters would be slain by the sword in front of their idols.

But the Lord I would spare some who escaped the sword among the lands and nations, and they would loathe themselves for all they had done.

11 “‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Strike your hands together and stamp your feet and cry out “Alas!” because of all the wicked and detestable practices of the house of Israel, for they will fall by the sword, famine and plague.
12 He that is far away will die of the plague, and he that is near will fall by the sword, and he that survives and is spared will die of famine. So I will spend my wrath upon them.
13 And they will know that I am the Lord, when their people lie slain among their idols around their altars, on every high hill and on all the mountaintops, under every spreading tree and every leafy oak—places where they offered fragrant incense to all their idols.
14 And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land a desolate waste from the desert to Diblah [Most Hebrew manuscripts; a few Hebrew manuscripts Riblah]—wherever they live. Then they will know that I am the Lord.’”

In Ezek. 6: 11 it is written: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Strike your hands together and stamp your feet and cry out “Alas!” because of all the wicked and detestable practices of the house of Israel, for they will fall by the sword, famine and plague.”

The hand and foot gestures here signified a gesture of anger and mourning for the great sins of Israel. God needed to call Israel’s attention to the fact that they considered their idolatry trivial, but He saw it as evil abominations. According to theologians, these gestures aim to attract attention and convey a premonition of threat and challenge.

Ezekiel refers to similar gestures in other chapters of his book:

Ezek. 21: 14, 17; Ezek. 22: 13 also speak of the Lord clapping His hands as a gesture of hatred or discipline against Israel.

In Ezek. 21: 12, striking the thigh would be a gesture to attract the attention of the listeners and raise questions, or a demonstration of sadness, since it follows the order to cry out and groan because of the destruction to come.

In other biblical texts, clapping refers to an expression of mockery, scorn, hatred, contempt (Nah 3: 19, Job 34: 37; Lam 2: 15).

Riblah was located on the eastern bank of the Orontes River in Syria, between Mount Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains. Today, it is reduced to ruins near the city of Ribleh, Syria. It was Nebuchadnezzar’s headquarters, where captives were held before being taken to Babylon, and where Zedekiah was blinded (Jer. 52: 9-11, 26-27). Another place where captives from Judah were gathered before being taken to Babylon was Ramah, in the territory of Benjamin, 8 km (4.97 mi) north of Jerusalem (Jer. 31: 15; Jer. 40: 1).

Chapter 7

Ezek 7 – NIV

The end has come

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 “Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says to the land of Israel: “‘The end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land!
3 The end is now upon you, and I will unleash my anger against you. I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices.
4 I will not look on you with pity; I will not spare you. I will surely repay you for your conduct and for the detestable practices among you. “‘Then you will know that I am the Lord.’
5 “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Disaster! An unheard-of [Most Hebrew manuscripts; some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac *Disaster after*] disaster is coming.
6 The end has come! The end has come! It has roused itself against you. See, it comes!
7 Doom has come upon you, upon you who dwell in the land. The time has come! The day is near! There is panic, not joy, on the mountains.
8 I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you. I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices.
9 I will not look on you with pity; I will not spare you. I will repay you for your conduct and for the detestable practices among you. “‘Then you will know that it is I the Lord who strikes you.

The Lord continues to pronounce His words of judgment in chapter 7, saying, “The end has come! The end has come!” as yet another sign that His patience has run out.

The pride of His own people provoked Him to bring violence through the Chaldeans.

10 “‘See, the day! See, it comes! Doom has burst forth, the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed!
11 Violence has grown into [Or The violent one has become] a rod to punish wickedness; none of the people will be left, none of that crowd — no wealth, nothing of value.
12 The time has come! The day has arrived! Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller grieve, for my wrath is on the whole crowd.
13 The seller will not recover the property that was sold—as long as both buyer and seller live. For the vision concerning the whole crowd will not be reversed. Because of their sins, not one of them will preserve their life.
14 “‘They have blown the trumpet, they have made all things ready, but no one will go into battle, for my wrath is on the whole crowd.
15 Outside is the sword, inside are plague and famine; those in the country will die by the sword, and those in the city will be devoured by famine and plague.
16 The fugitives who escape will flee to the mountains. Like doves of the valleys, they will all moan, each for their own sins.
17 Every hand will go limp; every leg will be wet with urine.
18 They will put on sackcloth and be clothed with terror. Every face will be covered with shame, and every head will be shaved.
19 “‘They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will be treated as a thing unclean. Their silver and gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s

wrath. It will not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs, for it has caused them to stumble into sin.
20 They took pride in their beautiful jewelry and used it to make their detestable idols.
They made it into vile images; therefore I will make it a thing unclean for them.
21 I will give their wealth as plunder to foreigners and as loot to the wicked of the earth,
who will defile it.
22 I will turn my face away from the people, and robbers will desecrate the place I treasure.
They will enter it and will defile it.

The wealth and glory they boasted of would perish, as well as their trade.

Inside the city, plague and famine would consume them, and outside, the sword would kill them.

Those who managed to escape to the mountains would feel weak, powerless, and would lament, for the riches in which they trusted would be useless. From the silver and gold they had made images and idols.

Therefore, the invaders would destroy these idols even inside the temple of the Lord.

23 "'Prepare chains! For the land is full of bloodshed, and the city is full of violence.
24 I will bring the most wicked of nations to take possession of their houses. I will put an end to the pride of the mighty, and their sanctuaries will be desecrated.
25 When terror comes, they will seek peace in vain.
26 Calamity upon calamity will come, and rumor upon rumor. They will go searching for a vision from the prophet, priestly instruction in the law will cease, the counsel of the elders will come to an end.
27 The king will mourn, the prince will be clothed with despair, and the hands of the people of the land will tremble. I will deal with them according to their conduct, and by their own standards I will judge them. "'Then they will know that I am the Lord.'"

He said that the land of Israel was full of bloodshed, and Jerusalem was full of violence.

Neither the prophets nor the priests or elders would be of help to the people when destruction came, for God had abandoned them.

The king and the prince would be horrified, and the people would tremble with fear.

God concludes by saying that the punishment is just because of their wrongdoings.

What does 'bloodguilt' mean?

When the Bible speaks of 'bloodstain' or 'bloodguilt'; in other versions, 'the guilt of shedding innocent blood', 'the guilt of blood', 'hands stained with blood' or 'the guilt of innocent blood', it usually refers to the shedding of innocent blood; a murder where often the culprit was not found, but God knew who had committed it and, in His eyes, it never went unpunished. In (Deut. 22: 8) the Lord instructed His people on how to properly build their houses so that no one would die accidentally because of someone else's negligence and thus not bring 'bloodguilt' upon that family. The verse says: "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have bloodguilt on your house, if anyone should fall from it."
Other Bible verses speak about 'bloodguilt': Lev 17: 3-4; Deut 19: 13; Deut 21: 8-9; 2 Sam 21: 1; 1 Kin 2: 31-33; Isa 4: 4; Isa 59: 3; Jer 26: 15; Ezek 22: 13; Ezek 23: 37; 45; Ezek 24: 7.

Chapter 8

Ezek 8 – NIV

Idolatry in the Temple

1 In the sixth year, in the sixth month on the fifth day, while I was sitting in my house and
the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign Lord came on me
there.
2 I looked, and I saw a figure like that of a man. [Or I saw a fiery figure] From what
appeared to be his waist down he was like fire, and from there up his appearance was as
bright as glowing metal.
3 He stretched out what looked like a hand and took me by the hair of my head. The Spirit
lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to
the entrance of the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy
stood.
4 And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the
plain.
5 Then he said to me, "Son of man, look toward the north." So I looked, and in the entrance
north of the gate of the altar I saw this idol of jealousy.
6 And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing—the utterly detestable
things the Israelites are doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But
you will see things that are even more detestable."
7 Then he brought me to the entrance to the court. I looked, and I saw a hole in the wall.
8 He said to me, "Son of man, now dig into the wall." So I dug into the wall and saw a
doorway there.
9 And he said to me, "Go in and see the wicked and detestable things they are doing here."
10 So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling
things and unclean animals and all the idols of Israel.
11 In front of them stood seventy elders of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was
standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was
rising.
12 He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of Israel are doing in the
darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, 'The Lord does not see us; the
Lord has forsaken the land.'"
13 Again, he said, "You will see them doing things that are even more detestable."
14 Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the Lord, and I
saw women sitting there, mourning the god Tammuz.
15 He said to me, "Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more
detestable than this."
16 He then brought me into the inner court of the house of the Lord, and there at the
entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men.
With their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, they were
bowing down to the sun in the east.
17 He said to me, "Have you seen this, son of man? Is it a trivial matter for the people of
Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with
violence and continually arouse my anger? Look at them putting the branch to their nose!
18 Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare
them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them."

In the sixth year of the exile (591 BC), one year after the previous prophecies, the prophet was sitting in his house with the elders of Judah. And there the Lord spoke to him again.

A figure with human form stood before him, shining like fire.

The figure Ezekiel saw was similar to the one in the vision of God and His glory in the first chapter (Ezek. 1:27). Here it was probably a representation of God (Jesus, the Lord; v.18: "I", "my") in some human likeness.

And the Spirit led him in a vision to Jerusalem in a vision, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where there was an idol that provokes God to jealousy, 'the image of jealousy' (Ezek. 8: 3).

And the glory of the Lord was there with Ezekiel.

No one knows exactly which idol was this. We only know that it was placed at the entrance to the north gate of the inner court of the temple (v.3), in the entrance of the north gate of the altar (v.5).

The worship of this deity and of Tammuz were separate practices.

It was called the 'idol of jealousy' (or 'image of jealousy') because it was an affront to God, to His temple, and to His people.

Ahaz placed an idolatrous altar inside the temple itself, moving the bronze altar to the north in order to make room for his altar (2 Kin. 16: 14-15).

Hezekiah removed idolatry from Judah (2 Kin. 18: 1-5), but his son Manasseh restored it in a worse way than before, placing an idol in the temple (2 Chr. 33: 7) and building altars in the House of the Lord (2 Kin. 21: 4). In 2 Chr. 33: 15, it is written that Manasseh himself removed the idol. His son Amon continued his father's idolatry (2 Kin. 21: 21), and probably replaced the idol, since Josiah, Amon's son, purified Judah from idolatry and burned the idol that Manasseh had placed in the temple (2 Kin. 23: 4-20; verse 12 in particular). So how was the idol back in the temple? A replica? The word used in Ezek. 8: 3 for 'image' or 'idol' is the same one found in Deut. 4: 16 ('idol' or 'figure' in some translations) and in 2 Chr. 33: 7, 15 (the idol of Manasseh), that is, semel, סֶמֶל, Strong #5566, meaning figure, idol, image. It comes from an unused root meaning to resemble; a likeness. But we don't know which false god this image represented.

If the Bible does not describe a separation between the outer courtyard, the altar, and the inner courtyard in Solomon's Temple, why are so many gates mentioned in Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9—located within the Temple (Ezek. 8:3, 5, 7, 12, 14; Ezek. 9:2, 3)?

We can observe that in Ezekiel's account, there are certain gates and walls within the temple that were not present in Solomon's temple. This resulted from idolatrous practices within the Temple—as Ahaz, Manasseh, and the more recent kings of Judah had done—which led them to alter the architecture to accommodate a form of worship shared with idols inside.

In Solomon's temple, there were no walls separating the altar of burnt offerings and the outer court, except for the reference mentioned in 2 Chr. 4: 9 ("He made the courtyard of the priests, and the large court and the doors for the court, and overlaid the doors with bronze"), where the doors mentioned here could refer to the side doors of the sanctuary, perhaps, where the storerooms and treasury chambers of the temple were located, and where things pertaining to the priesthood were also kept, or the priests' quarters around the rear of the temple. However, over the years, the original architectural design of Solomon's Temple was altered due to the constructions of King Manasseh (Jer. 15: 4; 2 Chr. 33: 4, 7) and other idolatrous monarchs. This explains the many gates mentioned in Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9 (Ezek. 8:3, 5, 7, 12, 14; Ezek. 9:2, 3). In other words, in Ezekiel's time, it was a temple already modified for idolatrous practices.

Then the man began to show the prophet the abominations that the leaders were committing inside the temple.

There was a hole in the wall, and a door behind it.

The prophet entered and saw images of creeping creatures and unclean animals and all the idols of the house of Israel, painted on the surrounding walls.

The idols to which the priests were burning incense were probably Egyptian gods (the animal cults of Egypt), in the form of reptiles and unclean animals, as the Egyptians used to worship oxen, donkeys, goats, dogs, cats, snakes, crocodiles, the ibis bird, etc.

There, seventy leaders of Israel were burning fragrant incense before the paintings. And among them stood Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan, one of the leaders during the time of Josiah's reform and the rediscovery of the Book of the Law (2 Rs 22: 3; 2 Cr 34: 8). All of them were burning fragrant incense before the paintings.

And they said that the Lord did not see them and had abandoned them.

Then the angel took him to the north gate of the sanctuary, and he saw women weeping for Tammuz.

Tammuz or Dumuzid (in Babylonian) was the Mesopotamian god of shepherds, associated with the growth of plants, the one who dies and is reborn each year.

The worship of Tammuz was accepted by the exiled Jews. Tammuz in Hebrew means: 'hidden', 'son of life.'

The Greek god corresponding to Tammuz was Adonis, worshipped in Byblos, Phoenicia, in much the same way as Baal.

This happened on the 2nd day of the 4th month (NIV note), and therefore, the name of the 4th Jewish post-exilic month (June–July) is 'Tammuz', coinciding with the time of the grape harvest.

And in the inner court of the house of the Lord, in the courtyard of the priests, at the entrance to the temple, between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, worshiping the sun. This was an attitude of repudiation of the Lord.

These twenty-five men could be the representatives of each of the 24 priestly classes and the High Priest.

'Putting the branch to their nose' (NIV) or 'they put the branch to their nose' is an obscure expression, but one that shows provocation towards God and contempt for Him. NABRE translates as 'they are putting the branch to my nose!', and writes in the footnotes, "The Masoretic text reads 'their noses' as a euphemism for 'my nose,' thus avoiding the impropriety of these idolaters coming into contact with God even figuratively."

The Lord may be saying that instead of the pleasing aroma of sincere sacrificial worship, He was receiving from the Israelites an odor that came like a stench to His nostrils; or that violence provoked His anger, both violence against God (idolatry) and that of the people, who filled the nation with violence against their neighbors.

And that is why the Lord would not look on them with pity.

Chapter 9

Ezek 9 – NIV

Judgment on the idolaters

1 Then I heard him call out in a loud voice, “Bring near those who are appointed to execute
judgment on the city, each with a weapon in his hand.”
2 And I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each
with a deadly weapon in his hand. With them was a man clothed in linen who had a
writing kit at his side. They came in and stood beside the bronze altar.
3 Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been,
and moved to the threshold of the temple. Then the Lord called to the man clothed in linen
who had the writing kit at his side
4 and said to him, “Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads
of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it.”
5 As I listened, he said to the others, “Follow him through the city and kill, without
showing pity or compassion.
6 Slaughter the old men, the young men and women, the mothers and children, but do not
touch anyone who has the mark. Begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the old men
who were in front of the temple.
7 Then he said to them, “Defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Go!” So they
went out and began killing throughout the city.
8 While they were killing and I was left alone, I fell facedown, crying out, “Alas,
Sovereign Lord! Are you going to destroy the entire remnant of Israel in this outpouring
of your wrath on Jerusalem?”
9 He answered me, “The sin of the people of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the
land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. They say, ‘The Lord has forsaken
the land; the Lord does not see.’
10 So I will not look on them with pity or spare them, but I will bring down on their own
heads what they have done.”
11 Then the man in linen with the writing kit at his side brought back word, saying, “I
have done as you commanded.”

Ezekiel heard God calling out in a loud voice, summoning the executors of His judgment.

Six men with a deadly weapon in their hand came from the upper gate of the temple. With them came a man clothed in linen with a writing case at his waist. They stood beside the bronze altar.

The glory of the Lord moved to the entrance of the temple.

Then, the Lord commanded the man in linen to go throughout Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieved and lamented over all the abominations in it. And to the other six, He gave the command to destroy without pity, regardless of age. They began with the elders who were before the house and then killed the idolaters in the city.

What is interesting here is the appearance of six men, each with a deadly weapon in his hand, to execute God’s judgment upon the wicked and the idolaters; this bears a striking resemblance to Rev. 7:3 and 9:4, referring to the first six trumpets, that is, God’s

punishment upon the wicked who oppress and persecute His people and do not have His seal on their foreheads.

The prophet fell face down on the ground, astonished, still trying to preserve some in Israel. But the Lord would continue His judgment, for He did not judged them as innocent. They sinned and comforted themselves with the thought that the Lord was not seeing what they were doing.

Chapter 10

Ezek 10 – NIV

The Glory of the Lord departs from the temple

1 I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of lapis lazuli above the vault that was over
the heads of the cherubim.
2 The Lord said to the man clothed in linen, "Go in among the wheels beneath the
cherubim. Fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim and scatter them
over the city." And as I watched, he went in.
3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the temple when the man went in,
and a cloud filled the inner court.
4 Then the glory of the Lord rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of
the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory
of the Lord.
5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim could be heard as far away as the outer court,
like the voice of God Almighty [Hebrew, El-Shaddai] when he speaks.
6 When the Lord commanded the man in linen, "Take fire from among the wheels, from
among the cherubim," the man went in and stood beside a wheel.
7 Then one of the cherubim reached out his hand to the fire that was among them. He took
up some of it and put it into the hands of the man in linen, who took it and went out.
8 (Under the wings of the cherubim could be seen what looked like human hand).

Ezekiel saw the firmament above the cherubim, and he heard the voice of the Lord speaking to the man clothed in linen to go between the wheels of the cherubim and fill his hands with burning coals and scatter them over the city.

The burning coals symbolize God's judgment on Jerusalem.

The cherubim were on the right side of the House of the Lord, and His glory filled the entire temple.

One of the cherubim gave the coals to the man clothed in linen.

9 I looked, and I saw beside the cherubim four wheels, one beside each of the cherubim;
the wheels sparkled like topaz.
10 As for their appearance, the four of them looked alike; each was like a wheel
intersecting a wheel.
11 As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the cherubim faced; the
wheels did not turn about [Or aside] as the cherubim went. The cherubim went in
whatever direction the head faced, without turning as they went.
12 Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands and their wings, were completely
full of eyes, as were their four wheels.
13 I heard the wheels being called "the whirling wheels."
14 Each of the cherubim had four faces: One face was that of a cherub, the second the face
of a human being, the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.
15 Then the cherubim rose upward. These were the living creatures I had seen by the Kebar
River.
16 When the cherubim moved, the wheels beside them moved; and when the cherubim
spread their wings to rise from the ground, the wheels did not leave their side.

17 When the cherubim stood still, they also stood still; and when the cherubim rose, they
rose with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in them.
18 Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple and stopped
above the cherubim.
19 While I watched, the cherubim spread their wings and rose from the ground, and as
they went, the wheels went with them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of
the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.
20 These were the living creatures I had seen beneath the God of Israel by the Kebar River,
and I realized that they were cherubim.
21 Each had four faces and four wings, and under their wings was what looked like human
hands.
22 Their faces had the same appearance as those I had seen by the Kebar River. Each one
went straight ahead.

Ezekiel again had a vision of the cherubim and the four wheels, like the one he had at the Kebar River.

Then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim, who stood at the entrance of the east gate of the temple. He was about to leave His House.

Chapter 11

Ezek 11 – NIV

God's Sure Judgment on Jerusalem

1 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the Lord that
faces east. There at the entrance of the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them
Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people.
2 The Lord said to me, "Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving
wicked advice in this city.
3 They say, 'Will it not soon be time to build houses? [Or 'This is not the time to build
houses'] This city is a cooking pot, and we are the meat.'
4 Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, son of man."
5 Then the Spirit of the Lord came on me, and he told me to say: "This is what the Lord
says: That is what you are saying, you leaders in Israel, but I know what is going through
your mind.
6 You have killed many people in this city and filled its streets with the dead.
7 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: The bodies you have thrown there are
the meat and this city is the pot, but I will drive you out of it.
8 You fear the sword, and the sword is what I will bring against you, declares the
Sovereign Lord.
9 I will drive you out of the city and deliver you into the hands of foreigners and inflict
punishment on you.
10 You will fall by the sword, and I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel.
Then you will know that I am the Lord.
11 This city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat in it; I will execute
judgment on you at the borders of Israel.
12 And you will know that I am the Lord, for you have not followed my decrees or kept
my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you."
13 Now as I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell face down and
cried out in a loud voice, "Alas, Sovereign Lord! Will you completely destroy the remnant
of Israel?"

The Spirit took Ezekiel to the east gate, and then he saw there twenty-five princes of the people, among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son of Benaiah. They were different from the other twenty-five men seen in chapter 8. They were political and civil leaders in Jerusalem.
And God said that they were the evil counselors of the city, leading the people into idolatry. They spoke with false confidence, asking, "Will it not soon be time to build houses?", displaying arrogance in the face of impending judgment.

They were distorting Jeremiah's words (Jer. 29: 5-6) about building houses and planting vineyards. But the Lord was telling them to do this in the land to which they were being exiled because the exile would last many years.

They said they were the protected meat inside a cooking pot (Jerusalem), but God said there would be judgment. They would die by the sword of the foreigners on the borders of Israel, referring to Riblah in Syria, where the leaders of Judah were condemned by the king of Babylon.

And when Ezekiel prophesied this, Pelatiah fell dead. The prophet was frightened and cried out to the Lord.

The Promise of Israel's Return

14 The word of the Lord came to me:
15 "Son of man, your brothers—your brothers who are your blood relatives [or 'are in exile with you – LXX and Syriac] and the whole house of Israel—are those of whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'They are [or 'those to whom the people of Jerusalem have said, 'Stay''] far away from the LORD; this land was given to us as our possession.'
16 "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Although I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.'
17 "Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.'
18 "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols.
19 I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.
20 Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.
21 But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord."
22 Then the cherubim, with the wheels beside them, spread their wings, and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.
23 The glory of the Lord went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it [that is, Mount of Olives].
24 The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the exiles in Babylonia [Or Chaldea] in the vision given by the Spirit of God. Then the vision I had seen went up from me,
25 and I told the exiles everything the Lord had shown me.

He told him that the people of Jerusalem felt safe and mocked the exiles as if saying, "Aha! Let them stay far away from de Lord!" Because they still believed that Jerusalem would not be invaded and that land had been given to them as an inheritance from the Lord. But the city would be invaded and they would be killed or taken captive. Then, God would bring them back to their land. He would remove their hearts of stone and would give them hearts of flesh.

"I will put a new spirit in them" suggests the presence of the Holy Spirit, poured out in the New Testament by Jesus upon those who accepted the new covenant He came to make. And the Holy Spirit has this power of transformation and restoration (cf. Ezek. 16: 60-63).

Although the Lord have sent them far away and scattered them among the other nations, even there He would be with them, and they would return and remove their detestable idols from Israel.

The glory of the Lord left Jerusalem and stopped on the Mount of Olives. Then, the Spirit brought the prophet back to the exiles.

Like a true prophet, he recounted the vision to them.

Chapter 12

Ezek 12 – NIV

The exile symbolized

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 “Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do
not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.
3 “Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they
watch, set out and go from where you are to another place. Perhaps they will understand,
though they are a rebellious people.
4 During the daytime, while they watch, bring out your belongings packed for exile. Then
in the evening, while they are watching, go out like those who go into exile.
5 While they watch, dig through the wall and take your belongings out through it.
6 Put them on your shoulder as they are watching and carry them out at dusk. Cover your
face so that you cannot see the land, for I have made you a sign to the Israelites.”
7 So I did as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my things packed for exile.
Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands. I took my belongings out at
dusk, carrying them on my shoulders while they watched.

Another staging of Ezekiel was when he prepared the baggage of exile and, at daytime, brought it out to the street.

That evening, at the Lord’s command he set out for another place.

God commanded him to dig through the city wall and pass his belongings through it.

He also told the prophet to cover his face so that he could not see the land.

8 In the morning the word of the Lord came to me:
9 “Son of man, did not the Israelites, that rebellious people, ask you, ‘What are you
doing?’
10 “Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: This prophecy concerns the prince
in Jerusalem and all the Israelites who are there.’
11 Say to them, ‘I am a sign to you.’ “As I have done, so it will be done to them. They will
go into exile as captives.
12 “The prince among them will put his things on his shoulder at dusk and leave, and a
hole will be dug in the wall for him to go through. He will cover his face so that he cannot
see the land.
13 I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare; I will bring him to
Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die.
14 I will scatter to the winds all those around him—his staff and all his troops—and I will
pursue them with drawn sword.
15 “They will know that I am the Lord, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter
them through the countries.
16 But I will spare a few of them from the sword, famine and plague, so that in the nations
where they go they may acknowledge all their detestable practices. Then they will know
that I am the Lord.”
17 The word of the Lord came to me:
18 “Son of man, tremble as you eat your food, and shudder in fear as you drink your water.

19 Say to the people of the land: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says about those living
in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel: They will eat their food in anxiety and drink their
water in despair, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence
of all who live there.
20 The inhabited towns will be laid waste and the land will be desolate. Then you will
know that I am the Lord.’”

This would be a sign that King Zedekiah would try to flee, but he would be caught and taken into captivity, where he would be blinded (“I will bring him to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die.”).

God would scatter all who tried to help Him and all His troops, who would be killed by the Babylonian sword.

And those whom God spared from famine, plague, and the sword would come to other nations and there acknowledge their sins and know that He is God.

The Lord said to the prophet to eat his bread with fear and drink his water with anxiety, as an example of what would happen to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The cities would be ruined and the land would be desolate.

There will be no delay

21 The word of the Lord came to me:
22 “Son of man, what is this proverb you have in the land of Israel: ‘The days go by and
every vision comes to nothing’?
23 Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to put an end to this
proverb, and they will no longer quote it in Israel.’ Say to them, ‘The days are near when
every vision will be fulfilled.
24 For there will be no more false visions or flattering divinations among the people of
Israel.
25 But I the Lord will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay. For in your
days, you rebellious people, I will fulfill whatever I say, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”
26 The word of the Lord came to me:
27 “Son of man, the Israelites are saying, ‘The vision he sees is for many years from now,
and he prophesies about the distant future.’
28 “Therefore say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: None of my words will
be delayed any longer; whatever I say will be fulfilled, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”

The people mocked and said it would still take a long time to happen, but God told them that the prophecy was very close to being fulfilled.

None of His words would be delayed any longer.

Chapter 13

Ezek 13 – NIV

False Prophets Condemned

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are now prophesying. Say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: 'Hear the word of the Lord!
3 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the foolish [Or wicked] prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!
4 Your prophets, Israel, are like jackals among ruins.
5 You have not gone up to the breaches in the wall to repair it for the people of Israel so that it will stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord.
6 Their visions are false and their divinations a lie. Even though the Lord has not sent them, they say, "The Lord declares," and expect him to fulfill their words.
7 Have you not seen false visions and uttered lying divinations when you say, "The Lord declares," though I have not spoken?
8 "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because of your false words and lying visions, I am against you, declares the Sovereign Lord.
9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will not belong to the council [NKJV, assembly] of my people or be listed in the records of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.
10 "'Because they lead my people astray, saying, "Peace," when there is no peace, and because, when a flimsy wall is built, they cover it with whitewash [KJV: untempered mortar],
11 therefore tell those who cover it with whitewash that it is going to fall. Rain will come in torrents, and I will send hailstones hurtling down, and violent winds will burst forth.
12 When the wall collapses, will people not ask you, "Where is the whitewash you covered it with?"
13 "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury.
14 I will tear down the wall you have covered with whitewash and will level it to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare. When it [Or the city] falls, you will be destroyed in it; and you will know that I am the Lord.
15 So I will pour out my wrath against the wall and against those who covered it with whitewash. I will say to you, "The wall is gone and so are those who whitewashed it,
16 those prophets of Israel who prophesied to Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her when there was no peace, declares the Sovereign Lord."'

In chapter 13, Ezekiel prophesies against false prophets and false prophetesses.

God Himself would make their false visions cease.

The prophets deceived the people, saying, "Peace," when there was no peace. In other words, they generally had an optimistic and positive message that God would deliver Jerusalem and Judah from the Babylonians, and that those already in exile would soon return home. Their message followed their own spirit, not God's Spirit.

God compares them to foxes (or jackals) among ruins. Foxes and jackals are predatory animals that usually live among ruins, taking advantage of the aftermath of destruction. Like foxes, they were cunning, malicious, and destructive.

These self-proclaimed prophets did not resemble courageous soldiers, but rather cowards, for trained and brave soldiers rush into the breaches of destroyed walls during battle to maintain their defensive position. However, the false prophets lacked the courage to stand firm and strengthen Israel in the moment of crisis. They did not build the strong walls of repentance and obedience to God.

If they had received and delivered a message from God Himself, it would be a secure place given to the house of Israel to stand when judgment came ('on the day of the Lord,' v.5). 'The day of the Lord' in Ezekiel refers to the day of judgment which the Lord has decreed upon His people and particularly upon Jerusalem, here referring to Nebuchadnezzar's 3rd invasion, as a storm of divine judgment.

'They will not belong to the council [NKJV, assembly] of my people or be listed in the records of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel': these false prophets, from God's point of view, did not belong to His people. They had no part in the assembly of Israel, in the house of Israel, or in the land of Israel. They would lose the position of authority and respect they had among the people by virtue of their supposed calling.

Their lies were like whitewash or poorly tempered mortar [KJV: untempered mortar] placed on a fragile wall. Although it gave the appearance of solidity, the wall would collapse because it was built with poor quality materials. Their words were like that. The illusions they were trying to create would vanish, for the Lord was speaking words of judgment.

"In my wrath I will unleash a violent wind, and in my anger hailstones and torrents of rain will fall with destructive fury" (v.13) – is referring to Nebuchadnezzar's 3rd invasion, as a storm of divine judgment.

False prophetesses condemned

17 "Now, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy
out of their own imagination. Prophesy against them
18 and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the women who sew magic
charms on all their wrists and make veils of various lengths for their heads in order to
ensnare people. Will you ensnare the lives of my people but preserve your own?
19 You have profaned me among my people for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of
bread. By lying to my people, who listen to lies, you have killed those who should not
have died and have spared those who should not live.
20 "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against your magic charms with
which you ensnare people like birds and I will tear them from your arms; I will set free
the people that you ensnare like birds.
21 I will tear off your veils and save my people from your hands, and they will no longer
fall prey to your power. Then you will know that I am the Lord.
22 Because you disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no
grief, and because you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save
their lives,
23 therefore you will no longer see false visions or practice divination. I will save my
people from your hands. And then you will know that I am the Lord.'"
20 Therefore thus says the Lord God: I am against your bands with which you hunt lives;
I will tear them from your arms, and let the lives go free, the lives that you hunt down
like birds.

[21] I will tear off your veils, and save my people from your hands; they shall no longer be prey in your hands; and you shall know that I am the Lord.
[22] Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened them, and you have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their wicked way and save their lives;
[23] therefore you shall no longer see false visions or practice divination; I will save my people from your hand. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

'Now, son of man, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own imagination.' – The false prophetesses were just like the false prophets; they prophesied from their own hearts or imaginations, but were not moved by the Spirit of God.

'Woe to the women who sew magic charms on all their wrists and make veils of various lengths for their heads in order to ensnare people' – As part of their false prophecy, these women used symbols of magic charms and particular articles of clothing (veils) in their ceremonies.

They made a living for themselves through their false words, ceremonies, and actions.

The phrase, 'For a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread' can represent the paltry payment these prophetesses would accept in return for their occult practices. But according to some theologians, Hittite practices and later Syrian rituals demonstrate that divination was carried out with barley bread either as part of the pagan sacrificial ritual or as a means of determining whether the victim would live or die ('you have killed those who should not have died and have spared those who should not live').

The Lord would destroy their works of sorcery and cause their visions to cease, and would deliver His people from this deception.

Chapter 14

Ezek 14 – NIV

Idolaters Condemned

[1] Some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat down in front of me.
[2] Then the word of the Lord came to me:
[3] "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all?
[4] Therefore speak to them and tell them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: When any of the Israelites set up idols in their hearts and put a wicked stumbling block before their faces and then go to a prophet, I the Lord will answer them myself in keeping with their great idolatry.
[5] I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.'
[6] "Therefore say to the people of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!
[7] "'When any of the Israelites or any foreigner residing in Israel separate themselves from me and set up idols in their hearts and put a wicked stumbling block before their faces and then go to a prophet to inquire of me, I the Lord will answer them myself.
[8] I will set my face against them and make them an example and a byword. I will remove them from my people. Then you will know that I am the Lord.
[9] "'And if the prophet is enticed to utter a prophecy, I the Lord have enticed that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and destroy him from among my people Israel.
[10] They will bear their guilt—the prophet will be as guilty as the one who consults him.
[11] Then the people of Israel will no longer stray from me, nor will they defile themselves anymore with all their sins. They will be my people, and I will be their God, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"

Some elders of Israel came to the prophet to consult the Lord, but He showed Ezekiel that they did not actually want to listen to God, for they had set up idols in their hearts.

They had probably come hoping to hear some revelation about the length of their exile or to receive news from Jerusalem. The prophet spoke, but it was not what they expected to hear from God.

They still maintained their beliefs in other gods, not just in the Lord.

Perhaps they were infected by the Babylonian way of life and its idolatrous religion and had taken its idols into their hearts. Perhaps they were like the people in Isaiah's day who approached God with words, but not with their hearts fully turned to Him (Isa 29: 13); or perhaps they had kept their hearts bound to the Canaanite idols.

So God told the prophet that they too would be punished.

'And if the prophet is enticed to utter a prophecy, I the Lord have enticed that prophet.' (vv. 9-11) – Ezekiel was speaking here of false prophets. When the people with idolatrous hearts went to a false prophet to inquire of the Lord, God could give them whatever answer He wanted.

Jerusalem's Judgment Inescapable

[12] The word of the Lord came to me:

13 “Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand
against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its people and their
animals,
14 even if these three men—Noah, Daniel [Or Danel, a man of renown in ancient
literature] and Job—were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness,
declares the Sovereign Lord.
15 “Or if I send wild beasts through that country and they leave it childless and it becomes
desolate so that no one can pass through it because of the beasts,
16 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they
could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved, but the land
would be desolate.
17 “Or if I bring a sword against that country and say, ‘Let the sword pass throughout the
land,’ and I kill its people and their animals,
18 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if these three men were in it, they
could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved.
19 “Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out my wrath on it through bloodshed,
killing its people and their animals,
20 as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, even if Noah, Daniel [Or Danel, a man
of renown in ancient literature] and Job were in it, they could save neither son nor
daughter. They would save only themselves by their righteousness.
21 “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: How much worse will it be when I send
against Jerusalem my four dreadful judgments [NRSV: my four deadly acts of
judgment]—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague—to kill its men and their
animals!

Then the Lord explains the justice of His punishments and mentions His four judgments: famine, wild animals, sword, and plague.

When He sent these judgments, not even Daniel, Job, and Noah could prevent the destruction of a land.

Israel’s sin was so deep and serious that even if three of the most righteous men of their nation were present on earth, it would not prevent God’s judgment against it. They would only save themselves through their righteousness, not the nation as a whole.

Noah, Daniel, and Job: all three were men who were wrought by God and whose faith was tested, being rescued from trials by their trust in Him. Daniel was a well-known contemporary of Ezekiel in the Babylonian court, for his wisdom and piety. In fact, Ezekiel praises him here, as Peter also did with Paul (2 Pet 3: 15-16).

God promised to send these four severe judgments upon Jerusalem and Judah. When they came, they bring death to both men and animals.

22 Yet there will be some survivors—sons and daughters who will be brought out of it.
They will come to you, and when you see their conduct and their actions, you will be
consoled regarding the disaster I have brought on Jerusalem—every disaster I have
brought on it.
23 You will be consoled when you see their conduct and their actions, for you will know
that I have done nothing in it without cause, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

Jerusalem would be destroyed, but there would be survivors. They would come to the exiles and they would feel comforted, for through their conduct, all would know that the Lord’s punishments were just.

This text doesn't seem to refer to a righteous remnant, but a wicked one. Their actions were unjust, and because of them, the due punishment was carried out. All the exiles would see their low standard of conduct and understand why the Lord had to act in that way. When Ezekiel said this, there were still exiles to be brought to Babylon. Therefore, the Jews who were with him would know that the judgment was well deserved. It is obvious that righteous exiles would also come (Ezek 9: 4-6), but the Jews with Ezekiel would see that he had not exaggerated in what he said. Their consolation would be to understand God's ways and judgments. He had not brought the destruction of Jerusalem without just cause.

Chapter 15

Ezek 15 – NIV

Jerusalem, a useless vine

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, how is the wood of a vine different from that of a branch from any of the trees in the forest?
[3] Is wood ever taken from it to make anything useful? Do they make pegs from it to hang things on?
[4] And after it is thrown on the fire as fuel and the fire burns both ends and chars the middle, is it then useful for anything?
[5] If it was not useful for anything when it was whole, how much less can it be made into something useful when the fire has burned it and it is charred?
[6] "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: As I have given the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest as fuel for the fire, so will I treat the people living in Jerusalem.
[7] I will set my face against them. Although they have come out of the fire, the fire will yet consume them. And when I set my face against them, you will know that I am the Lord.
[8] I will make the land desolate because they have been unfaithful, declares the Sovereign Lord."

The prophet now tells the parable of the useless vine, which would be burned.

The vine was not made for beams, planks, or utensils, but to bear fruit. Burnt, then, it is completely useless. So would Jerusalem be when the fire consumed it.

Israel had been planned by God to bear fruit of covenant, justice, and faithfulness. This set them apart from other peoples. So why the boasting of being the chosen people, when they behaved like pagan nations?

Without spiritual fruit, they would not be useful instruments in God's hands.

Chapter 16

Ezek 16 – NRSV / NIV

An allegory of unfaithful Jerusalem

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] Mortal, make known to Jerusalem her abominations,
[3] and say, Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite.

Although this text (Ezek. 16: 1-63) speaks of the abominations and infidelity of Jerusalem, it begins with a declaration of love of God to His people, His Bride (v. 1-14). In a figurative way the Lord explains what He did with us when He separated us to Him through Jesus.

The Lord reminds us that the Israelite nation came from the land of the Canaanites, which was given to Abraham (Gen 12: 5), as well as from the other peoples who lived there, such as the Hittites and the Amorites.

According to Charles Lee Feinberg (a biblical scholar of the Jewish history, languages and customs of the OT and biblical prophecies, 1909–1995), 'Amorite' and 'Hittite' were general names, representing the people of Canaan, for they were the most powerful of the nations that lived there.

According to some theologians, the statement being made was somewhat harsh and ironic, since the term 'Canaanite' was a synonym for moral decay.

Jerusalem 'had its origins in Canaan,' referring to the mountainous territory to the south, and the non-Semitic peoples founded the city (formerly called Jebus), which was only taken in the time of David.

The Canaanites were the first inhabitants of the Promised Land before Israel arrive. They lived in the region near the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea) to the north, so were also called Syro-Phoenicians. In the times of the Old Testament, Phoenicia was called Canaan (Hebr.: Kena'an), and its inhabitants, **Canaanites** (Hebr.: Kna'aniy; Strong #3669), meaning 'merchants', 'traders.' And just as a merchant takes care of his goods so that they are not stolen and that he does not have financial loss on them, we can extend its meaning to 'zealous.' In Greek, Phoenicia is called Phoiníkē, Φοινίκη, 'land of the palm trees.' **Hittite** (Hebr.: Chitti; Strong #2850) means 'descendant of Heth'; and Heth means 'fear, terror.' We can say, therefore, that Hittite means 'He who is not afraid to show who he is.' **Amorite** (Hebr.: Emori; Strong #567) is a word derived from a primitive root that means prominence; consequently, mountaineer, mountainous, mountain dweller; symbolically, visionary [Os nomes bíblicos e seus significados – Evandro de Souza Lopes – CPAD, 8ª edição 2002].

Symbolically, for us today it means that what He desired for 'His Bride' was what was previously in the enemy's hands. Instead of characteristics and blessings belonging to the wicked, they should be our characteristics. It's we that should be zealous of the word and the things of God and take care of them like seeds planted within us; it's we that should think 'high' as the inhabitants of the mountains, as visionaries, and not to be afraid to change our lives and show who we are.

But both Israel and Judah disregarded all of that, in the sense that they preferred to imitate the errors of those peoples, their idolatries and bad attitudes.

[4] As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths.

Regarding her origins, God speaks of Jerusalem as a newborn baby who was not very well cared for. He speaks in verse 4, “As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths,” that is, ‘without proper attention to the navel cord’, for the child who was just born is susceptible to die from a serious infection.

In ancient times, the birth of a child, in the Middle East in particular, obeyed certain standards and had meaning. Cutting the umbilical cord, washing the newborn, rubbing salt on its skin, and swaddling it for protection were customary legal acts of legitimizing or establishing legal paternity over the child. The same thing was true with the choice of the child’s name. Similarly, God “took upon Himself the fatherhood” over the firstborn males on the eighth day of life, through circumcision, as the law of Moses prescribed (Ex 13: 2; Num 8: 17). Every firstborn son was consecrated to the Lord. Wrapping the newborn with strips of cloths was a common practice in Ancient times, showing also that he was well cared for. First, the umbilical cord was cut and the child was washed with water to remove from his body the amniotic fluid and blood present at birth. The baby was then rubbed with a small amount of salt and olive oil to help clean and disinfect the skin. Some desert tribes rubbed salt on the skin of the newborn child so that he could bear heat better. Therefore, it means protection, strengthening, resistance to adverse conditions. Another meaning of this practice, equally important for Jews, is that salt was added to each offering on the altar of sacrifice in the Tabernacle and in the Temple. Most likely, Israelite mothers saw this custom in relation to their babies as a symbolic way of offering their children to the service of the Lord; a way to dedicate them to God. Salt represents the faithfulness of promises, the unchanging love of God, and the enduring nature of the covenant, His pact with mankind. After that, the baby was wrapped in long strips of linen or cotton, which helped to provide him comfort; the tight bands would replicate the feeling of the comfort of the womb. On some occasions the bands were

marked in some way to find out whose baby it was. Some scholars say they were embroidered with symbols of the child's ancestry.

And He goes further, comparing her to a baby thrown into the field (Ezek 16:5-6):
5 No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.
6 I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, 'Live!'

This is an allusion to children exposed by their unnatural parents or cruel midwives, and left in an open field or anywhere in the desert to perish for lack of care, food, water and protection, unless someone saw them and sympathized with them. The Egyptians mistreated the Lord's people, for the Hebrews were an abomination to them, and wanted to throw their newborn into de Nile. In the same way, many children of God were born and suffered the pain of rejection, ostensible or not and even inexplicable, because the enemy touched people to act in this way, knowing somehow that these children were already separated by God to be His at some point in their lives; they were 'different.' Jesus said: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me" (Mk. 9: 37).

In cases of neglect and abandonment of a child in an open field, the father legally relinquished all rights and responsibilities towards the child.

Therefore, in verse 6, the Lord says: "I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, 'Live!'" The Lord passed by her and gave her a word of ransom and life. "'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them" (Mk. 10: 14b-16).

In Deut. 7: 7-8, God explained the reason why He focused His attention on Israel to rescue them: "The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it

was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt." The reason wasn't because Israel was so numerous, or so different from other peoples, or so holy. They were weak, poor, and near death in that Egyptian slavery. But God passed by and took notice of them.

7 and grow up like a plant of the field. You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare [NIV: I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels [or 'became mature']. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare]. *This means that she was not so self-sufficient that she no longer needed God; she was without the protection of the 'cloak.'*
8 I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine.

The bride grew up, and in verse 8, when the time to have children came He spread His cloak over her. In Hebrew, the word 'mantle' or 'cloak', means, among others things, 'wings', symbol of protection, life, anointing and power. It also refers to marriage proposals. So, when the Lord set us apart for Him, we became to be His exclusive property and we no longer felt unprotected. God made a covenant with her (and with us) as in a marriage (v. 8).

9 Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil.
10 I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric [NIV: I clothed you with embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments].

From verse 9 to 14, He reports the process of growth and beautification of His bride to whom He Himself went on adding blessings and gifts like ornaments. In verse 9, He says He bathed her with water.

For us, this means: we came to Jesus, we heard His word and it began to wash us from the old ways of thinking and acting. He also says that He washed off the blood from us, that is, He healed our wounds. After this He anointed us with oil, i.e., His Spirit was poured out on us, strengthening us and sanctifying us and consecrating us to Him.

In verse 10, He speaks of embroidered cloth, fine linen, rich fabric such as silk, and sandals of fine leather ("I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric."). The word 'silk' in Ezek 16: 10, 13, in Hebrew is meshhi, מֶשִׁי, Strong #4897, which means silk (as drawn from the cocoon); or an expensive material for clothing, perhaps silk, according to some theologians. It only occurs these two times in the Bible.

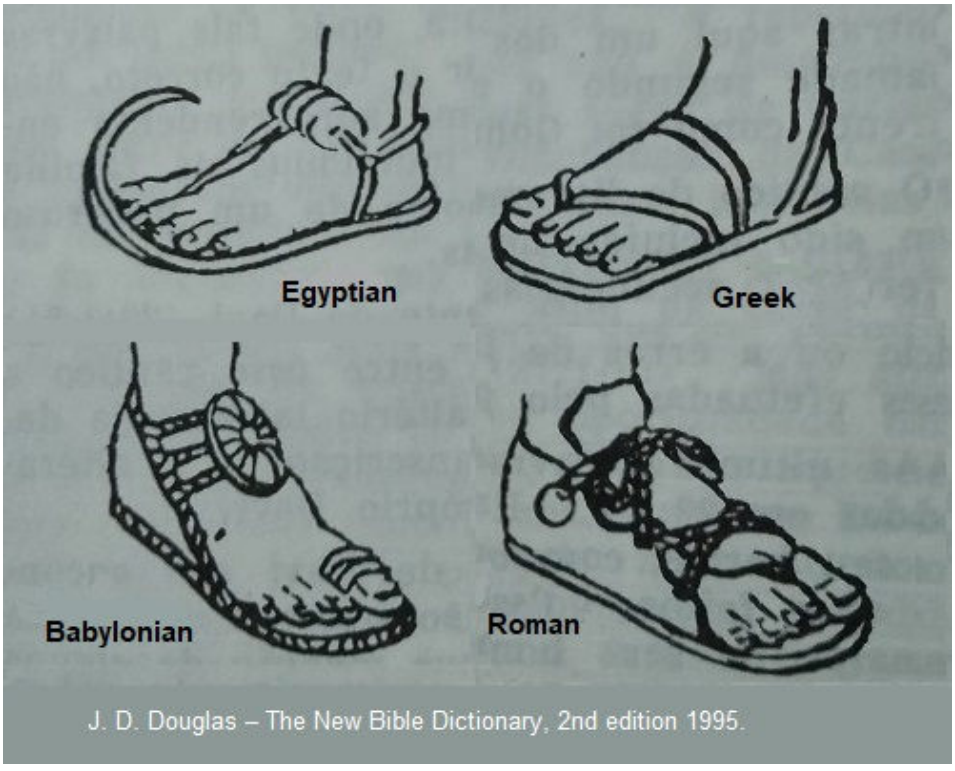
The fine linen is a symbol of holiness and righteousness (Rev. 19: 8). Silk, for example, is a symbol of refinement and sensibility. He protected His bride's feet from injuries, as well as enabled them to step with safety. The expression 'fine leather' or 'hides of sea cows' translated in KJV as 'badgers skins', in Hebrew is tahash (tā·haš) or tachash – תחש (plural: tahashim or thchshim – תחשים) – Strong #8476; probably originated from the Egyptian word, thhs, 'leather', and the Arab, tuhasum, 'dolphin.' Tahash means porpoise, dolphin, sea cow (dugong); a (clean) animal with fur (like some species of goat).

Ezekiel here probably refers to shoes, not sandals. The shoes were made of soft leather; the sandals, made of hard leather.

I want to make a parenthesis here to talk a little about sandals and shoes in ancient times.

Sandals were well known in Ancient times: Am. 2: 6; Am. 8: 6; Deut. 25: 10; in Ezek. 24: 7, where the word sandal (סנדל) is written in our version, in Hebrew it is written 'footwear' or 'shoe' – na'al נעל or נָעַל – Strong #5275; in Ezekiel 16: 10 it is the same word, used for the verb 'to put on' (shoes or sandals) (נָעַל – Strong #5274, naal or na'al): "I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk" (KJV).

Sandals with soles (ne'ãlïm or na'alayim – נעל – Strong #5275) of leather were worn to protect the feet from the burning sand and dampness. Sandals might also have soles (ne'ãlïm) of wood, with leather straps (serõkh – Gen. 14: 23, Isa. 5: 27; Mk. 1: 7; Lk. 3: 16; Mk. 6: 9). Sandals were not worn in the house or in the sanctuary (Ex. 3: 5; Josh. 5: 15). Walking without sandals was a sign of great poverty (Deut. 25: 9; Lk. 15: 22) or of mourning (2 Sam. 15: 30; Isa. 20: 2-4; Ezek. 24: 17, 23). When an angel appeared to Peter in the prison, he ordered him to put on his sandals (Acts 12: 8).



In Assyria, sandals also covered the heel and the side of the foot. Sandals and thongs were so common that they symbolized the most insignificant thing, as in Gn. 14: 23. Most people at that time walked barefoot or wore sandals, but shoes were not so common. The poor could not afford to wear shoes, since they were made of soft leather, which was scarce. The sandals were made of hard leather. Jews did not wear sandals at home (Lk. 7: 38); they removed them when entering the house, and washed their feet. Sandals are related to authority, occupation, material possessions. And in Ex. 3: 5 and Josh. 5: 15 when the Lord said to Moses and Joshua on different occasion to take off the sandals from their feet, the connection between taking off one's shoes and surrender is implicit, a sign

of submission and respect, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”

The Jews considered carrying or untying someone else’s sandals to be a very humble task. When John the Baptist spoke of the coming of Christ, he said, “… the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” (John 1: 27).

Thus, God bathed her with water, anointed her, healed her wounds, clothed her, fed her with what was best, shod her feet, and adorned her with jewels. Ornaments and jewelry for us mean the gifts and fruit of the Spirit:

11 I adorned you with ornaments [NIV, jewelry]: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain [NIV, necklace] on your neck,
12 a ring on your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head.
13 You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, rich fabric, and embroidered cloth. You had choice flour and honey and oil for food. You grew exceedingly beautiful, fit to be a queen. [NIV: So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen.]
14 Your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of my splendor that I had bestowed on you, says the Lord God.

In ancient times, male Jews wore bracelets, rings, chains and necklaces of various types. In the Near East, both sexes used gold chains as an ornament and a symbol of dignity. Government officials placed such gold chains on Joseph and Daniel as a symbol of sovereignty (Gen. 41: 42; Dan. 5: 29). Male Jews wore jewelry with the purpose of improving their personal appearance. The art of jewelry began in a remote period of humanity (Num. 31: 50; Judg. 8: 26; Hos. 2: 13). A Jew used the ring as a seal and symbol

of his authority (Gen. 41: 42; Dan. 6: 17). With the seal he stamped his personal seal on official documents (In the time of Esther, for example). It could be worn on a string around the neck or on the finger. Men also wore rings or bands on their arms (cf. 2 Sam. 1: 10). The bracelet and the crown are symbol of glory and majesty. The necklace is a symbol of grace, mercy (Hebrew, Hesedh or Chesed) with which we are adorned. Women wore earrings and other jewelry (Gen. 24: 22, 30, 53; Gen. 35: 4; Ex. 32: 2-3; Ezek. 16: 12).

But as a free man, a Jew never used earrings. The rings and earrings are a symbol of voluntary private property. In the OT, when it was the seventh year of slavery for anyone, he was entitled to be freed, but if he wanted to stay with his master, this one led him to the judges and his ear was placed in the doorpost and pierced. It was placed, then, an earring and the slave went to serve that man forever (Ex. 21: 6; Deut. 15: 16-17): "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the door-post and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life" (Ex. 21: 2; 5-6); "But if your servant says to you, 'I do not want to leave you,' because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your maidservant" (Deut. 15: 16-17). Thus, the earring was a sign of slavery.

In verse 13 the Lord tells that He fed His bride with what was best: honey, oil and choice flour.

"I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments… So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil." (Ezek 16: 10, 13).

Embroidered dress or embroidered cloth, fine leather or 'hides of sea cows' [NVI], fine linen, fine flour, honey and olive oil are words and expressions commonly used in the descriptions of the Tabernacle and its curtains, the priestly garments, and the offerings, especially the grain offering, the burnt offerings and the peace offerings. This leads us to believe that Jerusalem, the Lord's bride, was clothed in garments of holiness, like those of her Temple, and was nourished with the 'food' of her offerings.

Thus, well-treated and adorned she came to be beautiful and her fame spread among the nations. Because of God's loving care and compassion, Jerusalem excelled in beauty and was elevated to the status of queen among the cities of the ancient world. What made the Israelites famous among the nations did not come from them, but from the blessings God bestowed upon them. This honor was solely due to the Lord's choice of them. This splendor reached its peak during the reign of King David and during the early years of Solomon, and Israel was a prosperous kingdom. As long as Israel obeyed His Word and remained faithful to His covenant, God blessed them abundantly as He had promised. He gave Israel healthy children, fertile flocks and herds, abundant harvests, and protection from disease, disaster, and invasion.

In the following verses, as a betrayed and angry husband He reports the infidelity of His bride, surrendering to all sorts of idolatry and that led her to the loss of her beauty. Thus the Lord takes us out of the world, heals us, adorns us, feeds us and beautifies us, therefore He wants from us loyalty and gratitude, and not that we come to repeat the same mistake as Israel. May you know how to keep the precious heritage you received from Him, waiting for His coming.

Jerusalem was unfaithful, giving herself over to the idols of the nations and even sacrificing her own children.

15 But you trusted in your beauty, and played the whore because of your fame, and lavished your prostitutions on any passer-by [NIV: But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his.]

Excessive self-confidence, pride in what they were, brought about the downfall of Jerusalem and the entire nation. The people forgot that they were nothing when God found them, and that He had granted them beauty, wealth, wisdom, and healthy, well-nourished citizens. Instead of trusting in God, they trusted in the blessing God gave them. They ended up using the fame they had among the nations to chase after the idols of pagan nations, like a prostitute runs after her 'clients.'

16 You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be [NIV: You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. Such things should not happen, nor should they ever occur].
17 You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and my silver that I had given you, and made for yourself male images, and with them played the whore [NIV: You also took the fine jewelry I gave you, the jewelry made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them];

'Gaudy high places' or 'colorful shrines (v.16):' The women's colorful garments ended up being used to decorate idolatrous altars; that is, they were part of the colorful hangings of the tents set up in high places, which were places for feasting, fornication, idolatry, and child sacrifice.

Israel took the gold and silver that God gave them to adorn the places of pagan idolatry and used in the worship of idols with sexual connotations [NIV: idols in the form of men]. Here they refer to priapus, which were ritual representations of the male sexual organ, an erect and disproportionate penis, usually made of wood in the cults of Bacchus. Here in Ezekiel, it seems they were made of gold and silver. These amulets celebrated life, the cycle of renewal, and agricultural abundance, and were associated with the Greek god of fertility, Priapus. They were carried in festivities honoring Osiris, Bacchus (Dionysus), and Adonis.

18 and you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them.
19 Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with choice flour and oil and honey—you set it before them as a pleasing odor; and so it was, says the Lord God [NIV: Also the food I provided for you—the flour, olive oil and honey I gave you to eat—you offered as fragrant incense before them. That is what happened, declares the Sovereign Lord].

The embroidered garments were used to cover idols. My bread [NIV: food]: Bread is a generic name for all foods. As I mentioned above, these elements were important ingredients used in grain offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, with the exception of honey, for these were unleavened cakes made with flour, olive oil, and salt. More than that, the land of Canaan was a land of wheat, from which the finest flour ('the choice flour') was made for use in temple offerings; a land of olive trees, from which

came the best olive oil; and 'a land flowing with milk and honey,' given to them by the Lord. It can be said, then, that the Lord had fed them with these things, but instead of glorifying Him through these fruits and using them in the proper way, they offered all these fruits of the earth to idols to obtain their favor and goodwill, and to appease them and make them propitious to them. Except for honey, which was forbidden in temple offerings, flour and oil were dedicated to the Lord in temple offerings, and the incense He spoke of was the fragrant incense used by the priest on the golden altar in front of the Holy of Holies during prayers, and also placed on the grain offerings. Honey was only used in sacrifices by the Gentiles (Lev 2: 1-11, 13).

[20] You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. As if your prostitutions were not enough! [NIV: And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough?]
[21] You slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering to them *[the idols]*.
[22] And in all your abominations and your prostitutions you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, flailing about in your blood.

Israel became so degenerate in its devotion to idols that it offered its own sons and daughters and sacrificed them to pagan idols, such as the detestable Molech, the Ammonite god.

Ahaz (2 Kin. 16: 3; 2 Chr. 28: 3) and Manasseh (2 Kin. 21: 6; 2 Chr. 33: 6), kings of Judah, participated in this horrible practice of sacrificing children to Canaanite gods. Even Solomon sanctioned the worship of Molech, god of the Ammonites, and Chemosh, god of the Moabites, and built a temple for these idols (1 Kin 11: 3-7) and followed Ashtoreth. The northern tribes went into captivity in Assyria because they had committed the same sins (2 Kin 17: 17). Josiah, king of Judah, destroyed a place of worship to Molech (2 Kin 23: 10).

Israel no longer remembered its poor and humble beginning, where God's protection and provision were its greatest blessings.

[23] After all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! says the Lord God),
[24] you built yourself a platform and made yourself a lofty place in every square (NRSV) [NIV: you built a mound for yourself and made a lofty shrine in every public square].
[NABRE: you built yourself a platform and raised up a dais in every public place ('a dais': it is associated with rituals borrowed from the Canaanites)];
[KJV writes: "That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street."]

'Eminent place' ('a platform' or 'a mound'), in Hebrew is, gab (גָּב, Strong #1354), which means, rims. It comes from an unused root meaning, hollow or curve; the back (as rounded); by analogy, the top or rim, a boss (projection), a vault (dome), arch (of eye), bulwarks, eminent place or higher place, nave, among other meanings. In other words, a curved or rounded surface, a vault or a raised dome, a vaulted chamber. It could be a small hill or a structure of a certain size, but with a vaulted shape like a large 'niche' in the rock, containing the image of the idol and/or where sacrifices were made to it.

'High place', in Hebrew is, ramah (רָמָה, Strong #7413), which means, place. It is the feminine active participle of 'ruwm'; a height (as a seat of idolatry). In the lands of the Canaanites and the ancient Near East, these places were frequently on mounds or artificial platforms used to support idols and make sacrifices.

As their wickedness worsened, Israel began to multiply its idolatry. It became widespread and common throughout the land.

'In every square,' 'in every public place,' 'in every street,' or 'in every public square' – The Hebrew word is rechob or rchowb (רְחוֹב, Strong #7339), translated as 'street' or 'square'. It originates from the word rachab, which means: width, broad place (way), street, avenue or area. Therefore, it refers to a public meeting place, not exactly a street; that is, a wide place, an open space in the city, where people meet and where markets are located.

'In every square,' 'in every public place,' 'in every street,' or 'in every public square' it doesn't matter the version – This reminds us of Ahaz and Manasseh, who erected altars in every corner of Jerusalem, including in the House of the Lord itself, like Ahaz with the altar similar to the one he saw in Assyria, and Manasseh with the altars in the Temple and the idol, probably referring to the 'idol of jealousy' mentioned by Ezekiel. References:

Ahaz – 2 Chr 28: 24-25; 2 Kin 16: 10-18

Manasseh – 2 Chr 33: 3; 2 Kin 21: 3; 2 Chr 33: 3, 4-5, 7; 2 Kin 21: 4-5, 7

25

"At the head of every street you built your lofty place and prostituted your beauty, offering yourself to every passer-by, and multiplying your whoring." – NRSV
"At every street corner you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, spreading your legs with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by." – NIV
"Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to everyone that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms." – KJV
"At every intersection you built yourself a dais so that you could degrade your beauty by spreading your legs for every passerby, multiplying your prostitutions." – NABRE

Israel's unfaithfulness to God was not only everywhere, but apparently also in every pagan god ('to every passer-by' or 'to anyone who passed by'). They did everything to provoke God to anger.

Ezekiel used this shocking and indelicate language to shake his listeners, who were completely oblivious and apathetic to the voice of God's prophetic rebuke. A carnal and sinful people might understand such language, and such a deplorable comparison, as their spiritual betrayal to their God.

The Lord mentions the most important nations with which she shared her idolatry: Egypt, Philistia, Assyria and Chaldea.

26 You played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger [NIV: You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your neighbors with large genitals, and aroused my anger with your increasing promiscuity].

'Your lustful neighbors' or 'your neighbors with large genitals' – Similarly to the previous verses, this language is also shocking and quite impolite in referring to Egypt's spiritual promiscuity and idolatry. The prophet clearly refers to the male sexual organ to describe the moral degradation and sexual perversion into which the people had fallen.

27 Therefore I stretched out my hand against you, reduced your rations, and gave you up to the will of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior [NIV: So I stretched out my hand against you and reduced your territory;

I gave you over to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were shocked by your lewd conduct].

'Reduced your rations' or 'reduced your territory' – This refers not only to the reduction of the people's food ration, allowing the enemy to take control of the land and consequently the harvest, taking the produce by force, as happened in the time of the judges (Judg. 10: 7; 13: 1; 14: 4; 15: 11; 1 Sam. 4: 1-10), when the Lord used the Philistines to discipline His people. It also refers to the loss of territory.

"The daughters of the Philistines" refers to the cities of the Philistines. Even they are ashamed of Jerusalem's obscene conduct, with so much idolatry. In the time of Ahaz, the Philistines attacked Judah (2 Chr. 28: 18-19), taking cities of Judah and inhabiting them.

[28] You played the whore with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied.

After sharing in the idolatry of Egypt, Jerusalem spiritually prostituted itself with the Assyrians, for it also embraced their idols. These idols were brought to Jerusalem primarily by King Ahaz (2 Kin. 16: 10-18; 2 Chr. 28: 23). Prostituting itself with the Assyrians also refers to the political and military agreement with Assyria (2 Chr. 28: 16, 20-21 – Ahaz even gave the treasures of the temple and the royal house to Tiglath-Pileser III; Hos. 5: 13; Hos. 7: 11 – probably during the time of Menahem, king of Israel, who also made an agreement with Tiglath-Pileser III). Israel also relied on political alliances with foreign nations.

[29] You multiplied your prostitutions with Chaldea, the land of merchants; and even with this you were not satisfied.

The Israelites not only pursued the Babylonian gods, but also formed political alliances with that nation and others. By seeking trade relations with Babylon (Chaldea), Jerusalem opened the door to Babylonian idolatry, and the prophet says that, even so, she is not satisfied with this idolatry.

[30] How sick is your heart, says the Lord God, that you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen whore;
[NIV: "I am filled with fury against you, [Or How feverish is your heart] declares the Sovereign Lord, when you do all these things, acting like a brazen prostitute!"]
[NKJV: "How degenerate is your heart!" says the Lord God, "seeing you do all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot."]

"How sick is your heart" or "I am filled with fury against you" or "How feverish is your heart" or "How degenerate is your heart!" – The problem with Israel was much deeper than their actions, for their hearts had become proud and dissatisfied with their God and His covenant. In God's eyes, this behavior was degenerate, sick.

Israel's decline began with the wickedness of its heart and continued with its deeds, like those of brazen prostitutes.

[31] building your platform at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square! Yet you were not like a whore, because you scorned payment.
[32] Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband!

33 Gifts are given to all whores; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from all around for your prostitutions.
34 So you were different from other women in your prostitutions: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; you were different.

Now the Prophet compares the nation to the 'commercial' behavior of a prostitute and an adulteress, for in despising her husband and turning to strangers, the adulteress is moved only by the emotion of transgression, she freely gives her body. The prostitute, however, receives payment.

They built idolatrous altars everywhere, yet they received no payment, no profit, no benefit from it, neither from men nor from these false gods; on the contrary, they paid other nations for their idols. And despite their 'loss,' they still persisted in idolatry.
They had scorned the wages of a prostitute and bought lavish gifts for their illicit lovers.

But what gifts were these?

Israel made costly sacrifices to foreign gods and gave its gold and silver to buy idols. They also paid tribute to foreign peoples to ensure their sustenance and stability. They made political alliances with Gentile nations in exchange for their favors and friendship. The Jews gave money to the Egyptians and Assyrians to obtain commercial and military alliances with them. Ahaz gave the treasures of the temple and the royal house to the Assyrians (Tiglath-Pileser III – 2 Chr. 28: 20-21; 2 Kin. 16: 8), as did Asa (1 Kin. 15: 18, to the king of Syria), Hezekiah (2 Kin. 18: 15, to Sennacherib), and Joash (2 Kin. 12: 18, to the king of Syria).

In the time of Solomon, Israel imported horses from Egypt.

Isaiah rebuked them for trying the make political alliance with Egypt to defend them from Assyria (this is a prophecy of the time of Sennacherib): "Through a land of trouble and distress, of lioness and roaring lion, of viper and flying serpent *[He referred to Egypt; In Hebrew, 'Mizraim', meaning 'land of slavery, dilemma, conflict, confusion, affliction, trouble, disturbance'],* they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. For Egypt's help is worthless and empty, therefore I have called her, 'Rahab who sits still' *[NIV: Rahab the Do-Nothing; In Hebrew, Rahab is an epithet of Egypt, and means, 'insolence, haughtiness, large, ferocity'; 'boaster.']*" (Isa. 30: 6-7).

The verses above express how much wealth of the land of Israel had already been carried on these animals as a tribute to Egypt or as gifts to get its friendship and political help. During the invasion of Sennacherib king of Assyria many of Judea and Jerusalem fled to Egypt with all that they had, with their riches on young donkeys and camels, seeking shelter; for a people also powerless, who would not help them, for they themselves were subjects of Assyria at that time.

35 Therefore, O whore, hear the word of the Lord:
36 Thus says the Lord God, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your prostitution with your lovers, and because of all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them,
37 therefore, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated; I will gather them against you from all around, and will uncover your nakedness to them, so that they may see all your nakedness.
38 I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring blood upon you in wrath and jealousy [NIV: I will bring on you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger].

[39] I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall throw down your platform and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful objects and leave you naked and bare.

Then the Lord says that Jerusalem's sin will be exposed and He will cause the idolatrous nations with whom she allied themselves to turn against her to destroy her. The prophet explains the judgment that is being announced to them. God did not address her by a noble name; on the contrary, He called her by a shocking name ("Therefore, O whore, hear the word of the Lord.").

Her lovers would hate her. They themselves would be instruments of God's vengeance upon her. And that, in itself, would bring shame upon her, for they would show her how little value they placed on her. Both Egyptians and the Chaldeans, whom she hated, would come from all directions.

'I will uncover your nakedness to them, so that they may see all your nakedness.' – God promised to humiliate Israel before its pagan neighbors. The nation had shown foreigners its 'adornments,' 'its beauty,' the 'gifts' that God had given it, that is, it had stripped its body bare to all passersby. Now, then, God would expose it completely. He would leave it naked and stripped of everything. The neighboring nations and their gods would conquer and humiliate it.

First, the prophet tells them that God exposes the nation in public, like a promiscuous woman or an adulteress caught in the act, which was a well-known custom in ancient Israel. Then, the nation especially the city of Jerusalem, would be stoned to death, which is described in the following verses.

[40] They shall bring up a mob against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords.
[41] They shall burn your houses and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; I will stop you from playing the whore, and you shall also make no more payments [NIV: I will put a stop to your prostitution, and you will no longer pay your lovers].
[42] So I will satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall turn away from you; I will be calm, and will be angry no longer.
[43] Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, I have returned your deeds upon your head, says the Lord God. Have you not committed lewdness beyond all your abominations?

Describing the coming judgment against Jerusalem, the harlot:

'They shall bring up a mob against you' refers to the armies of the nations that would come against her, as a form of judgment from God. The image of stoning clearly shows the stones of attack from the invaders, which come along with the blows of the swords and the fire of destruction.

'In the sight of many women' may refer to nations or important cities of the nations that practiced similar things and had helped her in this prostitution.

'So I will satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall turn away from you; I will be calm, and will be angry no longer.' – The Lord's anger would not last forever. When they became aware and showed repentance, He would consider Himself avenged, He would remember her again.

'Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, I have returned your deeds upon your head, says the Lord God. Have you not committed lewdness beyond all your abominations?' (v. 43) – Since her betrayal had been public, her husband's revenge would also be public. They caused

their own destruction because of pride and because they forgot that all the good things they had were a blessing and a gift from God.

44 See, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you, 'Like mother, like daughter.'
45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed [NIV: despised] her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed [NIV: despised] their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

'Like mother, like daughter' and 'Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite' illustrate the mockery that Israel would receive from neighboring nations because it had behaved like the pagan nations where its origins lay.

'You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed [NIV: despised] her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed [NIV: despised] their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite' (v.45) – Israel despised her perfect husband and exchanged him for other lovers (other gods), but to say that the Hittites, the Sodomites, and the Samaritans also loathed or despised their gods seems a bit strange. They did not despised their gods to seek the true Living God; however, because their behavior was promiscuous, when they got tired of one false god, they sought blessings in another, and so they went on.

46 Your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters.
47 You not only followed their ways, and acted according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.

'Your elder sister is Samaria' and 'Your younger sister is Sodom' – the Hebrew terms are, literally, "big" (gadol, Strong #1419) and "small," (katan, Strong #6996), respectively.

The city of Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, and Jerusalem, so faithful to God for a time, became as corrupt as its older sister, Samaria. Even worse was comparing Jerusalem to its younger sister, Sodom, with all its infamous corruptions (Gen. 13:13; 19: 1-24; Isa. 1:10; Jer. 23:14). Isaiah (740-681 BC) had already made this comparison almost 150 years earlier, and Jeremiah (626-585 BC) used the same expression a few decades before Ezekiel (592-571 BC). Therefore, its sin was not so recent, and God's patience would not last forever.

Sodom represented the ruins of Canaanite society, which had no loyalty to God. And Samaria had been the cause of a rupture in the united kingdom of Israel.

These differences were not merely cultural or political, but spiritual, for none of these nations had loyalty or covenant with the Most High God.

The sad reality is that Jerusalem had become more corrupt than those cities. To say it was more corrupt than Sodom was something only God would say. He had called Israel to be different from the pagan nations, and instead it had become like them.

48 As I live, says the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.
49 This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.
50 They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it.

When God mentions the sins of Sodom in the text above, He does not mean that He ignored the city's sexual depravity (Gen. 19:4-5) and the violence they practiced along with those sins, nor the city's abominable idolatry with its sacrifices. He is simply saying that the 'pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease' that Sodom and the surrounding cities had were the root of the sins that came later (Gen. 13:13; 18:20).

They took pride in the fertile vegetation of the well-watered land, for in Gen. 13:10 it is written that the land of Sodom was "like the garden of the LORD." Since the land was well-watered, it was good for agriculture and grazing, which brought an abundance of food and a certain idleness, for there was peace, comfort, and entertainment. These kinds of blessings made them self-sufficient. They did not yet know the God of Abraham, mainly because all the peoples there lived in the darkness of idolatry. God told Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a country not their own, and they would be enslaved and ill-treated (Gen. 15:13), until in the 4th generation they could return there, because "the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (Gen. 15:16). This is because their nature was evil and sinful (Gen. 13:13; 18:20).

Sodom had much pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but "did not aid the poor and needy... and did abominable things before me" (Ezek. 16:49-50). 'Abominable things' is a term that refers to their terrible idolatry, and the sexual depravity described in Gen. 19: 4-5 was a consequence of it. And for this reason, God destroyed it along with the other surrounding cities (Gen. 14:8: Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim), except for Zoar, because Lot had gone there (Gen. 19:20-25; 29; 30; Deut. 29:23) – "therefore I removed them when I saw it" (Ezek. 16:50). The lack of assistance for the needy was also among the prophetic rebukes of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and it only worsened until the time of the exile.

Similarly, God would bring his judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah, for in many aspects they were worse than Sodom.

51 Samaria has not committed half your sins; you have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed.
52 Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have brought about for your sisters a more favorable judgment; because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

Since separating from Judah, Samaria and the northern kingdom have, so to speak, lost the blessings God gave to the House of David. Samaria and the entire northern kingdom (Ephraim) more easily engaged in idolatry, especially after the calves of Jeroboam I. Their kings, unlike the kings of Judah, were no longer chosen by God or approved by Him, for even though they erred and sinned, the Southern Kingdom was still under the Lord's promise to David. The temple and the priesthood received more light of understanding from God, for His presence was in that House since it was built by Solomon, and the Lord's prophets never tired of calling for holiness and repentance. The Ark was still there with the Tablets of the Law, and the Levitical priests knew the law of the Lord very well. So, we can say that Judah and Jerusalem had a much greater spiritual privilege, however, a greater responsibility before Ephraim and pagan nations, and the chance to be a light to the peoples.

All the gifts that the Lord gives us require greater vigilance so that they are not stolen or contaminated by worldly values. Therefore, Judah should have maintained this responsibility before God, to be an example of righteousness to other peoples and

countries. But they ended up yielding to idolatry. Jesus left a very strong warning in the parable of the watchful servant: "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Lk. 12: 47-48).

Precisely because they knew the truth and yet disobeyed God, turning to the abominations of the Gentiles, the weight of Judah's sin was greater than that of Samaria, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Canaanites. And by sinning more, the land of Judah made the others more just. All would be corrected and punished by God, but Judah should not have judged Samaria and other cities so prematurely without first looking at itself. Facing God's judgment would be a shame for Judah.

53 I will restore their fortunes, the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes along with theirs,
54 in order that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them [NIV: so that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all you have done in giving them comfort].
55 As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your daughters shall return to your former state.
56 Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, [NIV: You would not even mention your sister Sodom in the day of your pride],
57 before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you are a mockery to the daughters of Aram [Many Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac: Edom] and all her neighbors, and to the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you.
58 You must bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, says the Lord.
59 Yes, thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done [NIV: as you deserve], you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant;

"I will restore their fortunes" means bringing them back from captivity. God promised restoration to Sodom and Samaria, and Jerusalem would also have its captives brought back. Neither the Bible nor history speaks of the return of the captives from Sodom. Sodom was located in the Jordan plain (or Valley of Siddim, Gen. 14: 3, where the war of the four kings against five took place), along the southern or southeastern shore of the present-day Dead Sea ('The Salt Sea'), which was part of the ancient land of Canaan. The Valley of Siddim was known for its bitumen pits. After Sodom was destroyed by the Lord, we know nothing more about it. Although we don't know if Sodom got its captives back, if God spoke, it must have happened.

"In order that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them" [NIV: "so that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all you have done in giving them comfort"]. (v.54) – The restoration of Samaria and Sodom after the captivity would serve as a way to bring Judah to a level of humility, for the Jews would know that they were not the only objects of God's favor. His love and mercy extended to all other nations.

"Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, before your wickedness was uncovered? [NIV: "You would not even mention your sister Sodom in the day of your pride."] – Before the captivity, Jerusalem used the name Sodom as a mockery or did not use it at all, but now it was she whose name was mocked among the

cities of Syria (Aram) and Philistia, for her own wickedness had been made public through divine judgment.

60 yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant.
61 Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of my covenant with you.
62 I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord,
63 in order that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord God. [NIV: Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign Lord].

"I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant" – Despite the harsh judgment that was approaching, God promised Israel that His covenant would be renewed; now, it would be an everlasting covenant. Even if the long captivity caused them to lose hope in God's favor again, He would renew His covenant with them.

"In order that you may remember and be confounded" or "you will remember and be ashamed" – The restoration would bring humility to Israel, not only toward God, but also toward those whom they had previously despised and judged.

"When I forgive you all that you have done" or "when I make atonement for you for all you have done" – The forgiveness and atonement for sins mentioned in this verse from Ezekiel suggest the future and ultimate covenant with mankind through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

The atonement provided by God is an important aspect of the new covenant, already mentioned in Ezek. 11: 19. This would be the true and final restoration of Israel.

"I will … put a new spirit in them" suggests the presence of the Holy Spirit, poured out in the New Testament by Jesus upon those who accepted the new covenant He came to make. And the Holy Spirit has this power of transformation and restoration (Ezek. 11: 19).

Chapter 17

Ezek 17 – NIV

Two Eagles and a Vine

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, set forth an allegory and tell it to the Israelites as a parable.

In chapter 17, Ezekiel tells the parable of the two eagles and the vine, alluding to the royal house of Judah. God referred to the kingdom and tribe of Judah as the house of Israel as a whole.

The parable describes the events between the time of King Jehoiachin's exile (597 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar also placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah) and the year Zedekiah revolted against Babylon because he trusted in Egypt's promise of help (588 BC).

[3] Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: A great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colors came to Lebanon. Taking hold of the top of a cedar,
[4] he broke off its topmost shoot and carried it away to a land of merchants, where he planted it in a city of traders [KJV: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants].

He speaks of a great eagle with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colors that came to Lebanon and took hold of the top of a cedar.

The great eagle represents Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

'Powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage of varied colors' – It symbolizes his majesty as king and his dominion over many territories, his proud and conquering spirit, which soared victoriously over many lands. 'Feathers of various colors' may refer not only to his magnificent sovereign attire, but also to the tributary nations that were part of his kingdom.

Lebanon here is a figure of Jerusalem, a city adorned with cedar wood, especially in the palace and the temple. 'The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon' or 'the house of the forest of Lebanon' was the name of Solomon's royal house (1 Kin. 7: 2; 1 Kin. 10: 17, 21; 2 Chr. 9: 16, 20).

The cedar corresponds to the house of David. 'A cedar' (v.3) refers to the house of Israel, and 'the topmost shoot' refers to Jehoiachin, king of Judah.

'The top of his young twigs' or 'its topmost shoot' (v.4) represents the royal lineage, that is, the nobles and leaders of the land, who were taken to a land of merchants, that is, to the land of Babylon and to the city of Babylon ('in a city of traders'), along with Jehoiachin.

[5] "'He took one of the seedlings of the land and put it in fertile soil. He planted it like a willow by abundant water, [KJV: He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree];

In v.5, when Ezekiel says that the eagle 'took seedlings of the land', he refers to Zedekiah, Jehoiachin's uncle, who was placed on the throne ('a fruitful field' or 'fertile soil') by Nebuchadnezzar.

'Planted it like a willow by abundant water' – Willow tree grows very well near large streams of water. Willows are often planted on the borders of streams so their interlacing roots may protect the bank against the action of the water. The roots are often larger than the stem which grows from them.

'Abundant water or great waters' may refer to Babylon, a city that had much trade because it was well-favored with water sources near it: its two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, and the Persian Gulf, gave it communication with the richest and most distant nations.

God allowed Zedekiah to reign under conditions of peace, if he obeyed. And the expression 'a willow by abundant water' means that he had the opportunity to prosper, if he remained faithful to the covenant.

6 and it sprouted and became a low, spreading vine. Its branches turned toward him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out leafy boughs.

The vine (the house of Judah), though short ('a spreading vine of low stature' or 'a low, spreading vine'), sprouted and flourished, that is, as a dependent nation under Babylonian protection, Zedekiah prospered because he paid tribute. In other words, Zedekiah was submissive to Nebuchadnezzar and had peace.

7 "'But there was another great eagle with powerful wings and full plumage. The vine now sent out its roots toward him from the plot where it was planted and stretched out its branches to him for water.
8 It had been planted in good soil by abundant water so that it would produce branches, bear fruit and become a splendid vine.'
9 "Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Will it thrive? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it withers? All its new growth will wither. It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it up by the roots.
10 It has been planted, but will it thrive? Will it not wither completely when the east wind strikes it—wither away in the plot where it grew?'"

Then, Ezekiel mentions a second eagle with great wings and many feathers, and the vine sent out its roots and extended its branches toward it. This eagle is Egypt, to whom Zedekiah turned to deliver him from Babylonian rule.

Thus, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon and no longer paid him tribute, and for this reason, Nebuchadnezzar came and deposed him, took him captive, killed his children ('its fresh sprouting leaves' or 'its green leaves', v.9) and Zedekiah died in exile because of his rebellion against the king and against God, for this had already been prophesied by the prophets, such as Jeremiah, warning him to submit to the Babylonian yoke, for in this way he would be preserved alive.

Thus, Ezekiel prophesies the same thing again: the vine of Judah (the royal house of Judah), which could have lived, would be burned, dried up, because it sought roots in the wrong place, in Egypt, which even with its great troops, would not prevent the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. On the contrary, they would retreat before the Babylonians (Jer. 37: 5-10).

11 Then the word of the Lord came to me:

12 “Say to this rebellious people, ‘Do you not know what these things mean?’ Say to them: ‘The king of Babylon went to Jerusalem and carried off her king and her nobles, bringing them back with him to Babylon.

Then Ezekiel explains the parable to the people. Nebuchadnezzar came and took Jehoiachin and carried him off to Babylon, along with court officials and many princes of royal lineage (2 Kin. 24: 10-16).

13 Then he took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him, putting him under oath. He also carried away the leading men of the land,
14 so that the kingdom would be brought low, unable to rise again, surviving only by keeping his treaty.

‘A member of the royal family’ refers to Jehoiachin’s uncle, Mattaniah, whom Nebuchadnezzar called Zedekiah and left in the land as king of Judah.

The bible writes:

“At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him. In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. As the Lord had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed the treasures from the temple of the Lord and from the royal palace, and cut up the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the Lord. He carried all Jerusalem into exile: all the officers and fighting men, and all the skilled workers and artisans—a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king’s mother, his wives, his officials and the prominent people of the land. The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.” (2 Kin. 24: 10-17).

15 But the king rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt to get horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Will he break the treaty and yet escape?
16 “‘As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, he shall die in Babylon, in the land of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose treaty he broke.
17 Pharaoh with his mighty army and great horde will be of no help to him in war, when ramps are built and siege works erected to destroy many lives.
18 He despised the oath by breaking the covenant. Because he had given his hand in pledge and yet did all these things, he shall not escape.
19 “‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: As surely as I live, I will repay him for despising my oath and breaking my covenant.

Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and sent his envoys to Egypt (the second eagle) to get horses and a large army. The pharaoh to whom Zedekiah asked for help was Hophra (חָפְרַע, in Hebrew, Jer. 44:30), also known as Apries (589–570 BC), the Greek version of the Egyptian name, Wahibre Haaibre, pharaoh of the 26th Egyptian dynasty.

Hophra was a warrior sovereign who supported the peoples of the Syria-Palestine region in their fight against the Babylonians. However, his support was not enough to prevent the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BC) in 586 BC.

In Jer. 44:30, God said that He would deliver him into the hands of his enemies, into the hands of those who sought his death. "Into the hand of them that seek his life – KJV" refers to his own general, Ahmose or Amasis, who in 570 BC was made pharaoh by his soldiers after quelling a rebellion within the Egyptian army, which had been defeated by the Greeks because of Hophra's support for the ruler of Cyrene (on the Libyan coast).

Apries (Hophra) gathered an army of mercenaries against Ahmose, and the two fought battle northwest of the Egyptian Delta, but Apries had to retreat. After a second failed attempt, he left Egypt in 570 BC.

He attempted to regain power again in 567 BC, with the aid of a shipped force (probably Greek and maybe Carian), but according to the historian Herodotus, he was handed over to the people by Ahmose, and they strangled him. Thus, the end of this pharaoh was tragic, which may fit the prophecy of Ezek. 32.

Ahmose II (Amasis) managed to contain Nebuchadnezzar II's advance into Egypt, and prevented him from extending his empire there. Thus, he maintained Egyptian sovereignty during his reign (570-526 BC).

In this prophecy from Ezek 17:15-19, God severely rebukes Zedekiah for breaking the covenant he made with Nebuchadnezzar under oath, that is, to be in submission to Babylonian rule. It is true that this covenant was not spontaneous on Zedekiah's part. Nebuchadnezzar forced him to make it: "He *[Zedekiah]* also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the LORD, the God of Israel." (2 Chr. 36: 13, NIV).

But by rebelling and ceasing to pay tribute to Babylon, Zedekiah not only betrayed an agreement made between two rulers; He broke the oath that had been made in the name of God, as we read above.

God expected Zedekiah to be loyal to the covenant and would punish him for breaking it.

Jeremiah had warned him about this submission, which was God's will. And Ezekiel was now rebuking him for his betrayal of Nebuchadnezzar and for his disobedience and betrayal of God.

Nebuchadnezzar's benevolent attitude helped Zedekiah prosper in his reign. If he had remained true to his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, the kingdom of Judah might have continued to prosper, at least as a vassal kingdom to Babylon. However, captivity would be inevitable, as even Isaiah had prophesied about it 100 years earlier, even mentioning the name of Cyrus.

[20] I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare. I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me.
[21] All his choice troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to the winds. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken.

In these verses, then, the Lord speaks about his captivity.

'I will spread my net for him, and he will be caught in my snare' – Zedekiah even tried to escape at the moment of the invasion, but God had already spread His net over him, that is, He had already caught him.

'I will bring him to Babylon and execute judgment on him there because he was unfaithful to me' – God would bring him to Babylon and judge him, for He took into

account Zedekiah's breaking of his oath to Him, the Lord. Therefore, He said in verse 19: "for despising my oath and breaking my covenant."

The Lord concludes by saying that all of Zedekiah's troops would be put to death by the sword, and those who escaped would be scattered among other nations.

22 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain.
23 On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches.
24 All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. "'I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.'"

The Lord goes on to say that He Himself will take a shoot from the very top (Shealtiel, son of Jehoiachin) of a cedar (the rulers of the throne of David), and will break off 'a tender sprig' (The Messiah, Isa. 11:1; Isa. 53:2; Jer. 23: 5-6; Jer. 33:15; Zech. 6:12; Rev. 22:16) and plant it on the high mountain of Israel, the physical Zion, i.e., the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, at the first coming of Christ, where the lineage of David would be restored. Mount Zion here represents the place of honor and future security of the Messiah's divine rule, in contrast to the ruin of Jerusalem at that time.

Ezekiel believed in the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, ruling over a new and renewed Israel in the times to come, just as Isaiah did. In chapters 9 and 11 of the book of Isaiah, we can see this more clearly: every time he spoke about the Messiah, it gives the impression that he was talking about something very near, either because his desire was for Him to come soon or because he did not, in fact, have a notion of the spiritual kingdom brought by the Messiah. In his human mind, as a Jew, he expected a Messiah in human form bringing a military kingdom, like David or Cyrus. Ezekiel and many prophets of the Old Testament thought the same way. That is why Jesus surprised His people when He came in human form and without the material glory that everyone was expecting.

The Messiah will be born of the royal lineage of Judah and His kingdom is universal.

He will bear fruit (Jn 15:5) and under His rule many will find refuge. Jews and Gentiles will be under His dominion and all nations will recognize His power and His authority to humble the proud ('the tall tree') and exalt the humble ('the low tree'); to make 'the dry tree' green (the house of David in decay) and to wither the 'green tree' (human powers, which are apparently prosperous and fruitful).

Chapter 18

Ezek 18 – NIV

The one who sins will die

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 "What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: "'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? (Jer. 31: 29-30; Lam. 5: 7)
3 "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel.

In chapter 18, God speaks to Ezekiel about a well-known proverb in Israel, referring to the wrongdoings of parents that ended up bringing bad consequences and even God's punishment, as if they placed the blame for what they were suffering on their parents and ancestors.

4 For everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child—both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.

But the Lord replies that all souls belong to Him, the soul of the Father and the soul of the Son, and whoever sins will die. No one will bear the guilt for the sins of another person.

And He also mentions several sins present in the lives of His people: injustice, idol worship and to eat meat sacrificed to them, adultery, disrespect for the laws of bodily purification, oppression, to withhold someone's pledge, robbery, to deny food to the hungry or clothing to the naked, to take excessive interest, partial judgment, and disobedience to the commandments:

5 "Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right.
6 He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife or have sexual relations with a woman during her period.
7 He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked.
8 He does not lend to them at interest or take a profit from them. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between two parties.
9 He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord.
10 "Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things [Or things to a brother]
11 (though the father has done none of them): "He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbor's wife.
12 He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things.
13 He lends at interest and takes a profit. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he is to be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.

14 “But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he
sees them, he does not do such things:
15 “He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile
his neighbor’s wife.
16 He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery
but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked.
17 He withholds his hand from mistreating the poor and takes no interest or profit from
them. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father’s sin; he
will surely live.
18 But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother
and did what was wrong among his people.
19 “Yet you ask, ‘Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?’ Since the son has
done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely
live.
[NRSV: Yet you say, “Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?” When
the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes,
he shall surely live].
20 The one who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent,
nor will the parent share the guilt of the child. The righteousness of the righteous will be
credited to them, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against them.
[NRSV: The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent,
nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be
his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own].
21 “But if a wicked person turns away from all the sins they have committed and keeps all
my decrees and does what is just and right, that person will surely live; they will not die.
22 None of the offenses they have committed will be remembered against them. Because
of the righteous things they have done, they will live.
23 Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather,
am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?
24 “But if a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin and does the
same detestable things the wicked person does, will they live? None of the righteous
things that person has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness they are
guilty of and because of the sins they have committed, they will die.

The righteous person, by doing what is just, shall be saved; the wicked person, by practicing evil, shall die in his own sin. No one shall be held responsible or die for the sins of others. The responsibility of choosing between life and death belongs to each individual. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but desires that they turn from their ways and live.

25 “Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Hear, you Israelites: Is my way unjust?
Is it not your ways that are unjust?
26 If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits sin, they will die for
it; because of the sin they have committed they will die.
27 But if a wicked person turns away from the wickedness they have committed and does
what is just and right, they will save their life.
28 Because they consider all the offenses they have committed and turn away from them,
that person will surely live; they will not die.
29 Yet the Israelites say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ Are my ways unjust, people of
Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?

30 “Therefore, you Israelites, I will judge each of you according to your own ways,
declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not
be your downfall.
31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new
spirit. Why will you die, people of Israel?
32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and
live!

They said that the ways of the Lord were not just, but theirs were unjust, and God would judge them according to their deeds.

Chapter 19

Ezek 19 – NIV

A lament over Israel's princes

1 "Take up a lament concerning the princes of Israel
2 and say: "'What a lioness was your mother among the lions! She lay down among them and reared her cubs.

In chapter 19, Ezekiel tells two parables. One of them is the parable of the caged lion, which consists of a lament for the princes of the royal lineage of David, the last kings of Judah, but God refers to them as princes of Israel, even though the northern kingdom has been conquered and scattered many years ago.

The "mother," the "lioness" (Ezek. 19: 2), represents the royal tribe of Judah (Gen. 49: 9). Several rulers were born from her.

Its kings, like lion cubs, learned to tear de prey and devoured men.

It is interesting that we remember Jacob's blessing upon Judah (Gen. 49: 9-10), where he compares Judah to a lion: "Judah is a lion's cub, you have grown up on prey, my son. He crouches, lies down like a lion, like a lioness—who would dare rouse him? The scepter shall never depart from Judah, or the mace from between his feet, Until tribute comes to him, [NIV, until he comes to whom it belongs; in Hebrew, until Shiloh comes, or until he comes to whom tribute belongs] and he receives the people's obedience."

3 She brought up one of her cubs, and he became a strong lion. He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater [KJV: devoured men].
4 The nations heard about him, and he was trapped in their pit. They led him with hooks to the land of Egypt.

This is Jehoahaz (or Johanan or Shallum), taken by Pharaoh Necho to Egypt as a prisoner (2 Kin. 23: 31-34). He reigned for three months in 609 BC. His original name (Shallum = retribution – Jer. 22: 11-12) was replaced by Jehoahaz to bring luck (Historical information). Jehoahaz = 'YHWH seized' or 'YHWH laid his hand'; Johanan = 'YHWH has been gracious.' Necho arrested him and imposed tribute on Judah (100 talents of silver and one talent of gold), constituting Eliakim son of Josiah king instead of Jehoahaz, changing his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz died in Egypt. According to some theologians, his reign, though short, was wicked. He was a bloodthirsty king, guilty of violence, he exploited the people and devoured them.

5 "'When she saw her hope unfulfilled, her expectation gone, she took another of her cubs and made him a strong lion.
6 He prowled among the lions, for he was now a strong lion. He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater.
NABRE: "He prowled among the lions, became a young lion; He learned to tear apart prey, he devoured people."
7 He broke down [Targum; Masoretic text: He knew] their strongholds and devastated their towns. The land and all who were in it were terrified by his roaring.
NABRE: "He ravaged their strongholds *[men's houses],* laid waste their cities. The earth and everything in it were terrified at the sound of his roar."

[8] Then the nations came against him, those from regions round about. They spread their net for him, and he was trapped in their pit.
NABRE: Nations laid out against him snares all around; They spread their net for him, in their pit he was caught.
[9] With hooks they pulled him into a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon. They put him in prison, so his roar was heard no longer on the mountains of Israel.

Another king (another lion) took the place of Jehoahaz and also learned to catch prey and devoured men. Although many speak of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, only because of verse 9, I agree with two other theologians, John Gill [1697–1771 – English minister, theologian and biblical scholar of the Baptist Church] and Arthur Ernest Cundall [1914-2003 – Anglican clergyman, theologian, writer and scholar and professor of Old Testament at the London School of Theology], that it refers to Jehoiakim (Eliakim), another son of Josiah and brother of Jehoahaz. Eliakim reigned for 11 years.

Necho made him king, but with the consent of the Jewish people. "He prowled among the lions" refers to the kings of neighboring nations, such as Pharaoh of Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, for sometimes he submitted to one, sometimes to the other. He became an oppressive prince, a cruel and tyrannical king, and "He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater."

The Bible says that he committed murder (2 Kin. 24: 1-4, Jer. 22: 17) and treated his own people with violence. Jeremiah describes him well in Jer. 22:13-19: injustice; presumption, greed, and selfish and indulgent luxury, building imposing palaces for himself and forcing his subjects to work for him without paying them wages; he did not follow the example of Josiah, his father; he shed innocent blood (2 Kin. 24: 1-4, Jer. 22:17); and he extorted money from the people, taking silver and gold from them to pay tribute to Necho, Pharaoh of Egypt (2 Kin. 23: 33-35).

The shedding of innocent blood described by Jeremiah is another way of referring to the words of Ezek. 19: 7: "He ravaged their strongholds *[i.e., men's houses],* laid waste their cities. The earth and everything in it were terrified at the sound of his roar." Early in his ministry and during the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah pointed out this type of sin in Jerusalem because of its bad example: Jer. 7: 3-11.

Through his threats and intimidation, decrees and demands, he terrified his subjects; his menacing demands, symbolized by his roar, are in keeping with his lion-like character, to which he is compared (Prov. 19: 12).

Jehoiakim paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for 3 years (after the first invasion in 605 BC), but then rebelled, which provoked an attack from the surrounding nations (Ezek. 19: 8), by the Lord's permission because of this and other sins (2 Kin. 23: 2: Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites). "Then the nations came against him, those from regions round about. They spread their net for him, and he was trapped in their pit," in other words, these attacks weakened him and favored the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar (according to historians, at the end of the year, in 6th December 598 BC), when he bound him with two bronze chains (2 Chr. 36: 6) to take him to Babylon, but it seems that he died on the way or while Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians because of his rebellion, before he was actually taken away.

It is true that both Nebuchadnezzar's army and the nations that were his allies belonged to peoples from the provinces neighboring Israel. They gathered around Jerusalem during the siege and "they spread their net for him."

Because he was a cruel and greedy ruler, Jeremiah wrote (Jer. 22: 18-19) that no one would mourn for him, and his burial would be like that of a donkey; that "they would drag him away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem." (NIV).

In Jer. 36: 30 the prophet says: “Therefore, this is what the LORD says about Jehoiakim king of Judah: He will have no-one to sit on the throne of David; his body will be thrown out and exposed to the heat by day and the frost by night.” This could mean that because of the siege, he was unable to have a proper burial, or because he was taken to Babylon (before Jehoiakim) but died on the way.

His son Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah) succeeded him, but three months later, in the spring of 597 BC (on March 16, according to some sources), he was taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, along with his mother and many princes and officials. However, the Bible does not say that Jehoiachin was taken in chains. The text of 2 Kin. 24: 10-17 suggests that there was a certain voluntary surrender on Jehoiachin’s part, and then Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah on the throne.

With Jehoiakim imprisoned or dead, his roar was heard no longer on the mountains of Israel.

“With hooks they pulled him into a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon. They put him in prison, so his roar was heard no longer on the mountains of Israel.” (Ez 19: 9)

The Hebrew word for ‘cage’ is ‘sugar’ (סוּגָר, Strong #5474). It is probably borrowed from the Akkadian term ‘sigaru’, which means a cage for animals or a leash for prisoners. Perhaps Ezekiel was making a play on words, using it literally in relation to the collar for Jehoiakim and, at the same time, referring to an ‘animal cage,’ which seems to be used figuratively to describe how one catches a lion.

Regarding Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, his son, Jeremiah wrote that he had indeed reigned badly in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kin. 24: 9), but was seen as a worthless figure, associated with idolatry (Jer. 22: 28):

KJV: “Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?”

NVI: “Is this man Jehoiachin a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants? Why will he and his children be hurled out, cast into a land they do not know?”

NABRE: “Is this man Coniah a thing despised, to be broken, a vessel that no one wants? Why are he and his offspring cast out? why thrown into a land they do not know?”

When he uses the expression “a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants” (NIV) or “a despised, broken pot, an object no one wants” (KJV) or “a thing despised, to be broken, a vessel that no one wants” (NABRE), he is ironically referring to Joachim’s leadership skills, which were none (he was 18 years old when he began to reign). Therefore, I also think that at that age and with his short reign, it would not be possible to fit him into the figure of the threatening second lion whose roar everyone was so eager to silence.

The parable of the ruined vine

10 “‘Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard [Masoretic: your blood] planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water.
11 Its branches were strong, fit for a ruler’s scepter. It towered high above the thick foliage, conspicuous for its height and for its many branches.
12 But it was uprooted in fury and thrown to the ground. The east wind made it shrivel, it was stripped of its fruit; its strong branches withered and fire consumed them.
13 Now it is planted in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land.

[14] Fire spread from one of its [Or from under its] main branches and consumed its fruit.
No strong branch is left on it fit for a ruler's scepter.' "This is a lament and is to be used as a lament."

The second part of the chapter compares the fall of the royal line of Judah to the parable of the ruined vine.

"Your mother" (Israel, here representing Judah) is compared to a lush vine (Ezek. 19: 10; Jer. 2: 21).

The "strong branches" or "strong rods" are reminiscent of powerful rulers who reigned on David's throne.

Zedekiah was one of those branches. But the vine "was uprooted in fury" and the "east wind" (Nebuchadnezzar) dried up its fruit (the prosperity of the land). The "east wind" broke its branches (the royal family), and the fire (the Lord's wrath) consumed them. This showed the imminent destruction of the holy city.

The remnant of Israel was "planted in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land," that is, it was taken to Babylon. Babylon wasn't exactly a desert, but to the kings and the exiled people it resembled one.

The fire that spread from one of its main branches and consumed its fruit is an allusion to Zedekiah's rebellion, destroying his own chance to reign, as well as that of his descendants ("No strong branch is left on it"). The final destruction of Judah came through its ruler, Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the last of the kings of the line of David, until the Messiah establishes His reign as promised to David (2 Sam. 7:11-16).

Chapter 20

Ezek 20 – NIV

Rebellious Israel

[1] In the seventh year, in the fifth month on the tenth day, some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and they sat down in front of me.
[2] Then the word of the Lord came to me:
[3] "Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Have you come to inquire of me? As surely as I live, I will not let you inquire of me, declares the Sovereign Lord.'
[4] "Will you judge them? Will you judge them, son of man? Then confront them with the detestable practices of their ancestors

In chapter 20, in the 7th year of the captivity (590 BC), in the 5th month, some elders came to Ezekiel to consult the Lord, but He began to show them the abominations of the house of Israel after the exodus. Two years had already passed since the initial prophecy of his calling (Ezek. 1:2) and one year since the last revelation about the abominations of Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:1).

These leaders brought many foolish questions to God, even after the revelations of God's judgment on Jerusalem because its abominations (chap. 8).

[5] and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, "I am the Lord your God."
[6] On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands.
[7] And I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

In the past, He had promised to take them out of captivity in Egypt and bring them to a good land, because of the promise He made to Abraham (v.42 "I lifted up mine hand" or "with uplifted hand", Gen. 13: 14-17; Ex. 6: 8).

He also commanded them to get rid of the idols they had served in Egypt. Many Hebrews must have been drawn to Egyptian religious practices while they were there.

[8] "'But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt.
[9] But for the sake of my name, I brought them out of Egypt. I did it to keep my name from being profaned in the eyes of the nations among whom they lived and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites.
[10] Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.

But they did not obey and continued to believe in the Egyptian gods, as Stephen mentioned in Acts 7:41-43. There was considerable evidence of Israel's idolatry in Egypt:

The worship of the golden calf on Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:1-6).

Joshua's words: "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord." (Josh. 24: 14)

Jeroboam's choice of golden calves as objects of worship (1 Kin. 12:26-33).

For the sake of His name (Ezek 20:9), He took them out anyway. He did this to preserve His reputation among the Gentiles.

11 I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, by which the person who
obeys them will live.
12 Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord
made them holy.
13 "'Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not follow
my decrees but rejected my laws—by which the person who obeys them will live—and
they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and
destroy them in the wilderness.
14 But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes
of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.
15 Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them
into the land I had given them—a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful
of all lands—
16 because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my
Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols.
17 Yet I looked on them with pity and did not destroy them or put an end to them in the
wilderness.

In the desert, God gave them His statutes and the Sabbath to be kept in reverence to Him. He was setting them apart to be the Lord's holy people. The Sabbath was the central sign of the old covenant (Isa. 56: 2, 4).

But in the desert, they rebelled, and He forgave them, for the sake of His name, so that it would not be profaned among the nations.

And He warned them again against idols.

However, the next generation rebelled, and the Lord wanted to destroy them, but again He withheld His hand and again gave them His statutes.

18 I said to their children in the wilderness, "Do not follow the statutes of your parents or
keep their laws or defile yourselves with their idols.
19 I am the Lord your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
20 Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that
I am the Lord your God."

The generation that came from Egypt did not trust or obey God as they should have, and so they died in the desert. The Lord spoke to the next generation and told them not to repeat the same mistakes as their parents.

21 "'But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not
careful to keep my laws, of which I said, "The person who obeys them will live by them,"
and they desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend
my anger against them in the wilderness.
22 But I withheld my hand, and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from
being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.

[23] Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries,
[24] because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their parents' idols.

Unfortunately, this new generation also disobeyed God: "But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws." God told them that He would judge them, as He had judged the previous generation that had come out of Egypt.

"But I withheld my hand, and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out." – once again He withheld His hand and did not destroy them for the sake of His own name, to preserve His reputation among other peoples.

"Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries" – Near the end of their journey, before Moses died, the people heard again about the blessings resulting from obedience and the curses resulting from disobedience, one of which was being scattered among the nations if they abandoned the statutes and the covenant with God (Deut. 4: 27; Deut. 28: 64). The elders to whom Ezekiel was speaking were now experiencing this situation.

[25] So I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live;
[26] I defiled them through their gifts—the sacrifice of every firstborn—that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the Lord.'

Because they disobeyed once again, the Lord allowed them to go their own way and see for themselves the results of their evil deeds. Sin became their own punishment, and they suffered God's judgment.

The Lord considered them unclean because of the offerings and sacrifices they made; that is, Israel served and honored pagan idols in the most impure and terrible ways, including the sacrifice of children, their firstborn sons. Therefore, the Lord Himself would fill them with horror, so that they knew that He is the Lord.

[27] "Therefore, son of man, speak to the people of Israel and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In this also your ancestors blasphemed me by being unfaithful to me:
[28] When I brought them into the land I had sworn to give them and they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices, made offerings that aroused my anger, presented their fragrant incense and poured out their drink offerings.
[29] Then I said to them: What is this high place you go to?'" (It is called Bamah [Bamah means high place] to this day).

But even after entering the Promised Land, they sacrificed on the mountains, burned incense, and poured out their libations. And they called these places of worship Bamah (High Place).

[30] "Therefore say to the Israelites: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Will you defile yourselves the way your ancestors did and lust after their vile images?
[31] When you offer your gifts—the sacrifice of your children in the fire—you continue to defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. Am I to let you inquire of me, you

Israelites? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I will not let you inquire of me.
32 "'You say, "We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve wood and stone." But what you have in mind will never happen.

Many of the elders who were held captive there had repeated the same mistakes as their fathers, becoming contaminated by idolatry until that moment. Nothing had changed. Therefore, the Lord told them that it was hypocrisy to be there to consult him, since their thoughts and the intentions of their hearts remained unchanged. It was absurd for them to come there to consult the Lord, for they continued with idols in their hearts too.

They were waiting for the opportunity to live like families in other countries and abandon the Lord, serving idols of wood and stone. God needed to correct this evil attitude, otherwise Israel would completely assimilate the idolatrous customs of the countries where they were exiled. The period of exile was meant to refine and change Israel from its idolatrous tendencies. They could never be accepted in a pagan community; it was a mistake to think that way. They did not reach the level of holiness that God asked of them when they returned from captivity, but at least they were cured of the old idolatries of Canaan.

33 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I will reign over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath.
34 I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered—with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath.
35 I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you.
36 As I judged your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign Lord.

"As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I will reign over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath" – God said this as a vow. He would rule over them in His own way.

He would gather them again from all the nations to which they had been scattered, with the same energy and intent as His previous judgment, that is, the departure from Babylon would be a second exodus..

Then the Lord says (Ezek 20: 35) that He will bring them into 'the wilderness of the people' (or 'the desert of the nations') where they will be judged.

In this text, 'face to face' does not refer to a relationship of intimacy, but reflects the sincerity of this encounter. God spoke to their parents in a cloud or in a majestic way through the power of nature, but now He would speak to them in another way.

'Desert of the peoples' or 'wilderness of the nations' is a metaphor for the captivity and exile of Israel among foreign nations.

37 I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.
38 I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

Just as He had done in the past, God would use exile to discipline, purify, and test the hearts of His people. The figure depicted here is that of a shepherd. Just as a shepherd disciplines his flock with a rod, He would do the same to separate His true sheep, those who would renew their covenant with Him.

And many rebels would die in exile ('they will not enter the land of Israel').

39 "'As for you, people of Israel, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols.

This was a challenge: to choose between the Lord and idols. They had their free will. If they wanted to follow God, it had to be with a pure, undivided heart, for He would no longer profane His holy name by mixing it with idols. If they wanted to become Babylonians, so be it.

40 For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord, there in the land all the people of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, [Or and the gifts of your firstfruits] along with all your holy sacrifices.
41 I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations.
42 Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your ancestors.
43 There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done.
44 You will know that I am the Lord, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, you people of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"

Thus purified, and already on His holy mountain (Zion) the house of Israel will serve Him, and He will accept their sacrifices. This was partially fulfilled when the temple was rebuilt under Ezra and Zerubbabel. At least, the priestly ministry was restored.

Bringing them back to their land was a powerful demonstration and revelation of Himself, both to the Gentiles and to His own people.

And there they would loathe themselves for what they had done and would repent. The Israel that returned from exile no longer walked in the same sins as before.

And everything the Lord did was for the sake of His name, not because of their actions.

But this plan of spiritual regeneration of God for His people after the return from captivity did not materialize completely.

If that were true, the history of Israel would have been very different.

Not because God cannot fulfill it, but because His own people have returned to reject His laws. Many fell into apathy and apostasy, just read Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to see the content of the prophetic rebukes. The initial enthusiasm dissipated, and the people fell into spiritual apathy.

Therefore, discipline continued with the Persians, Greeks (Ptolemies and Seleucids), Romans, etc., when the Jews were delivered into the power of the nations (to the 'wilderness of the people' or 'the desert of the nations'), where the word of God was absent, for those peoples were Gentiles and served their own gods and doctrines.

Prophecy Against the South

45 The word of the Lord came to me:
46 "Son of man, set your face toward the south; preach against the south and prophesy against the forest of the southland [KJV: the forest of the south field].
47 Say to the southern forest: 'Hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to set fire to you, and it will consume all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it.
48 Everyone will see that I the Lord have kindled it; it will not be quenched.'"
49 Then I said, "Sovereign Lord, they are saying of me, 'Isn't he just telling parables?'"
[In Hebrew texts Ezek. 20: 45-49 is numbered Ezek. 21: 1-5 – note NIV 2011]

Still in the same chapter, Ezekiel makes the prophecy against the South, referring to Judah, the southern kingdom, which had many trees in its territory ('the forest of the south field' or 'the forest of the southland'). The Bible often uses the word 'Negev' to refer to the 'south,' but that is not the case here. Ezekiel was referring to the land of Judah, the south of Israel, and the Hebrew word used here is teman (תֵּמָן, Strong #8486), the south in the cardinal directions.

It is a word of judgment against the land of Judah. Jerusalem was as full of people as the forest is full of trees.

Fire symbolizes a devastating work that will strike the righteous ('green tree') and the wicked ('dry tree'), as an instrument of God's discipline.

This refers to the actions of Nebuchadnezzar and his armies by invading Israel.

And His decree is inevitable and will not be reversed. God Himself kindled this fire.

Ezekiel felt the burden and spoke to God, telling him that the exiles did not believe him as a prophet.

This was not a surprise, for men have some difficulty to understand an unpleasant message. They only like nice words. The truth is that when a heart is not willing to know and obey God, any message from Him seems difficult to understand.

Chapter 21

Ezek 21 – NIV
[In Hebrew texts 21: 1-32 is numbered 21: 6-37 because of the last five verses of the previous chapter].

Babylon as God's Sword of Judgment

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, set your face against Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuary [NIV: toward the holy places]. Prophesy against the land of Israel
[3] and say to her: 'This is what the Lord says: I am against you. I will draw my sword from its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked.
[4] Because I am going to cut off the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be unsheathed against everyone from south to north.
[5] Then all people will know that I the Lord have drawn my sword from its sheath; it will not return again.'

In chapter 21, Ezekiel speaks of the Lord's sword against Jerusalem and the sanctuaries [KJV: holy places] of Israel. The sword refers to the Babylonian army. The "slayer" (v. 11) is Nebuchadnezzar, who commands this army. The sword will kill both the people and the princes.

God told the prophet to turn his face against Jerusalem and prophesy against the land of Israel and the sanctuaries, both the idolatrous sanctuaries and the temple itself in Jerusalem and its precincts, for they were places of worship.

The Lord said that He would send His sword against them, and it would spare neither the righteous nor the wicked, from north to south of their land. Everyone would know that this was the Lord's judgment. Until He had finished His vengeance against them, His sword would not return to its sheath.

[6] "Therefore groan, son of man! Groan before them with broken heart and bitter grief.
[7] And when they ask you, 'Why are you groaning?' you shall say, 'Because of the news that is coming. Every heart will melt with fear and every hand go limp; every spirit will become faint and every leg will be wet with urine.' It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord."
NKJV: "all knees will be weak as water."
NRSV: "all knees will turn to water."
NABRE: "every knee run with water."
LXX: "every thigh will be weak with water."

Next, the Lord told the prophet to sigh with his heart, showing bitterness and brokenness. In this way, he could better convey to the people his own pain and God's pain over the disaster that would follow. The expression 'broken heart' (v. 6) can be translated in Hebrew as 'broken loins'. For the Jews, the kidneys (the loins) were the center of emotions and consciousness, the seat of strength, just as the heart was the center of moral and intellectual decision. So, when he speaks of 'broken heart' or 'broken loins', he is referring to deep emotional anguish, loss of strength, a nervous and physical collapse due to a conflicting situation.

And when the people asked him the meaning of his despair, he should say that the sigh was because of the bad news he had to give, and all who heard it would be greatly disturbed.

Every heart would melt with fear, every hand would go limp, every spirit would faint, and every knee would turn to water (every leg will be wet with urine), which alludes to the loss of urinary control in moments of terror or panic (also Ezek. 7: 17: "every knee will become as weak as water"). In this way, the people would feel the degree of anguish of the prophet and his countrymen in Jerusalem when the enemy army approached.

In short: the news of Jerusalem's fall and destruction will take away the courage of all who hear it, and this will happen because the Lord said so. Therefore, Ezekiel needed to show and make the exiles hear how he was feeling.

8 The word of the Lord came to me:
9 "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the Lord says: "'A sword, a sword, sharpened and polished—
10 sharpened for the slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! "'Shall we rejoice in the scepter of my royal son? The sword despises every such stick.
11 "'The sword is appointed to be polished, to be grasped with the hand; it is sharpened and polished, made ready for the hand of the slayer.

Since Ezekiel performed symbolic acts to make his prophecy more easily understood, perhaps he drew a sword and held it in his hand, twirling it and making it gleam in the sun while he prophesied.

God says that the sword is sharpened for slaughter, polished to flash like lightning.

In verse 10b, it is written: "Shall we rejoice in the scepter of my royal son? The sword despises every such stick." (NVI)

NRSV: "How can we make merry? You have despised the rod, and all discipline."

NKJV: "Should we then make mirth? It despises the scepter of My son, as it does all wood."

The son referred to here is probably the ruler of Judah, Zedekiah, or the nation of Judah itself. God's sword of judgment had no regard for Zedekiah's scepter, that is, for his right to reign. So, Ezekiel asks the people if, in the face of this slaughter, there was still reason to rejoice, or if perhaps there was reason to be proud of their king, as if he were different from other wood and the sword could not touch him ("My son's scepter despises any other wood" – ARA).

In the latter case, this could mean the arrogance or overconfidence of the royal lineage of Judah that no enemy could take their throne or harm them in any way, because they had the word of God given to David.

Therefore, they should not rejoice over the king of Judah or think that he and the royal house of David would be immune to the sword of God, for it would despise all kinds of wood. This belief that God's judgment would never befall them was wrong. It was a false hope.

12 Cry out and wail, son of man, for it is against my people; it is against all the princes of Israel. They are thrown to the sword along with my people. Therefore beat your breast (NIV).
NRSV: "Cry and wail, O mortal, for it is against my people; it is against all Israel's princes; they are thrown to the sword, together with my people. Ah! Strike the thigh!"

NKJV: “Cry and wail, son of man; For it will be against My people, against all the princes of Israel. Terrors including the sword will be against My people; Therefore strike your thigh”.

In verse 12, striking the thigh would be a gesture to attract the attention of the listeners and raise questions, or a demonstration of sadness, since it follows the order to cry out and wail because of the destruction to come.

13 “‘Testing will surely come. And what if even the scepter, which the sword despises, does not continue? declares the Sovereign Lord.’
NKJV: “Because it is a testing, And what if the sword despises even the scepter? The scepter shall be no more,” says the Lord God.

Disregarding the king of Judah, the sword of Babylon would transform the scepter of Judah (the throne of Judah; the royal family and its government) into nothing more than a piece of wood. That is, Zedekiah’s reign would end, and there would be no more descendant of David on the throne of the nation of Israel until the Messiah comes (Ezek. 21: 27). This would truly be a great trial, a painful test.

14 “So then, son of man, prophesy and strike your hands together. Let the sword strike twice, even three times. It is a sword for slaughter—a sword for great slaughter, closing in on them from every side.
15 So that hearts may melt with fear and the fallen be many, I have stationed the sword for slaughter [Septuagint; the meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.] at all their gates. Look! It is forged to strike like lightning, it is grasped for slaughter.
16 Slash to the right, you sword, then to the left, wherever your blade is turned.
17 I too will strike my hands together, and my wrath will subside. I the Lord have spoken.”

In verses 14 and 17, God said to the prophet to strike his hands together and He would also strike His, and His wrath would subside.

Striking hands in these verses would be a gesture of hatred or discipline against Israel, which would be repeated in Ezek. 22: 13: “I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst.”

Similarly, the gestures involving the hands and feet in Ezek. 6:11 signified a gesture of anger and mourning for Israel’s grave sins of idolatry, and were intended to attract attention and warn of a threat or challenge.

Still in verse 14, the Lord tells the prophet to double the blow of the sword and to triple it. This means that it had already come twice in the first two invasions of Nebuchadnezzar: the first during the reign of Jehoiakim, the second against Jehoiachin or Jeconiah, and now it would come against Zedekiah, and would end in a great and complete destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

“Slash to the right, you sword, then to the left, wherever your blade is turned.” (v.16). This reflects the violence of the enemy’s sword, which will spare no one.

18 The word of the Lord came to me:
19 “Son of man, mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to take, both starting from the same country. Make a signpost where the road branches off to the city.
20 Mark out one road for the sword to come against Rabbah of the Ammonites and another against Judah and fortified Jerusalem.

21 For the king of Babylon will stop at the fork in the road, at the junction of the two roads,
to seek an omen: He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, he will examine
the liver.
22 Into his right hand will come the lot for Jerusalem, where he is to set up battering rams,
to give the command to slaughter, to sound the battle cry, to set battering rams against the
gates, to build a ramp and to erect siege works.
23 It will seem like a false omen to those who have sworn allegiance to him, but he will
remind them of their guilt and take them captive.
24 "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Because you people have brought to
mind your guilt by your open rebellion, revealing your sins in all that you do—because
you have done this, you will be taken captive.

In this staging, God told Ezekiel to draw two roads and place a signpost indicating the way to Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites, and to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Perhaps he drew this kind of map on a clay tablet as he did with Jerusalem and the brick in chapter 4; or perhaps he drew it on the ground. The signpost the text speaks of was probably a hand-shaped plaque, with the index finger pointing to the place whose name was written on it. Since the 13th century BC, Rabbah was the capital of the Ammonites, known as Rabat 'Ammān, with the term Rabat meaning the 'Capital' or the 'King's Quarters.' In the Hebrew Bible, it is called Rabbaṯ Bənē ʿAmmōn (רַבַּת בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן), Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, or simply Rabbā (רַבָּה), or else Rabbath Ammon. In the 3rd century BC, during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 BC), it was given the name of Philadelphia ('brotherly love'), and became one of the ten Greek-Roman Cities of Decapolis. By the Islamic era of Rashidun Caliphate (632-661, 'Well-Guided Caliphate'), it became known as Amman, today the capital of Syria.

Then, God shows him that the king of Babylon will stop at the crossroads, at the entrance of the two paths, and consult his oracles (his pagan divinations) to know which way to go. And here, Ezekiel has a vision of the methods he will use for this, three years after these words of the prophet: he will cast lots with arrows, consult the household idols, and examine the liver of a recently slaughtered animal.

NKJV writes: "For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images [the household idols], he looks at the liver," which suggests that this casting of lots with arrows was done by placing several arrows with the names of the cities inscribed on them in a quiver, shaking and mixing them, and the arrow that came out of the quiver first indicated the city that should be attacked first [Jerome of Stridon or Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, 347–420 AD, early Christian priest, theologian, translator, and historian; born in Illyria]. Another way the gods used arrows as a method of choosing was to throw them into the air or toss them and stick them in the ground, and the direction they pointed when they fell or tilted was interpreted to make decisions.

This method is called belomancy, an ancient art of divination that uses arrows or darts (which have wooden axles). The term comes from the Greek bélos (arrow) and manteia (divination); or rhabdomancy, identified by St. Jerome also in Hos. 4: 12, NKJV: "My people ask counsel from their wooden idols [NRSV: a piece of wood; NIV: a wooden idol], and their staff [NRSV: their divining rod; NIV: a diviner's rod] informs them", where 'a piece of wood' or 'a wooden idol' or 'their wooden idols' refers to the household idols that the people consulted. And 'their staff', 'their divining rod' or 'a diviner's rod' refers to rhabdomancy or belomancy (Ezek. 21: 21), practiced by Babylonians, Greeks, Arabs and Scythians [wikipedia.org; ref.: Encyclopædia Britannica (3rd ed.) 1797, vol. VII p.67].

Household idols or household gods (Hebrew: teraphim, תְּרָפִים, Strong #8655) were human-shaped figurines, often carried as amulets for protection and healing, for the name teraphim ('a healer') comes from the Hebrew root rapha, meaning to heal. It is not known exactly how they were consulted, especially in the case of Nebuchadnezzar.

Regarding the examination of the liver, it was a method of divination called hepatoscopy, a common divinatory process among the Babylonians. Archaeologists have discovered sheep livers made of clay, marked with lines and inscriptions, evidently used to teach people how to use the method, based on the color of the livers of freshly slaughtered animals and the internal segments of the organ, generally determined by the blood vessels, ducts, and nerves that pass within it. Not only the liver is segmented, but also the lungs, kidneys, and brain.

But what matters is that the superstitious Nebuchadnezzar, consulting his oracles, chose to invade Jerusalem. This does not mean that the oracles were reliable, but that God had already determined that it should be so.

All of this would seem like a false omen to the Jews because, despite committing so many sins, provoking God, and even betraying the covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, as Zedekiah did, they still believed that, through God's promises to David, they would always be protected against any invasion and destruction. However, they would not only be invaded, but also taken captive.

25 "'You profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax,
26 this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low [KJV: Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high].

In verses 25-26, Zedekiah is called a "profane and wicked prince of Israel," and God tells him to take off the turban [KJV: diadem] and remove the crown.

Diadem: Strong #4701, מִצְנֶפֶת, mitsnepheth, from tsanaph 'to wrap' (like a cloth), a tiara, mitter, i.e., Official turban (of a king or high priest). In this case, the reference is to the royal turban, a sign of royalty.

These were the symbols and insignia of royal dignity, therefore, removing them meant his deposition as king, the loss of his royal power and authority. The diadem was a royal adornment worn on the head at all times; the crown was placed on certain occasions; both signify the same thing, royal dignity (John Gill).

Although the turban (NIV) is used as an ornament of the priesthood, the meaning here is that the Lord was addressing the civil ruler of Judah: ("You profane and wicked prince of Israel"). Even though Seraiah, the high priest, and Zephaniah, the second priest, were taken away (Jer 52:24), it was not them whom the Lord was speaking of.

"The lowly will be exalted" (v. 26) may refer to Jehoiachin (Jeconiah), years later freed from prison by Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-Merodach (Jer. 52: 31-32). Or, it could refer to Zerubbabel, from the lineage of Jeconiah, who was born in captivity and became prince of Judah, but even though he was from the lineage of David, he did not occupy the position of king of Judah, since there was no king after the captivity. "The exalted will be brought low" which is Zedekiah.

All this shows that the Davidic dynasty would be overthrown, the old order of government would be changed, transformed and it would only be restored with the Messiah, the righteous ruler (Ezek. 21: 27).

27 A ruin! A ruin! I will make it *[the monarchy]* a ruin! The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.' [KJV: I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him].

The Lord is saying that ruin is decreed upon the monarchy, the throne, and the kingdom of Judah (centered in Jerusalem). But the crown of king will be given "he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come," that is, the Messiah, from the lineage of David.

28 "And you, son of man, prophesy and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says about the Ammonites and their insults: "'A sword, a sword, drawn for the slaughter, polished to consume and to flash like lightning!
29 Despite false visions concerning you and lying divinations about you, it will be laid on the necks of the wicked who are to be slain, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax.
30 "'Let the sword return to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your ancestry, I will judge you [KJV: "Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity."]
31 I will pour out my wrath on you and breathe out my fiery anger against you; I will deliver you into the hands of brutal men, men skilled in destruction.
32 You will be fuel for the fire, your blood will be shed in your land, you will be remembered no more; for I the Lord have spoken.'"

In verse 28, Ezekiel prophesies against the Ammonites, who would also be judged for watching the destruction of Jerusalem with pleasure. Their insults would not go unanswered by God.

Ammon allied with Zedekiah and rebelled against Babylon in 589 BC (Jer. 27: 3).

At the time, Ammon, Edom, Moab, Tyre, and Sidon came to Zedekiah to settle this alliance against Nebuchadnezzar, and therefore Jeremiah staged the symbolic yokes and sent letters to these nations as well, with God's command to submit to Babylon. Ezekiel spoke in the same way to Ammon: "Return the sword to its scabbard" (Ezek. 21: 30).

If Ezekiel prophesied this around 591-590 BC, this alliance was about to happen.

Ammon fell along with Edom in 581 BC at the hands of the Babylonians, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Chapter 22

Ezek 22 – NIV

Crimes of Jerusalem

After speaking about the king of Judah, God now speaks about the sins of princes, the priests, the prophets, and the citizens of Jerusalem.

1 The word of the LORD came to me:
2 “Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed? Then confront her with all her detestable practices
3 and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O city that brings on herself doom by shedding blood in her midst and defiles herself by making idols,
4 you have become guilty because of the blood you have shed and have become defiled by the idols you have made. You have brought your days to a close, and the end of your years has come. Therefore I will make you an object of scorn to the nations and a laughing-stock to all the countries.
5 Those who are near and those who are far away will mock you, O infamous city, full of turmoil.
6 “‘See how each of the princes of Israel who are in you uses his power to shed blood.
7 In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the alien and ill-treated the fatherless and the widow.
8 You have despised my holy things and desecrated my Sabbaths.
9 In you are slanderous men bent on shedding blood; in you are those who eat at the mountain shrines and commit lewd acts.
10 In you are those who dishonor their fathers’ bed; in you are those who violate women during their period, when they are ceremonially unclean.
11 In you one man commits a detestable offence with his neighbor’s wife, another shamefully defiles his daughter-in-law, and another violates his sister, his own father’s daughter.
12 In you men accept bribes to shed blood; you take usury and excessive interest [Or usury and interest] and make unjust gain from your neighbors by extortion. And you have forgotten me, declares the Sovereign LORD.
13 “‘I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst
14 Will your courage endure or your hands be strong in the day I deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.
15 I will disperse you among the nations and scatter you through the countries; and I will put an end to your uncleanness.
16 When you have been defiled [Or When I have allotted you your inheritance] in the eyes of the nations, you will know that I am the LORD.’”

In the verses of Ezek. 22:2–16, Jerusalem is described as a bloodthirsty city. Transgressions involving bloodshed, the oppression of the poor, and the worship of false gods are interrelated.

Jerusalem was bringing condemnation upon itself by making idols and shedding innocent blood.

The neighboring and distant nations would mock it.

God condemns those sins and announces His imminent judgment.

He accuses the city's leaders of using their power and authority to oppress and exploit the people, instead of serving them.

The princes of Israel used their power to shed blood, despised father and mother, oppressed the foreigner, and mistreated the orphan and the widow. They murdered innocent people through slander.

They despised holy things and did not keep the Sabbath.

His people ate food sacrificed to idols and participated in their immoral rituals.

Verses 10 and 11 discuss sinful sexual relations from God's point of view (Lev. 20: 10–18).

They committed adultery with their neighbor's wife, had relations with women during their menstrual period, and practiced sexual immorality with family members and relatives (incest with daughters-in-law and sisters). When the Bible writes "who uncover the nakedness of their fathers" or "who dishonor their fathers' bed" it refers to the father's wife (a second wife or concubine, for example).

They loved money, using it to gain an advantage over their countrymen (bribery, usury, extortion). And they had forgotten the Lord.

Then the Lord says that he would strike his hands together again, that is, a gesture of hatred or discipline against Israel: "I will surely strike my hands together at the unjust gain you have made and at the blood you have shed in your midst" (Ezek. 22: 13).

He would scatter them among the nations and destroy the holy city and the land of Judah.

In the verses 18–22, the Lord again uses the image of melting metals to purify the people, as is common among the prophets (cf. Isa. 1: 22, 25; Jer. 6: 27–30).

17 Then the word of the LORD came to me:
18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them are the copper, tin, iron and lead left inside a furnace. They are but the dross of silver.
19 Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into Jerusalem.
20 As men gather silver, copper, iron, lead and tin into a furnace to melt it with a fiery blast, so will I gather you in my anger and my wrath and put you inside the city and melt you.
21 I will gather you and I will blow on you with my fiery wrath, and you will be melted inside her.
22 As silver is melted in a furnace, so you will be melted inside her, and you will know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath upon you.'"

They had all been transformed into despicable things, like metal slag.

He would cast them into the midst of the fire as punishment, as one melts down metal scraps. The fire was a symbol of His wrath.

23 Again the word of the LORD came to me:
24 "Son of man, say to the land, 'You are a land that has had no rain or showers [Septuagint; Hebrew has not been cleansed or rained on] in the day of wrath.'
25 There is a conspiracy of her princes [Septuagint; Hebrew prophets] within her like a roaring lion tearing its prey; they devour people, take treasures and precious things and make many widows within her.

[26] Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.
[27] Her officials within her are like wolves tearing their prey; they shed blood and kill people to make unjust gain.
[28] Her prophets whitewash these deeds for them by false visions and lying divinations. They say, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says" — when the LORD has not spoken.
[29] The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and ill-treat the alien, denying them justice.
[30] "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so that I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.
[31] So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done, declares the Sovereign LORD."

The prophets and priests among them were also corrupt. The princes misused their power and were greedy.

And the prophets saw the error, but they did not denounce it, and even covered it up, prophesying falsely in the name of the Lord.

The Lord found no one to stand in the gap to prevent the destruction. This meant that God could not find a spiritual leader to guide the people in holiness.

In Ezek. 22:24–31 there is a similar oracle to Zeph. 3: 1–8. Zephaniah (640-621 BC) lived around the time of Jeremiah, slightly before Ezekiel:

[1] Ah, soiled, defiled, oppressing city! [NIV: Woe to the city of oppressors, rebellious and defiled!].
[2] It has listened to no voice; it has accepted no correction. It has not trusted in the Lord; it has not drawn near to its God.
[3] The officials within it are roaring lions; its judges are evening wolves that leave nothing until the morning.
[4] Its prophets are reckless, faithless persons; its priests have profaned what is sacred, they have done violence to the law [NIV: Her prophets are arrogant; they are treacherous men. Her priests profane the sanctuary and do violence to the law].
[5] The Lord within it is righteous; he does no wrong. Every morning he renders his judgment, each dawn without fail; but the unjust knows no shame.
[6] I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without people, without inhabitants.
[7] I said, "Surely the city will fear me, it will accept correction; it will not lose sight of all that I have brought upon it." But they were the more eager to make all their deeds corrupt [NIV: I said to the city, 'Surely you will fear me and accept correction!' Then her dwelling would not be cut off, nor all my punishments come upon her. But they were still eager to act corruptly in all they did].
[8] Therefore wait for me, says the Lord, for the day when I arise as a witness. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all the heat of my anger; for in the fire of my passion all the earth shall be consumed.

Chapter 23

Ezek 23 – NIV

Two Adulterous Sisters

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, there were two women, daughters of the same mother.
[3] They became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and their virgin bosoms caressed [Syriac; Hebrew caressed because of your young breasts].
[4] The older was named Oholah, and her sister was Oholibah. They were mine and gave birth to sons and daughters. Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

In Ezekiel 23, God compares Samaria and Jerusalem to two prostitute sisters, whom He calls Oholah and Oholibah. Oholah means 'My tent,' and Oholibah, 'My tent is in her.' Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah. 'The same mother' was the nation of the Hebrews, Israel. It represents the nation of Israel in its entirety, from its founding as God's people, from the time of the patriarchs to the united kingdom under David and Solomon.

[5] "Oholah engaged in prostitution while she was still mine; and she lusted after her lovers, the Assyrians—warriors
6 clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, and mounted horsemen.
[7] She gave herself as a prostitute to all the elite of the Assyrians and defiled herself with all the idols of everyone she lusted after.

Samaria is the oldest (a larger territory) because it was the first to establish political and idolatrous alliances with foreign nations, and also the first to receive punishment through captivity.

The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC), for example, shows Jehu (841-814 BC), king of Israel, prostrating himself before the Assyrian king around 841-840 BC, bringing gifts, perhaps to buy his support against Hazael of Damascus. The obelisk is a Neo-Assyrian sculpture of black limestone with many bas-relief scenes and inscriptions, approximately 1.98 m high and 45 cm wide, from Nimrud (ancient Kalhu), in northern Iraq, commemorating the deeds of King Shalmaneser III, when Elisha was still a prophet in Israel, long before Jonah took his message to Nineveh. The inscription, written in Assyrian cuneiform, can be translated as: "I received the tribute from Iaua (Jehu), son of (the people of the land of) Omri: silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden vessel with a pointed bottom, golden tumblers, golden buckets, tin, a staff for a king [and] spears."

Menahem (752-742 BC), king of Israel, gave Tiglath-Pileser III (or Pul, 745-727 BC) a thousand talents of silver so that he would help him consolidate his kingdom and leave the land (2 Kings 15:19-20). Menahem's name is found in inscriptions in the palace of Nimrud as a tributary of the Assyrian king in his eighth year of reign, that is, 744 BC.

In the seventh year of Hoshea (732-723 BC), king of Israel, Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) of Assyria came up against Israel and defeated them because Hoshea sought help from Pharaoh So of Egypt (2 Kin. 17: 3-4); probably an abbreviation of (O)so(rkon), Osorkon IV (730-712 BC), of the 22nd dynasty, who reigned in Tanis and Bubastis, or

Tephnachte (732-725 BC), of the 24th dynasty, who reigned in Sais (Sa el-Hagar, in the western Delta). Hoshea was imprisoned. Samaria was besieged for three years and in 722 BC, fell under Sargon II (722-705 BC).

8 She did not give up the prostitution she began in Egypt, when during her youth men
slept with her, caressed her virgin bosom and poured out their lust on her.
9 "Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, the Assyrians, for whom she
lusted.
10 They stripped her naked, took away her sons and daughters and killed her with the
sword. She became a byword among women, and punishment was inflicted on her.

This chapter describes the Lord's indignation against the idolatrous behavior of Israel and Judah. And therefore, His wrath will come.

Samaria, or Oholah, committed idolatry with the Assyrian gods and did not abandon the gods of Egypt.

The Assyrians took the northern kingdom into exile and killed many Israelites.

11 "Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet in her lust and prostitution she was more depraved
than her sister.
12 She too lusted after the Assyrians—governors and commanders, warriors in full dress,
mounted horsemen, all handsome young men.
13 I saw that she too defiled herself; both of them went the same way.
14 "But she carried her prostitution still further. She saw men portrayed on a wall, figures
of Chaldeans [Or Babylonians] portrayed in red,
15 with belts around their waists and flowing turbans on their heads; all of them looked
like Babylonian chariot officers, natives of Chaldea. [Or Babylonia]
16 As soon as she saw them, she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea
[Or Babylonia].
17 Then the Babylonians came to her, to the bed of love, and in their lust they defiled her.
After she had been defiled by them, she turned away from them in disgust.

Then in verse 12 God says that Judah (Oholibah) also prostituted itself with the Assyrians, alluding to King Ahaz who made an agreement with Tiglath-Pileser III. King Ahaz gave gifts and made an alliance with the Assyrians (2 Kings 16:7-10). He went to Damascus to meet Tiglath–Pileser III, king of Assyria, and he saw there an altar he thought was the prettiest altar he'd ever seen. So he sent Urijah the priest to get the pattern of it in order to make one just like it (2 Kin. 16: 10-18).

Other kings of Judah adopted some Assyrian and Babylonian customs, and their palaces even had their walls painted with Chaldean images, as happened with Jehoiakim (Jer. 22: 14) and Hezekiah, in the case of Merodach-Baladan (2 Kin. 20: 12), king of Babylon who visited him after his illness.

Verse 14 tells how the envoys from Judah to Babylon were amazed by the rulers of that empire and their power, seeing the figures painted in the palace and on the temple walls.

18 When she carried on her prostitution openly and exposed her naked body, I turned away
from her in disgust, just as I had turned away from her sister.
19 Yet she became more and more promiscuous as she recalled the days of her youth,
when she was a prostitute in Egypt.

20 There she lusted after her lovers, whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses.
21 So you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when in Egypt your bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled [Syriac; Hebrew caressed because of your young breasts].
22 "Therefore, Oholibah, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will stir up your lovers against you, those you turned away from in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side—
23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, the men of Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, all of them governors and commanders, chariot officers and men of high rank, all mounted on horses.
24 They will come against you with weapons [The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain], chariots and wagons and with a throng of people; they will take up positions against you on every side with large and small shields and with helmets. I will turn you over to them for punishment, and they will punish you according to their standards.

Judah turned to Egypt for a political alliance, but once again became defiled by its gods. "She recalled the days of her youth, when she was a prostitute in Egypt" – This means that it revived long-forgotten Egyptian cults and customs.

The sexual potency of the Egyptians mentioned here ("whose genitals were like those of donkeys and whose emission was like that of horses") refers to their military power.

Therefore, the Lord would bring back the Chaldeans against them, the Babylonians and their vassal tribes and the Assyrians. Pekod and Shoa and Koa are unknown locations, likely situated east of the Tigris River.

They would be His instrument of judgment.

25 I will direct my jealous anger against you, and they will deal with you in fury. They will cut off your noses and your ears, and those of you who are left will fall by the sword. They will take away your sons and daughters, and those of you who are left will be consumed by fire.
26 They will also strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry.
27 So I will put a stop to the lewdness and prostitution you began in Egypt. You will not look on these things with longing or remember Egypt anymore.
28 "For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to deliver you into the hands of those you hate, to those you turned away from in disgust.
29 They will deal with you in hatred and take away everything you have worked for. They will leave you stark naked, and the shame of your prostitution will be exposed. Your lewdness and promiscuity
30 have brought this on you, because you lusted after the nations and defiled yourself with their idols.

In verse 25 the Bible writes: "They will cut off your noses and your ears", because tearing off the nose and cutting off the ears were the punishments used by these peoples for the sin of adultery.

This means the mutilation of the city after the invasion.

In addition to death and destruction, they would plunder all their possessions and destroy their Egyptian gods.

The produce of the land and their labor would be given into the hands of their enemies.

31 You have gone the way of your sister; so I will put her cup into your hand.

32 “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “You will drink your sister’s cup, a cup large
and deep; it will bring scorn and derision, for it holds so much.
33 You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of ruin and desolation, the cup
of your sister Samaria.
34 You will drink it and drain it dry and chew on its pieces—and you will tear your breasts.
I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.
35 “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Since you have forgotten me and
turned your back on me, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and
prostitution.”
36 The Lord said to me: “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then confront
them with their detestable practices,
37 for they have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery
with their idols; they even sacrificed their children, whom they bore to me, as food for
them.
38 They have also done this to me: At that same time they defiled my sanctuary and
desecrated my Sabbaths.
39 On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary
and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house.

The Lord was offering Judah the cup of His wrath (“her cup”, Ezek. 23: 31), because of their idolatry of their gods and because they even went so far as to sacrifice their children to them.

“You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of ruin and desolation, the cup of your sister Samaria.” – Because of all the sins of Samaria (2 Kin. 17:1-23), the cup of judgment of the Lord’s wrath was terrible. And the same would happen to Judah.

“You will drink it and drain it dry and chew on its pieces—and you will tear your breasts” – Their despair would be so great that they would succumb to madness, hurting themselves, like a drunkard who no longer has control over his own actions. Great would be their pain.

The people of Judah did not keep the Sabbath and defiled the Lord’s temple with idols.

“On the very day they sacrificed their children to their idols, they entered my sanctuary and desecrated it. That is what they did in my house.” – On the same day that they sacrificed their children to false gods, the Jews came to worship in the temple of the Lord. And this was disgusting.

40 “They even sent messengers for men who came from far away, and when they arrived
you bathed yourself for them, applied eye makeup and put on your jewelry.
41 You sat on an elegant couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed the
incense and olive oil that belonged to me.
42 “The noise of a carefree crowd was around her; drunkards were brought from the desert
along with men from the rabble, and they put bracelets on the wrists of the woman and
her sister and beautiful crowns on their heads.
43 Then I said about the one worn out by adultery, ‘Now let them use her as a prostitute,
for that is all she is.’
44 And they slept with her. As men sleep with a prostitute, so they slept with those lewd
women, Oholah and Oholibah.
45 But righteous judges will sentence them to the punishment of women who commit
adultery and shed blood, because they are adulterous and blood is on their hands.

46 “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Bring a mob against them and give them over to terror and plunder.
47 The mob will stone them and cut them down with their swords; they will kill their sons and daughters and burn down their houses.
48 “So I will put an end to lewdness in the land, that all women may take warning and not imitate you.
49 You will suffer the penalty for your lewdness and bear the consequences of your sins of idolatry. Then you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.”

They invited idolatrous pagans to come to them (Ezek. 23:40), even men of the lowest kind, such as the “drunkards of the desert” or “Sabeans” (v.42).

And they did their best to make a good impression on those pagans.

This represents the political and military alliances that Judah made with foreign nations such as Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon, attracting along with them some vassal peoples who ended up coming with their ambassadors, such as nomadic peoples to the east and south of Israel, neighbors of Moab and Ammon, who inhabited the desert, but a disorderly, foreign, and seductive group that surrounded Judah and also influenced it with their pagan customs and idolatry.

“You had placed the incense and olive oil that belonged to me” – God had appointed sacred incense and oil for the service of the temple. Jerusalem was so corrupt that it took these sacred things and used them in idolatry.

For all these sins, Jerusalem would be judged. “Righteous judges” does not necessarily mean people who feared God, but those who were in His purpose at that moment to execute His judgment against a sinful people who had despised Him.

The punishment under the law for the sin of adultery was death by stoning. This means stones thrown at the city during the siege. Enemy swords would kill the citizens and burn their houses. The incendiary projectiles would hit everyone who was under siege.

The destruction of Jerusalem would serve as a warning to other cities and nations, so that they didn’t commit the same sins and served the Lord.

With this judgment they would know that God is the Lord.

Chapter 24

Ezek 24 – NIV

Jerusalem as a Cooking Pot

1 In the ninth year, in the tenth month on the tenth day, the word of the Lord came to me:
2 "Son of man, record this date, this very date, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day.

In Ezekiel 24, in the 9th year of the captivity (588 BC), on the 10th day of the 10th month (Tevet – December-January), which coincides with the 10th day of the 10th month of the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign, when Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of the city of Jerusalem (2 Kin. 25: 1-3; Jer. 39: 1, 2; Jer. 52: 1-6), the prophet tells the parable of the cooking pot. God commanded him to write the name of this day.

3 Tell this rebellious people a parable and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'Put on the cooking pot; put it on and pour water into it.
4 Put into it the pieces of meat, all the choice pieces—the leg and the shoulder. Fill it with the best of these bones;
5 take the pick of the flock. Pile wood beneath it for the bones; bring it to a boil and cook the bones in it.
6 "'For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'Woe to the city of bloodshed, to the pot now encrusted, whose deposit will not go away! Take the meat out piece by piece in whatever order it comes.
7 "'For the blood she shed is in her midst: She poured it on the bare rock; she did not pour it on the ground, where the dust would cover it.
8 To stir up wrath and take revenge I put her blood on the bare rock, so that it would not be covered.

The Lord told him to put the cooking pot on the fire, with water inside, and to put the best cuts of meat along with the bones in it, and let it cook until the meat was tender and everything dried up, including the broth.

God explained that the cooking pot represented the city of Jerusalem and the meat represented the people.

God calls it the city of bloodshed, a pot that now is encrusted.

He told the prophet to take the meat out of the pot, piece by piece, but without casting lots for them, symbolizing the exile that would affect all the inhabitants, without privileges.

Therefore, the meat, that is, the inhabitants of the city, would be removed from it piece by piece.

Jerusalem went so far in its shameful and brutal violence that it did not bother to cover up the innocently spilled blood. The spilled blood was as evident as if it were on bare rock that cannot absorb it. If it were on land, it could be hidden, since it could be covered with more earth or sand.

Similarly, the blood that the Lord would shed upon her would be seen by all, and they would know that God had punished them.

9 “‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “‘Woe to the city of bloodshed! I, too, will pile the wood high.
10 So heap on the wood and kindle the fire. Cook the meat well, mixing in the spices; and let the bones be charred.

Then, he increased the pile of wood, which reflected the very hot fire of His judgment. God pronounced a “woe” against the bloodthirsty city.

The remaining meat and bones inside de pot would be cooked until they are charred.

11 Then set the empty pot on the coals till it becomes hot and its copper glows, so that its impurities may be melted and its deposit burned away.
12 It has frustrated all efforts; its heavy deposit has not been removed, not even by fire.
13 “‘Now your impurity is lewdness. Because I tried to cleanse you but you would not be cleansed from your impurity, you will not be clean again until my wrath against you has subsided.
14 “‘I the Lord have spoken. The time has come for me to act. I will not hold back; I will not have pity, nor will I relent. You will be judged according to your conduct and your actions, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”

When everything in the pot was consumed, the pot itself would be treated (Ezek. 24:11).

The prophet would leave the now empty pot on the coals till the copper glowed and the impurities inside it melted and the rust was consumed, but Ezekiel would see that the rust would not be removed, not even by the fire.

Jerusalem was this pot full of rust, which corresponds to the blood of the murders inside it, a rust that was not removed.

Jerusalem was so attached to its prostitution and apostasy that any discipline was in vain, their sins were like dirt inside a pot that cannot be removed.

So, the entire population of Jerusalem would be annihilated by the brilliance of God’s wrath.

The fire of trials probably refers to the deportations of 605 BC and 597 BC, whose purifying effects were incomplete; therefore, the judgment was now irrevocable.

This means that when all the inhabitants of Jerusalem are killed, the city itself would be destroyed.

With the destruction of the city, the rust and impurities would also disappear.

Ezekiel’s Wife Dies

15 The word of the Lord came to me:
16 “Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears.
17 Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover your mustache and beard or eat the customary food of mourners.”
18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did as I had been commanded.

Chapter 24 continues with Ezekiel’s widowhood.

The Lord warned Ezekiel that he would lose his wife; she would die, but he should mourn in silence, he should not make a public lament, such as dressing in sackcloth,

shaving his hair and spreading ashes on his head (dust, the dust of the earth), covering his mustache (to cover half of the face with the veil) and walking barefoot.

During the mourning period, a fast was also observed, and the people brought bread to the bereaved person after this period.

But Ezekiel could not eat it either.

Ezekiel spoke to the people in the morning (the parable of the cooking pot), and in the afternoon his wife died. And the next day, in obedience to the Lord, he did not mourn.

19 Then the people asked me, "Won't you tell us what these things have to do with us?
Why are you acting like this?"
20 So I said to them, "The word of the Lord came to me:
21 Say to the people of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to
desecrate my sanctuary—the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes,
the object of your affection. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall by the sword.
22 And you will do as I have done. You will not cover your mustache and beard or eat the
customary food of mourners.
23 You will keep your turbans on your heads and your sandals on your feet. You will not
mourn or weep but will waste away because of [Or away in] your sins and groan among
yourselves.
24 Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you
will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.'
25 "And you, son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold, their joy and glory, the
delight of their eyes, their heart's desire, and their sons and daughters as well—
26 on that day a fugitive will come to tell you the news.
27 At that time your mouth will be opened; you will speak with him and will no longer be
silent. So you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the Lord."

The people asked him to explain what that meant.

Then the Lord said that He would desecrate the sanctuary in Jerusalem, of which they were so proud and in which they rejoiced, and their children in the land of Israel would die.

And just like Ezekiel, they should not lament, except for themselves because of God's righteous judgment against their sin.

And as a sign that it was the Lord who was doing those things, on the day the city fell, someone who had escaped the destruction of Jerusalem would come to bring news to the exiles in Babylon (Ezek. 33: 21-22).

The fall of Jerusalem would justify the prophet in a striking way.

He would be a sign to his people. The Lord would show everyone that he was truly a prophet.

Chapter 25

Ezek 25 – NIV

A Prophecy Against Ammon

From chapter 25 onward, Ezekiel prophesies against the nations surrounding Israel. The first nation is Ammon.

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, set your face against the Ammonites and prophesy against them.
[3] Say to them, 'Hear the word of the Sovereign Lord. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because you said "Aha!" over my sanctuary when it was desecrated and over the land of Israel when it was laid waste and over the people of Judah when they went into exile,
[4] therefore I am going to give you to the people of the East as a possession. They will set up their camps and pitch their tents among you; they will eat your fruit and drink your milk.
[5] I will turn Rabbah into a pasture for camels and Ammon into a resting place for sheep. Then you will know that I am the Lord.
[6] For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet, rejoicing with all the malice of your heart against the land of Israel,
[7] therefore I will stretch out my hand against you and give you as plunder to the nations. I will wipe you out from among the nations and exterminate you from the countries. I will destroy you, and you will know that I am the Lord.'"

Ammon rejoiced at the destruction of the temple, the desolation of the land of Israel, and the exile of the house of Judah.

Likewise, they would be invaded, and their enemies would eat the fruits of their land.

Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, would also be destroyed and burned (Am 1: 14).

Once again, the Bible speaks of clapping, signifying mockery, scorn, hatred, and contempt.

Ammon had rejoiced at the ruin of Israel, but it too would be ruined. Its villages would be burned (Jer 49:2).

Its gods would be annihilated (Zeph 2:11).

"I will make Rabbah a pasture [KJV: a stable] for camels" – it means that the Eastern peoples, mainly the Arabs, used camels for transportation and for wars, and transformed both the houses and palaces of the conquered peoples into stables for their camels. This is what happened to the Church of St. John the Baptist in the village of Ein Kerem (Ain Karem, Ayn Karim), the birthplace of John the Baptist, located southwest of Jerusalem. The Crusaders (1095–1272) built the church there, but after their departure, Muslims converted it into an animal stable for more than four centuries. In 1621 (during the Ottoman Period), the Franciscans rebuilt on the site of the old Crusader church, but only took possession of it in 1693.

The invaders would not only take the sheep from the land of Ammon, but would bring their own to occupy the pastures of the Ammonites and rest there [KJV: "a couching place for flocks" or NIV: "a resting place for sheep"].

Ammon, like Edom, fell into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in 581 BC, five years after the fall of Judah, but afterwards Ammon became a Babylonian province and

survived into the Persian period. In the 2nd century BC, it was dominated by the Nabataeans (Arab tribes). Judas Maccabeus had to fight them in his time (167-160 BC). When Pompey conquered the Levant in 63 BC, Ammon lost its distinct identity and assimilated Greco-Roman culture.

A Prophecy Against Moab

8 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Because Moab and Seir said, "Look, Judah has become like all the other nations,"
9 therefore I will expose the flank of Moab, beginning at its frontier towns—Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon and Kiriathaim—the glory of that land.
10 I will give Moab along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, so that the Ammonites will not be remembered among the nations;
11 and I will inflict punishment on Moab. Then they will know that I am the Lord.'"

Then, Ezekiel speaks about Moab (Ezek. 25: 8-11).

The Lord would also destroy the land of Moab, beginning with its main cities, and its people would also be taken captive.

Moab would be punished for its arrogance.

Through His judgments there, they would know that He is God.

A Prophecy Against Edom

12 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Because Edom took revenge on Judah and became very guilty by doing so,
13 therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and kill both man and beast. I will lay it waste, and from Teman to Dedan they will fall by the sword.
14 I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom in accordance with my anger and my wrath; they will know my vengeance, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"

The next nation mentioned is Edom.

Edom behaved vengefully toward Israel, helping the Babylonians to plunder it (Ps 137: 7, Obad. 1).

From north to south ("from Teman to Dedan"), Edom would be equally destroyed.

They would see God's vengeance, and they would know that He was its agent.

The Bible says: "I will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of my people Israel".

Edom was destroyed five years after the captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, that is, in 581 BC, at the same time as Ammon.

Later, it fell into the hands of the Persians (539 BC) and in the 3rd century BC it was dominated by the Nabataeans (Arabs), who eventually pushed the inhabitants of Edom south to Judea, which was later called Idumea. Judas Maccabeus subjugated them (2nd century BC) and John Hyrcanus I (2nd-1st century BC) forced them to be circumcised in order to be incorporated into the Jewish people.

The people of Edom were definitively destroyed by Titus in 70 AD.

Today, the regions of Edom, Moab, and Ammon are part of Jordan.

A Prophecy Against Philistia

15 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Because the Philistines acted in vengeance and took revenge with malice in their hearts, and with ancient hostility sought to destroy Judah,
16 therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will wipe out the Kerethites and destroy those remaining along the coast.
17 I will carry out great vengeance on them and punish them in my wrath. Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I take vengeance on them.'"

Chapter 25 ends with the prophecy against Philistia.
The Philistines had a long history of hostility (KJV: "the old hatred"; NIV: "ancient hostility") toward Israel and constant competition for control of Judah. Thus, Philistia was guilty before God of a strong feeling of vengeance against His people.

The term Cherethites (Kerethites) is used here as a substitute for the Philistines. They had genuine rejoicing (like Ammon and Edom) in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord will punish them with "great vengeance" and "furious rebukes" (Ezek. 25: 17 – KJV).

Cherethites or Kerethites refer to a tribe living in the south of the land of the Philistines (1 Sam. 30: 14; 16). The island of Crete was a colony of the Philistines. The land of the Philistines was called Philistine (hence the term 'Palestine'); Kerïtha, by the Arabs; Creth, by the Syrians; and by the Hebrews: the land of the Kerethites. They were a people originally from the island of Crete (Greek: Κρήτη, Kríti) and scattered among the Philistines and, according to some scholars, were part of David's personal guard – 1 Chr. 11: 36 (J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995). The Kerethites were mercenaries. The word kerethites comes from the Hebrew Cherethites or Cherethims. The singular is Krethiy (Strong #3774), originated from 'karath' (Strong #3772) and meaning: executioner, life-guardsman; Kerethite or member of the royal guard, which in turn, derives from 'tabbach' (Strong #2876), which means: properly, a butcher; hence, a guardsman (because he was acting as an executioner); also a cook (usually slaughtering the animal for food) – cook, guard.

Chapter 26

Ezek 26

A Prophecy Against Tyre

[1] In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, because Tyre has said of Jerusalem, 'Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper,'…

From chapter 26 onward, Ezekiel addresses Tyre, a powerful commercial and maritime city on the Mediterranean coast.

In this chapter 26, Tyre is criticized for its rejoicing in the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the 11th year of the captivity (586 BC), the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel concerning Tyre, because it too rejoiced at the fate of Jerusalem, and thought it would get rich with it.

Jerusalem controlled the land trade routes from Egypt and Arabia to Tyre. Its fall would benefit Tyre.

Tyre exploited other nations and worshipped false gods.

[3] therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring many nations against you, like the sea casting up its waves.
[4] They will destroy the walls of Tyre and pull down her towers; I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock.
[5] Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord. She will become plunder for the nations,
[6] and her settlements on the mainland will be ravaged by the sword. Then they will know that I am the Lord [KJV: And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the LORD].
[7] "For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army.
[8] He will ravage your settlements on the mainland with the sword; he will set up siege works against you, build a ramp up to your walls and raise his shields against you.
[9] He will direct the blows of his battering rams against your walls and demolish your towers with his weapons.
[10] His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust. Your walls will tremble at the noise of the warhorses, wagons and chariots when he enters your gates as men enter a city whose walls have been broken through.
[11] The hooves of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground.
[12] They will plunder your wealth and loot your merchandise; they will break down your walls and demolish your fine houses and throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea.

Because of its pride and arrogance, God would bring many nations upon the city, and they would destroy its walls and towers.

The armies that would attack Tyre are compared to the waves of the sea, because the city of Tyre located on the mainland ("Old Tyre") was situated very close to the coast, where ships anchored; and the "New Tyre" was a fortress located on an island.

Tyre would serve only as a place to spread fishing nets.

The territories of Tyre, on the mainland (KJV: "her daughters"), would die by the sword at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his army, composed of soldiers from many peoples.

These cities and villages on the mainland were near Tyre and depended on it.

Nebuchadnezzar besieged the Continental Tyre for 13 years (586-573 BC), and finally destroyed it.

"The hooves of his horses will trample all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your strong pillars will fall to the ground" (v.11) – The columns referred to here were, in fact, the obelisks mentioned by Herodotus (484-425 BC), erected in the temple of Heracles in Tyre. Herodotus visited Tyre around 450 BC. One was made of gold and the other of emerald, which shone intensely at night, and was dedicated to Melqart, the official protective deity of Tyre [Herodotus, 'The Histories', Book 2, §44]. Herodotus wrote: "44. I moreover, desiring to know something certain of these matters so far as might be, made a voyage also to Tyre of Phenicia, hearing that in that place there was a holy temple of Heracles; and I saw that it was richly furnished with many votive offerings besides, and especially there were in it two pillars, the one of pure gold and the other of an emerald stone of such size as to shine by night:…" Herodotus called Melqart Heracles, because the Greeks believed these two deities were identical.
[Source: https://sacred-texts.com/cla/hh/hh2040.htm].

Melqart (Melkart, Melkarth, or Melgart, derived from the Phoenician expression melk qart, 'King of the City') was the official patron deity of Tyre, just as Eshmun protected Sidon. Melqart was frequently referred to as Ba'al, 'Lord' of Tyre (Baal-Melqart, 1 Kin. 16: 31); in Greek, Melqart was called Melicarthus, identified with Heracles, a demigod of Greek mythology with great strength and sagacity, a symbol of man struggling against the forces of nature, an example of masculinity and a champion of the Olympian order against the gods or spirits of the underworld. The Romans called him Hercules. Similar to Tammuz and Adonis, he symbolized an annual cycle of death and rebirth. Tyre was founded around 2750 BC according to Herodotus (informed by the priests there) and was originally built as a walled city on the mainland, now known as the Old City of Tyre. In fact, Hiram I (965–935 BC) had already built a temple to Heracles and Astarte [Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews xviii.v.§ 3]. These impressive pillars mentioned by Ezekiel and confirmed by Herodotus would be demolished by the invader.

"They will… throw your stones, timber and rubble into the sea" (v.12) – Although this may have been done by Nebuchadnezzar and other conquerors, it is worth remembering that when Alexander the Great came against Tyre, most of the people retreated to the island portion of the city which even Nebuchadnezzar could not conquer. Alexander's armies took the rubble of the mainland city and built a causeway, a solid road built up through the water out to the island part of the city and conquered it, just as Ezekiel prophesied. Alexander the Great literally threw Tyre's 'stones, timber and rubble into the sea' when he built a one-half mile causeway out to the island fortress to conquer the city.

"The American archaeologist Edward Robinson (1794–1863) saw forty or fifty marble columns beneath the water along the shores of Tyre." (Charles Lee Feinberg; a biblical scholar of the Jewish history, languages and customs of the OT and biblical prophecies, 1909–1995).

13 I will put an end to your noisy songs, and the music of your harps will be heard no more.
14 I will make you a bare rock, and you will become a place to spread fishnets. You will never be rebuilt, for I the Lord have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.
15 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says to Tyre: Will not the coastlands tremble at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan and the slaughter takes place in you?
16 Then all the princes of the coast will step down from their thrones and lay aside their robes and take off their embroidered garments. Clothed with terror, they will sit on the ground, trembling every moment, appalled at you.
17 Then they will take up a lament concerning you and say to you: "'How you are destroyed, city of renown, peopled by men of the sea! You were a power on the seas, you and your citizens; you put your terror on all who lived there.
18 Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the islands in the sea are terrified at your collapse.'
19 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: When I make you a desolate city, like cities no longer inhabited, and when I bring the ocean depths over you and its vast waters cover you,
20 then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will make you dwell in the earth below, as in ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, and you will not return or take your place [Septuagint; Hebrew return, and I will give glory] in the land of the living.
21 I will bring you to a horrible end and you will be no more. You will be sought, but you will never again be found, declares the Sovereign Lord."

Tyre would no longer sing or play music. It would never be rebuilt.

The other islands would be astonished by the fall of Tyre.

The governors and princes of Phoenicia ("All the princes of the coast") would be terrified by the news of its fall.

They would surrender and submit to Babylonian rule when they saw what would happen to Tyre. And they would mourn for it.

The waters in which Tyre sailed with its proud ships, and which were the source of its wealth and prosperity, would become its ruin.

The fulfillment of the prophecy began with the long siege under Nebuchadnezzar.

The second phase began with the Persian conquest, around 525 BC.

And the third with Alexander's siege in 332 BC, for 7 months.

The Seleucids recovered the Tyre from the mainland, but not from the island.

Herod the Great built a temple there.

In the 1st century AD, there was a Christian colony there (Acts 21: 3-6).

The last major military siege and final capture of Tyre occurred in 1291, when the Mamluk Sultanate besieged and conquered the city, definitively expelling the Crusaders and causing the decline and depopulation of the region that lasted until around 1750.

The present-day city of Tyre or Sour (from the Phoenician, Ṣūr) covers a large part of the original island and most of the causeway built by Alexander the Great in 332 BC, the isthmus having greatly increased in width over the centuries. The part of the original island not covered by the modern city of Tyre is primarily an archaeological site. Tyre (Phoenician, Ṣūr; Hebrew, Tzór) means "rock." In classical Greek it was written as Týros (Τύρος), and in Latin, Tyrus.

The two main archaeological sites within the magnificent complex of ancient ruins in Tyre are Al Bass and Al Mina:

1. Al Bass (or El Bass) is located on the mainland and served as the main entrance to ancient Tyre; it contains monuments dating back to the 2nd century AD, including the Roman Hippodrome, the Necropolis, the Triumphal Arch, and the aqueduct.

2. Al Mina is situated on the promontory facing the Mediterranean Sea and contains seaside ruins—including marble columns that are partially submerged in the water—as well as Roman baths, mosaics from the Roman and Byzantine eras, the Arena, and various harbor structures that are remnants of the ancient residential district and the submerged port.

Chapter 27

Ezek 27 – NIV

A Lament for Tyre

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 “Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre.
3 Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “‘You say, Tyre, “I am perfect in beauty.”

Chapter 27 (Ezek 27: 1-36) is a lament for Tyre.

In this chapter, Tiro is criticized for its arrogance and self-indulgence regarding its mistakes and appetites. Tyre was the economic center of the ancient world, and was considered perfect in its beauty.

4 Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection.
5 They made all your timbers of pine trees from Senir [Mount Hermon]; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you.
6 Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus [Hebrew: Kittim] they made your deck, inlaid with ivory.
7 Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail and served as your banner; your awnings were of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah.
8 Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, O Tyre, were aboard as your seamen.
9 Veteran craftsmen of Gebal [Byblos] were on board as shipwrights to caulk your seams. All the ships of the sea and their sailors came alongside to trade for your wares.
10 “‘Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in your army. They hung their shields and helmets on your walls, bringing you splendor.
11 Men of Arvad and Helek [Helech] guarded your walls on every side; men of Gammad were in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they brought your beauty to perfection.

This beauty was largely due to the nations that helped build it.

From verse 4, God compares the city of Tyre to a large ship, with many nations and peoples represented as its cargo.

This comparison is appropriate, since the city was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and part of it was built on a rocky island.

Its timbers were made of cypress from the forest of Mount Hermon (“Senir”), and its masts were made of cedar from Lebanon.

The oars were made from oak trees from the Bashan region, and the seats were made of ivory inlaid in pine from the coasts of Cyprus (“Kittim”).

The sails were of embroidered Egyptian linen, and its awnings was blue and purple from the islands of Elishah in the Aegean sea.

Elishah was the son of Javan. Elishah is called Alashia in extra-biblical sources, and perhaps could also be identified with Enkomi, on the eastern coast of Cyprus.
Some say that in this verse Elishah could be Italy (the region of Apulia, bordering the Adriatic Sea) or Sicily.

The rowers came from Sidon and Arvad, on the coast of Phoenicia. Its pilots were skilled, wise men.

Sidon was 40 kilometers north of Tyre. Around 1200 BC, the Philistines besieged Sidon, and its inhabitants fled to Tyre, which became known as 'daughter of Sidon' (Isa. 23: 12), for it is supposed that it was built and inhabited for the first time by a colony of the Sidonians.

With the decline of Egypt, the city of Tyre became independent, and its rulers began to dominate most of the coastal cities of Phoenicia, including the interior of Lebanon. So, they were rival cities, but Tyre dominated.

The skilled craftsmen of Gebal (Byblos, for Greeks and Romans, and Gubla for Assyrians and Babylonians) were the builders of the ships.

And all the ships of the sea and their sailors came to trade with Tyre.

Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in its army, and they brought splendor to Tyre with their shields and helmets hung on its walls.

There were also soldiers from Arvad (on the coast of Phoenicia), from Helech on its walls, and from Gammad on its towers. Gammad is an unidentified location, but the Septuagint writes shõmerïm, meaning guards. Other sources suggest gõmerïm ('Cappadocians'), and newer versions prefer the translation 'valiant men.' Perhaps Gammad was a local Phoenician tribe.

12 "'Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise.
13 "'Greece, Tubal and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged slaves and articles of bronze for your wares.
14 "'Men of Beth Togarmah exchanged work horses, war horses and mules for your merchandise. [KJV: "They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules."]
15 "'The men of Rhodes [Septuagint; Hebrew Dedan] traded with you, and many coastlands were your customers; they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony.
16 "'Aram [Most Hebrew manuscripts; some Hebrew manuscripts and Syriac Edom] did business with you because of your many products; they exchanged turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies for your merchandise [KJV: Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate].
17 "'Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, oil and balm for your wares [KJV: Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm].
18 "'Damascus, because of your many products and great wealth of goods, did business with you in wine from Helbon and wool from Zahar.
19 "'Danites and Greeks from Uzal bought your merchandise; they exchanged wrought iron, cassia and calamus for your wares.
20 "'Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you.
21 "'Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats.
22 "'The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your merchandise they exchanged the finest of all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold.
23 "'Harran, Kanneh [Canneh] and Eden and merchants of Sheba, Asshur and Kilmad traded with you.

[24] In your marketplace they traded with you beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted.

From verse 12 onward, God speaks of the commercial relations of Tyre.

Tarshish (probably Spain) traded with Tyre for silver, iron, tin, and lead.

Javan, Tubal, and Meshech (Greek nations of Asia Minor) brought slaves and bronze objects to Tyre in exchange for goods.

Javan corresponds to Greece, and Meshech and Tubal to the northeastern and southeastern regions of Turkey, respectively.

Togarmah (modern-day Armenia) traded with Tyre, mules, work horses, and warhorses. [KJV writes: "They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules."]

The sons of Dedan (NIV: 'the men of Rhodes', in Greek) brought ivory tusks and ebony wood.

Syria [Aram or Edom in other versions] traded emeralds [NIV: turquoise], purple, broidered work, fine linen, coral, and agate [NIV: rubies].

Tyre traded its goods with Israel and Judah for wheat from Minnith (Judges 11:33; located in Ammon), confections (KJV: and Pannag), honey, olive oil, and balm [a resin].

The Hebrew word for "confections" (NIV) is Pannag (פַּנַּג, Strong #6436), "cakes", of uncertain derivation; probably pastry.

Damascus traded with Tyre the wine of Helbon [perhaps modern Halbun, north of Damascus] and the wool from Zahar. Some scholars relate Zahar to the Hebrew word Tzar ("white wool") or to a place near Damascus.

Dan and Javan, Greeks from Uzal, traded wrought iron, cassia, and calamus.

Dedan traded saddle blankets with Tyre.

Arabia and the princes of Kedar traded lambs, rams, and goats.

Sheba [Yemen] and Raamah [southwest Saudi Arabia] brought to Tyre the finest spices, precious stones, and gold.

Haran, Canneh [Calno or Calneh], and Eden, Sheba, Asshur, and Kilmad, all of them in Assyria, They also traded with Tyre beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted.

[25] "'The ships of Tarshish serve as carriers for your wares. You are filled with heavy cargo in the heart of the sea.
[26] Your oarsmen take you out to the high seas. But the east wind will break you to pieces in the heart of the sea.
[27] Your wealth, merchandise and wares, your mariners, seamen and shipwrights, your merchants and all your soldiers, and everyone else on board will sink into the heart of the sea on the day of your shipwreck.
[28] The shorelands will quake when your seamen cry out.

Ships of Tarshish (refining or mining ships) sailed the seas with the heavy cargo of goods from Tyre.

Its oarsmen took it out to the high seas. But the east wind would break it to pieces in the heart of the sea.

The east wind symbolizes Babylon, located east of Phoenicia in Mesopotamia.

The east wind (Hos. 12: 1) coming from the desert is very dry and causes herbs wrinkle and wither. Often, it blows violently, which is a great metaphor for Babylon, just as it was for Assyria, in other prophetic writings. Some Jewish scholars explain that this east wind refers to the Simoon (in Arabic, 'to poison' or 'poisonous wind'), a strong, dry,

dust-laden wind, with a circular motion similar to that of a cyclone, and whose temperature can exceed 54° C (129° F) and the humidity may drop below 10%. It blows in the Sahara desert and in the east of Palestine, in Jordan, Syria and the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. It is of short duration (twenty minutes, more or less), but it lasts long enough to destroy.

Nebuchadnezzar failed to destroy the insular Tyre (800 meters from the mainland), only the Continental Tyre (the 'old Tyre'), but he was the divine instrument that broke the backbone of Tyre's commercial and proud power, even though the island city resisted temporarily and was later destroyed by Alexander the Great.

The mainland city held the city's supply sources, the land trade, and the necropolis.

Over time, the island complex became more prosperous and populated than that of the mainland and was heavily fortified.

Destroying the Continental Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar disrupted trade and the transport of goods through the island of Tyre. Therefore, Tyre lost its independence.

And Ezekiel then says that Nebuchadnezzar did not obtain enough spoils to cover his costs in Tyre, so the Lord was giving him Egypt (Ezek. 29:18-19).

Therefore, the destruction prophesied by Ezekiel began with Nebuchadnezzar and was completed centuries later.

This is similar to what happened with Cyrus and the destruction of Babylon. Cyrus initiated the process of Babylon's downfall, removing its supremacy. The rulers who followed continued this process (Darius I, Xerxes I, the Seleucids, the Parthians, and the Sassanians), until it was completely ruined by the Roman emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD).

In Isaiah 23:17, the prophet said that Tyre would be forgotten for seventy years, but after that time it would resume its trade. This is because, with the other kingdoms under Babylonian rule, it could not independently conduct its trade with other nations. After the captivity, it would return to its activities, but it was never the same again.

[29] All who handle the oars will abandon their ships; the mariners and all the seamen will stand on the shore.
[30] They will raise their voice and cry bitterly over you; they will sprinkle dust on their heads and roll in ashes.
[31] They will shave their heads because of you and will put on sackcloth. They will weep over you with anguish of soul and with bitter mourning.
[32] As they wail and mourn over you, they will take up a lament concerning you: "Who was ever silenced like Tyre, surrounded by the sea?"
[33] When your merchandise went out on the seas, you satisfied many nations; with your great wealth and your wares you enriched the kings of the earth.
[34] Now you are shattered by the sea in the depths of the waters; your wares and all your company have gone down with you.
[35] All who live in the coastlands are appalled at you; their kings shudder with horror and their faces are distorted with fear.
[36] The merchants among the nations hiss at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"

On the day of its ruin, everything would sink into the heart of the sea: wealth, merchandise, and the men who served Tyre.

Their cries would be heard from afar, and they would mourn their sudden and unexpected downfall.

They would mourn for what Tyre had been and for what it was now.

The merchandise from Tyre supplied many peoples and kings. But when Tyre sank into the sea, everyone would be astonished, kings would tremble with fear, and merchants from other nations would be amazed and mock her (“The merchants among the nations hiss at you”).

Chapter 28

Ezek 28 – NIV

A Prophecy Against the King of Tyre

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre [KJV: prince of Tyrus; NABRE: the prince of Tyre], 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'In the pride of your heart you say, "I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god in the heart of the seas." But you are a mere mortal and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.
[3] Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?
[4] By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries.
[5] By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud.

Now the focus of the prophecy is on the king of Tyre. He saw himself as a god.

According to Flavius Josephus and Philostratus (Lucius Flavius Philostratus, a Greek philosopher of the 2nd–3rd centuries), the figure in question is Ithobaal III (Hebrew: Etbaal III, 591–573 BC), who reigned during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre (586–573 BC). The name Ithobaal III means 'With Baal.' It is speculated that Ithobaal III survived the siege but was killed or removed from power, and Baal II was placed on the throne as a Babylonian vassal monarch. Flavius Josephus wrote that Baal II (573–564/563 BC) was deposed when the monarchy in Tyre was temporarily replaced by an oligarchic government of judges for several decades, lasting until the reign of Cyrus [Flavius Josephus, Against Apion, Book I, § 21].

In Ezek 28: 3 there is a reference to him being wiser than Daniel. Prophet Daniel was a well-known contemporary of Ezekiel in the Babylonian court, for his wisdom. Many had already heard of him.

Although biblical versions write it differently, such as the NIV, which places a question mark at the end of the sentence, the phrase is most likely an ironic statement on God's part, referring to an arrogant king who considered himself wise and a god as well, with a spirit similar to that of the serpent in Eden, conversing with Eve.

The king of Tyre boasted of his wisdom and shrewdness in business. In fact, his spirit of pride was equal to Lucifer's.

[6] "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'Because you think you are wise, as wise as a god,
[7] I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor.
[8] They will bring you down to the pit, and you will die a violent death in the heart of the seas.
[9] Will you then say, "I am a god," in the presence of those who kill you? You will be but a man, not a god, in the hands of those who slay you.
[10] You will die the death of the uncircumcised at the hands of foreigners. I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"

Therefore, God not only rebuked human arrogance, but also reminded His people of the spiritual rebellion of the fallen angels against God.

Then the Lord prophesies again about his destruction by the sword of a foreign people.

He would descend into the grave like any mortal.

Another lament for the king of Tyre

11 The word of the Lord came to me:
12 "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre [KJV: the king of Tyrus] and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'You were the seal [or model] of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli [or sapphire], turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared.
14 You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones [NKJV: "You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones."].
15 You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.
16 Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones [KJV: "By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire."]
17 Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.
18 By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching [KJV: Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee].
19 All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"

Ezekiel 28:11-19 makes a lament against the king of Tyre (see Ezek 31: 10,18; Isa 14: 12-15).

He speaks here about the fall of Satan himself, known before as Lucifer.

And this is a very good comparison with the pride of the king of Tyre. Or it could be a direct word against the Prince of darkness who was spiritually ruling the king of Tyre.

This idea of addressing a Ruler of Darkness behind an earthly ruler is similar to that used in Isa. 14: 12-14 in relation to the king of Babylon, where the prophecy goes beyond of the rebuke to a simple earthly ruler and describes Satan himself. In Daniel 10: 10-20,

the angel Michael described his battle with a spiritual opponent he called the prince of Persia.

• Ezek 28: 12: The prophet begins by saying that Lucifer was the model of perfection (NABRE: "a seal of perfection"; AMP: "the full measure of perfection"), full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. He was in the Garden of Eden with God, and he was covered with precious stones, and they were set in gold. This is the description of a being higher than any earthly, human king; It is the description of a being of great perfection, wisdom, and beauty.

"Seal of perfection" refers to the meaning of a seal. They were symbols of authority and authenticity. To possess the signet of someone superior was a great honor, because that person was authorized to sign documents on behalf of the other. This is what happened to Ahasuerus, Haman, and Mordecai.

• Ezek 28: 13: "You were in Eden, the garden of God" – These words are obviously addressed to Satan, who manifested himself in the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. The power behind the prince of Tyre – the true king of Tyre – was Satan himself, the great adversary of God and humanity. The precious stones are symbols of great glory and splendor, which he had before his fall.

• Ezek 28: 14a: "You were anointed as a guardian cherub" or "You were the anointed cherub who covers" – Before his fall, Satan was one of the angelic beings surrounding the throne of God (like the cherubim seen in Ezekiel 1), protecting His holiness, just as the cherubim kept their wings spread over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. He was anointed to be a guardian cherub and was on the holy mountain of God (The Heavenly Zion, Heb. 12: 22: the mountain of God, Zion, as a representation of heaven).

• Ezek 28: 14b: "You walked among the fiery stones" or "You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones." – this means that in this privileged place, Satan had great freedom of movement, among the others cherubim and seraphim (Isa. 6: 2).

Seraphim (literally: "burning ones" or "fiery ones") lead worship in heaven and protect God's holiness. The cherubim are guardians of the Throne of God. They are angels who reflect the beauty of the Creator, and with great strength of knowledge, wisdom, and divine illumination; they are knowledgeable of divine mysteries ("full of eyes").

• Ezek 28: 15: He was blameless in his ways until wickedness was found in him. Lucifer's pride in his beauty, his competitive spirit ('commerce': "Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned"), and his desire to be exalted above the other angels (Isa. 14: 13-14) corrupted his wisdom, inflamed his greed, and led him to influence other angels (Rev. 12: 4, 7-9; a 'dishonest business'), corrupting his privileged status and leading to violence: the battle in heaven (Rev. 12: 7) and violence against humanity made in the image of God (Jn. 10: 10: theft, murder, destruction). Lucifer negotiated with other angels to gain the power he desired. This shows that Satan is involved in commerce (business) and violence (war). And what was his profit? He was defeated and expelled from the mountain of God: "therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God" or "So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God." Satan fell from glory to profanity, lost access to God's presence, had restrictions on his actions on earth (Lk. 10: 17-18; Matt. 12: 29; Jn. 12: 31-32; Jn. 16: 11; Rev. 12: 9; Rev. 20: 1-3), and his destiny will be the lake of fire (Rev. 20: 10).

• Ezek 28: 16-17: Greed and ambition robbed him of that position. Through the increase of his trade, he became filled with violence and sinned.

Therefore, he was threw to the earth, far from the mountain of God, for his heart was lifted up and his wisdom was corrupted. God expelled him from among the other cherubim ("from among the fiery stones" or "from the midst of the stones of fire"). Up to

this point, it is clear the pride of that angel because of his beauty, which led to rebellion, to the desire to take God's place, and, obviously, to his downfall.

• Ezek 28: 18: The dishonest business practices of the leaders of Tyre were a reflection of the dishonest and deceitful dealings of the spiritual power behind them. Satan is the father of lies (Jn. 8: 44) and comes only to steal, kill, and destroy (Jn. 10: 10). Lucifer negotiated with other angels to gain the power he wanted. The king of Tyre negotiated to obtain his own power.

So, the Bible describes the king's pride, as a human being, which led him to materialism, violence, and iniquity in business and religion. He was also proud of his beauty.

With the increase in his wealth, his pride also grew, for it corrupted him completely; he became dishonest.

His sanctuaries were desecrated by the injustice of his trade. "The sanctuaries" can refer to his palaces or his idolatrous temples. "Desecrated" because they would be destroyed by enemies. Tyre flaunted numerous sanctuaries and for this reason it was called the Sacred Island in Ancient times.

"So I made a fire come out from you" or "will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee" means that the king of Tyre himself brought about the fire of God's judgment. He will be consumed by the fire of God's wrath and, reduced to ashes, he will be thrown to the earth. Its destruction would leave the people appalled by its terrible end, for it would mean that they too would be judged.

Tyre possesses great spiritual power, similar to that of Great Babylon (Ezek. 27: 1-36; Rev. 17: 1-18; Rev. 18: 1-24).

A Prophecy Against Sidon

20 The word of the Lord came to me:
21 "Son of man, set your face against Sidon; prophesy against her
22 and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'I am against you, O Sidon, and I will gain glory within you. They will know that I am the Lord, when I inflict punishment on her and show myself holy within her.
23 I will send a plague upon her and make blood flow in her streets. The slain will fall within her, with the sword against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the Lord.
24 "'No longer will the people of Israel have malicious neighbors who are painful briers and sharp thorns. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.
25 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: When I gather the people of Israel from the nations where they have been scattered, I will show myself holy among them in the sight of the nations. Then they will live in their own land, which I gave to my servant Jacob.
26 They will live there in safety and will build houses and plant vineyards; they will live in safety when I inflict punishment on all their neighbors who maligned them. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God.'"

Next comes a prophecy against Sidon, whose sins were similar to those of Tyre.

In Joshua's time, Sidon was a large city (Josh. 11:8; Josh. 19:28). It was built by Sidon, son of Canaan (Gen. 10: 15; 1 Chr. 1:13). It was a famous commercial center. But in Ezekiel's day, Sidon was no more important than Tyre.

The cause of the judgment here was Sidon's contempt and mockery of Israel, due to the judgment that God brought upon His people (Ezek. 28:24,26: "those that despise them", KJV), while He gives a promise of restoration, justice, and relief for them.

God would silence all those nations, whose scorn and mockery acted like painful thorns and thistles.

His people would be sanctified, gathered from among the nations, and would return to live safely in their own land, rebuilding their lives.

God's plan for Israel's permanent dwelling in its land did not end with the conclusion of the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem, but continues until the Second Coming of Jesus.

Chapter 29

Ezek 29 – NIV

A Prophecy Against Egypt

Judgment on Pharaoh

[1] In the tenth year, in the tenth month on the twelfth day, the word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt.

Chapter 29 begins a prophecy against Egypt.

This prophecy is dated the 12th day of the 10th month (December-January) of the 10th year of the captivity (587 BC), 1 year and 2 days after Nebuchadnezzar began the siege of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 24:1-2; 2 Kings 25:1) and seven months before its destruction (2 Kings 25:2-8). At that time there were still some in Judah and Jerusalem who hoped that Egypt would rescue them from the powerful Babylonians.

Here, the Pharaoh in question is Hophra חָפְרַע (or Wahibre Haaibre; in Greek: Apries), who reigned from 589 to 570 BC.

He was also mentioned in Jer 43: 8-l3 and Jer 44: 29-30.

[3] Speak to him and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster lying among your streams. You say, "The Nile is mine; I made it for myself." ["great monster" or "great dragon" or "great crocodile" in few versions]

The Lord refers to Pharaoh king of Egypt, as "the great dragon" or "you great monster" or "great crocodile," saying that the river was his, and that he had made it for himself. Like a crocodile guarding the Nile and all the waterways of his land, Pharaoh was ready to attack anyone who dared to challenge him or seize his property.

The Hebrew word for "dragon" or "monster" in text is Tannim or Tannin (תַּנִּין, Strong #8577: a marine or land monster, that is, a sea serpent or a jackal; dragon, sea monster, snake, whale), and comes from the same common root ('tan', Strong #8565) of the Ugaritic term 'lotan' or the Babylonian word Leviathan (Strong #3882, Livyathan), which may correspond to any large sea animal, sometimes represented by the Phoenicians as a crocodile, snake, octopus or a huge fish or whale. The Leviathan may be associated with the Tiamat, the Babylonian 'chaos-monster' or 'dragon-chaos', a primitive ocean goddess in the Sumerian and Babylonian mythologies associated with the ocean (Isa. 27: 1; Isa. 51: 9; Jer. 51: 34; Job 7: 12; Ps. 91: 13). Tannin is usually translated as "jackal," representing the crocodile native to the Nile or the Babylonian Leviathan.

Perhaps the crocodile is a figure of the Egyptian god Sobek or Suchus, a protective deity with a crocodile's head, and associated with the Nile crocodile, pharaonic power, fertility, and military prowess. He was invoked to ward off evil influences, such as bad luck or the evil eye. He was especially worshipped in the area of the Nile Delta. Sobek, often depicted with the head of a crocodile and a crown composed of ram's horns, a solar disk, and plumes of feathers.

Since Pharaoh in Egypt was the personification of one of the gods, the prayers of his priests and even the people encouraged him to be like a ferocious crocodile to his enemies.

Pharaoh and his people believed that the great Nile River belonged to them and was created by them or by their gods, not by the Most High God, the God whom the patriarchs of Israel worshipped. He was the true creator and owner of everything and everyone. Therefore, his statement was arrogant: "The Nile is mine; I made it for myself."

The Nile was the source of Egypt's greatness. The silt deposits on its banks fertilized the land, which a little further from the river was almost a desert. The Nile was a continuous supply of water for men and animals and, consequently, a source of sustenance as well, through the crops that benefited from it. Furthermore, ships sailed along the river, not only to transport goods to the cities, but also for military defense. Therefore, without the Nile, there would be no Egypt.

And all this blessing had been given to them by God, but they didn't acknowledge it. They wanted the glory for themselves. And God wouldn't allow that. Even because Egypt had always used its natural wealth and military power to oppress and dominate nations.

[4] But I will put hooks in your jaws and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales. I will pull you out from among your streams, with all the fish sticking to your scales.
[5] I will leave you in the desert, you and all the fish of your streams. You will fall on the open field and not be gathered or picked up. I will give you as food to the beasts of the earth and the birds of the air.

God said that he would put hooks in their jaws and pull them out of the Nile, as well as the fish from his streams, which sticked to his scales, that is, the Egyptians who

followed him and worshipped him as a god. It was with hooks that a hunter caught crocodiles. They were pulled from the river to land with hooks and then slaughtered.

The crocodile and the fish would be left in the desert, where they would both fall into the open field, that is, in his fall, the Pharaoh would cause the downfall of others. They would not be gathered or picked up, but eaten by wild animals and birds of prey. This was an image of how they would be treated by their enemies, not only stripped, torn apart and 'eaten', as birds of prey do with the carcasses of other animals, but it also refers to the lack of dignity and respect in the burial of their bodies, because for the Egyptians, and especially the kings, burial and memorial tombs were very important. God said that their misfortune would be so great that it would be as if they weren't buried at all; at least not with the honors they expected. It would be quite a humiliating way to bury a man who claimed to be a god.

6 Then all who live in Egypt will know that I am the Lord. "'You have been a staff of reed
for the people of Israel.
7 When they grasped you with their hands, you splintered and you tore open their
shoulders; when they leaned on you, you broke and their backs were wrenched.

• Ezek 29: 6: "You have been a staff of reed for the people of Israel." In Isa. 36: 6, Egypt was called 'this broken reed' or 'that splintered reed of a staff' not only because of its internal disintegration, with pharaohs reigning simultaneously in two cities, and therefore, being a fragile nation. In fact, Egypt could not help any other nation, and anyone who leaned on this dry piece of reed could get hurt. And here Ezekiel says the same thing. Egypt was a staff of reed.

Egypt, which boasted of being a help to so many nations, if stripped of its power by the hand of God, would be useless, and even an instrument of "causing wounds" to other peoples, because it would be like a dry piece of reed that, when someone leans on it, gets hurt (Isa 36: 6; Ezek 29: 7). Israel expected help from them and ended up being frustrated.

8 "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will bring a sword against you and
kill your men and their animals.
9 Egypt will become a desolate wasteland. Then they will know that I am the Lord.
"'Because you said, "The Nile is mine; I made it,"
10 therefore I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt
a ruin and a desolate waste from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush [That is,
the upper Nile region].
11 No foot of man or animal will pass through it; no one will live there for forty years.
12 I will make the land of Egypt desolate among devastated lands, and her cities will lie
desolate forty years among ruined cities. And I will disperse the Egyptians among the
nations and scatter them through the countries.

Because of its arrogance, Egypt would be destroyed by the sword. Both men and beasts would die. From north to south (from Migdol to Aswan), the nation would be destroyed and left desolate.

"Because you said, 'The Nile is mine; I made it,' therefore I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt a ruin and a desolate waste" – God reiterates the reason for the punishment: pride over the fertility of the Nile and pride in claiming that he, Pharaoh, had created it. The Egyptians trusted their Nile River so much that they didn't need help from God.

Their land would lie desolate for 40 years (v.12). The Egyptians would also be scattered among the nations, and many of them were likely taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.

13 "'Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the nations where they were scattered.
14 I will bring them back from captivity and return them to Upper Egypt [Hebrew: to Pathros], the land of their ancestry. There they will be a lowly kingdom.
15 It will be the lowliest of kingdoms and will never again exalt itself above the other nations. I will make it so weak that it will never again rule over the nations.
16 Egypt will no longer be a source of confidence for the people of Israel but will be a reminder of their sin in turning to her for help. Then they will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.'"

After 40 years (in the Persian period) the Lord would gather them again and restore their nation. Cyrus the Great conquered Babylon in 539 BC and in 538 BC gave permission for the captive peoples to return to their homeland, and not only the Jews benefited, but also the Egyptians.

Nebuchadnezzar's attack was more of a divinely ordained punitive expedition than a conquest of that land for the Babylonian empire. Egypt never became a vassal or conquered territory of the Babylonian Empire under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, but began to decline after his invasion in 568 BC.

In fact, around 578 BC (40 years before Cyrus), during the reign of Hophra (or Wahibre Haaibre; in Greek: Apries, 589 to 570 BC), Egypt was already losing its power, including to the Babylonians, for this Pharaoh supported the peoples of the Levant region in the fight against Nebuchadnezzar. He could not prevent the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, but he received many Jewish refugees in his country, where they settled mainly on the island of Elephantine and formed a prosperous community. But in 570 BC, while trying to support the leader of Cyrene in his fight against the Greeks, he ended up failing, having his own army defeated and losing power to his general Amasis II (Ahmose II, Khnem-ib-re, 570-526 BC). This facilitated Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt in 568/567 BC. Thus, only during the reign of Cyrus (559–530 BC) did the people who were taken captive to Babylon or dispersed among other nations have the chance to return to their land and have some chance of reconstruction. Cyrus did expand the empire as far as the Egyptian borders, but he did not conquer it and incorporate it into the Persian Empire.

But, as Ezekiel wrote, the Egyptians would be a humble kingdom (v. 14). The Lord would make them a humble kingdom so that they would no longer dominate among the nations and would no longer have the confidence of Israel.

This may coincide with the reign of Cyrus' son, Cambyses II (530–522 BC), who conquered Egypt in 525 BC with Arab help. His troops defeated Psamtik III (Ankhkaen-re – 526-525 BC, in Greek, Psammeticus or Psammetichus III), son of Ahmose II, at the Battle of Pelusium.

Cambyses was quite cruel in his invasion and control over Egypt, humiliating Pharaoh's daughter and other young women of the nobility, and killing the young son of Pharaoh and 2,000 young men in shameful manner for vengeance on the men of Memphis who had assassinated the ambassadors whom he had sent. Psamtik III reigned for only 6 months (526-525 BC). It is not known for sure how he died. Cambyses annexed Egypt to the Achaemenid Empire and also proclaimed himself Pharaoh, establishing his seat of government in Memphis. There, he reigned for only 3 years, when he died under circumstances that remain unknown. This episode may be the fulfillment of the prophecy

in Isa. 19: 4: "I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a hard master [NIV: to the power of a cruel master]; a fierce king will rule over them, says the Sovereign, the Lord of hosts." Cambyses would be that cruel master and fierce king.

After Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, Egypt's dominion over the nations was broken and never recovered.

In 332 BC, Egypt was annexed to the Greek empire by Alexander, and its promised but limited restoration was achieved by the Ptolemies. Alexandria became a particularly important center of Judaism and Christianity. During the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus or Ptolemy II (285-247 BC), Jewish sages wrote the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Jewish Torah, 250 BC), thus probably fulfilling Isa. 19: 21-22: "The Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the Lord on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering [NIV: sacrifices and grain offerings], and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them. The Lord will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the Lord, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them."

The book of the Acts of the Apostles on the day of Pentecost shows us that there were already Jews everywhere, including Egypt (Acts 2: 9-11), who had come to Jerusalem for the feast. And they also ended up converting to Christianity.

In the time of the Gospel, Jesus' apostles preached in several places in the ancient world, including Egypt. John Mark made the first Christian convert in Alexandria, a shoemaker or a cobbler named Anianus. Bartholomew (Nathanael) preached as far as India with Thomas, returning to Armenia, Ethiopia, and southern Arabia. Matthew ministered in Persia (modern-day Iran) and Ethiopia. Through these men the gospel came to Egypt. Despite the persecutions suffered at the hands of the Romans, the Christians of Alexandria and the rest of Egypt maintained a strong Christian tradition, especially after 106-107 AD, during the reign of Trajan (98-117 AD).

"Egypt will no longer be a source of confidence for the people of Israel" – In the eyes of the Israelites, Egypt would no longer have the power it seemed to have before, and would only remind them of their sin in seeking help there instead of from the Lord. And this would glorify His name before them.

Nebuchadnezzar will come against Egypt

17 In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month on the first day, the word of the Lord came to me:
18 "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon drove his army in a hard campaign against Tyre; every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw. Yet he and his army got no reward from the campaign he led against Tyre.
19 Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will carry off its wealth. He will loot and plunder the land as pay for his army.
20 I have given him Egypt as a reward for his efforts because he and his army did it for me, declares the Sovereign Lord.
21 "On that day I will make a horn [Horn here symbolizes strength] grow for the Israelites, and I will open your mouth among them. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

In verse 17, Ezekiel makes a leap in time, as he receives another word from God about the Egyptians, but in this verse he describes the date as 571-570 BC: on the 1st day of the 1st month (March-April) of the 27th year of the captivity (i.e., well after the fall of Judah, which occurred in 586 BC).

The beginning of chapter 29 was in 588-587 BC, 17 years before this prophecy.

The Lord told him that Nebuchadnezzar, as His instrument of judgment, had served Him well by destroying Tyre (586-573 BC), but had not obtained enough spoils to cover the war expenses. Now, God would give him those spoils through the conquest of Egypt (568/567 BC), for him and his army.

This campaign against Tyre took place during the reign of Pharaoh Hophra (Apries, 589 to 570 BC).

"Every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw" (v.18) – This phrase could refer to the friction caused by helmets and armors, but since it was a siege and not a battle, it probably refers to the hard ork of carrying great amounts of earth to construct siege mounds and ramps, or even a causeway to the island fortress, which did not come to be accomplished.

When the conquest of Egypt happens (less than two years), Israel will renew its strength and they will believe in the prophet, for the word of God has been fulfilled. Ezekiel could speak freely among them: "On that day I will make a horn [Horn here symbolizes strength] grow for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Chapter 30

Ezek 30 – NIV

A Lament for Egypt

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 “Son of man, prophesy and say: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “‘Wail and say, “Alas for that day!”
3 For the day is near, the day of the Lord is near—a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.
4 A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush [KJV: Ethiopia]. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down.

Chapter 30 is a lament for Egypt, where God confirms that the nation would be conquered by Babylon (between 568-567 BC).

Probably, this prophecy follows the latest date (570 BC).

In verse 3, Ezekiel mentions “the day of the Lord” and adds that it will be a day of clouds and a time of doom for the nations.

The expression “Day of the Lord,” in the Bible, represents a day of God’s judgment, whether located in a short period of time and a specific situation, or for a future of humanity, where His enemies and the enemies of His people are judged, a day when His patience runs out.

The image of the “cloud” symbolizes judgment and destruction, as well as the majestic presence of God; a time of condemnation for the nations that oppose God.

The invasion of Egypt would also cause anguish and concern in Ethiopia, its ally. Ethiopia is an African country that borders Egypt, therefore, the closest and the first to suffer from the disintegration of Egypt.

In verse 4 the bible writes, “A sword will come against Egypt, and anguish will come upon Cush [KJV: Ethiopia]. When the slain fall in Egypt, her wealth will be carried away and her foundations torn down.”

God spoke to the prophet, saying that He would send a merciless nation to destroy Egypt and leave the land filled with the dead. This nation was Babylon, the greatest military power in the world at that time. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and defeated Pharaoh Ahmose II in 568 BC, the invasion was violent and left Egypt in ruins, for the Babylonian king sacked Egyptian cities and took much treasure as spoils of war. Egypt’s wealth was linked to its strategic position and trade, which would obviously be affected by the war. Ethiopia, in turn, being the closest nation and most benefited by Egypt’s wealth, would feel the effects of the war, even if Nebuchadnezzar did not enter there at that time. But God continues.

5 Cush [Ethiopia] and Libya [NRSV: Put; Hebrew Pul, Isa. 66: 19], Lydia [Isa 66:19, NRSV: Lud] and all Arabia, Kub [or Chub; probably a people in North Africa or near southern Egypt] and the people of the covenant land will fall by the sword along with Egypt.
6 “‘This is what the Lord says: “‘The allies of Egypt will fall and her proud strength will fail. From Migdol to Aswan they will fall by the sword within her, declares the Sovereign Lord.

7 "'They will be desolate among desolate lands, and their cities will lie among ruined cities.
8 Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I set fire to Egypt and all her helpers are crushed.
9 "'On that day messengers will go out from me in ships to frighten Cush [Ethiopia] out of her complacency. Anguish will take hold of them on the day of Egypt's doom, for it is sure to come.

Egypt had formed alliances with other nations. Some were economic allies, others military allies, and still others were allies with the intention of strengthening all the pagan and idolatrous practices that involved those nations. Here the Bible speaks that its allies would die by the sword, that is, they would be conquered through war by foreign armies. Nebuchadnezzar did not annex Egypt to his empire, nor the other African nations around it, but his invasion was the trigger that unleashed the interruption of trade, military alliances, and cultural and religious exchange between countries, that is, their 'foundations' (v.4).

Nebuchadnezzar's invasion was the trigger for the decline of Egypt and the establishment of new empires: the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans.

Ethiopia felt secure, but on the day of Egypt's fall, the Lord would send messengers in ships and frighten it (Isa 18: 2), because mighty Egypt was the pillar for the other nations around it. The nation possessed vast armies for centuries, more than any other people. And it maintained good relations with Arabia (2 Chr. 21:16). That is why Ezekiel mentions Arabia here.

Ethiopia and Egypt have been united many times in History, such as during the Assyrian period and during the reign of Necho II (610-595 BC) against Babylon at Carchemish (2 Chr. 35: 20; Jer. 46: 9).

The conquest of Egypt by Cambyses II in 525 BC brought Ethiopia (Cush) under Persian rule (Est. 1:1; Est. 8:9), and that nation also suffered under its violence, just like the Egyptians.

The Greek and Roman empires that followed always maintained control over Egypt and Ethiopia in particular. In this way, all nations neighboring Egypt were also conquered by foreign armies throughout the centuries.

The Kingdom of Kush persisted until the 3rd-6th centuries, when it was finally conquered by the Kingdom of Aksum, present-day Eritrea. Initially a Christian nation, Ethiopia was later dominated by the Mamluk Turks (Muslim soldiers and rulers of slave origin), of Islamic faith, around 1315 AD.

Ethiopia, Put, and Libya would fall before Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 46: 9; Ezek. 30: 4-5; Nah. 3: 9-10).

10 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.
11 He and his army—the most ruthless of nations—will be brought in to destroy the land. They will draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain.
12 I will dry up the waters of the Nile and sell the land to evil men [or 'to an evil nation']; by the hand of foreigners I will lay waste the land and everything in it. I the Lord have spoken.

Through Nebuchadnezzar, God would put an end to the arrogance of Egypt (KJV: "I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt"), for its armies had always been a source of pride for that nation.

• Ezek 30: 12: "I will dry up the waters of the Nile and sell the land to evil men [or 'to an evil nation']"

God would bring a drought that would disrupt the annual flood cycle of the Nile, compromising agriculture, harvests, the economy, and the lives of all the nation's citizens. It was a punishment upon Egypt for its arrogance and idolatry.

• Ezek 30: 12: "By the hand of foreigners I will lay waste the land and everything in it" – this refers to the Babylonians.

The "evil men" who would buy the land were probably Egypt's enemies who would take advantage of the country's weakness after the drought and invasion.

The drought affecting the Nile's streams symbolized the withdrawal of God's blessing upon Egypt.

13 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'I will destroy the idols and put an end to the
images in Memphis [Hebrew: Noph]. No longer will there be a prince in Egypt, and I will
spread fear throughout the land.
14 I will lay waste Upper Egypt [Hebrew: Pathros], set fire to Zoan and inflict punishment
on Thebes [Hebrew: No].
15 I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium [Hebrew: Sin], the stronghold of Egypt, and wipe
out the hordes of Thebes [Hebrew: No].
16 I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium [Hebrew: Sin], will writhe in agony. Thebes [Hebrew:
No] will be taken by storm; Memphis [Hebrew: Noph] will be in constant distress
[NABRE writes: Thebes will be breached, and Memphis besieged in daylight].
17 The young men of Heliopolis [Hebrew: Awen or On] and Bubastis [Hebrew: Pi-Beseth]
will fall by the sword, and the cities themselves will go into captivity.
18 Dark will be the day at Tahpanhes when I break the yoke of Egypt; there her proud
strength will come to an end. She will be covered with clouds, and her villages will go
into captivity.
19 So I will inflict punishment on Egypt, and they will know that I am the Lord.'"

The Egyptians idols would be destroyed. Cambyses, for example, destroyed the idols of Egypt more out of contempt for all religion than in revolt against idolatry. Many important cities in Egypt would be burned and completely destroyed because of this.

1) Memphis (Hebrew: Moph or Noph). It is mentioned in Hos. 9: 6; Isa. 19: 13; Jer. 2: 16; Jer. 46: 14,19; Ezek. 30: 13,16. Ramesses II, Merneptah, and Psamtik I carried out extensive construction in this region. The main gods of the city were Ptah, Sekhmet, Sokar, and Nefertem. The Apis bull (the bull of Memphis) was kept alive in the temple of Memphis.

2) Pathros – is the biblical name for the region of Upper Egypt (the south of the country, corresponding to the area from Thebes/Luxor to Aswan), and Kush (or Ethiopia). The most worshipped gods in the region were:

• The Theban Triad: Amun-Ra, Mut, and Khonsu.

•• Amun: frequently associated with the sun and air, later called Amun-Ra; therefore, the supreme god.

•• Mut: Wife of Amun and queen of the goddesses, symbolized by a vulture, representing motherhood.

•• Khonsu: The moon god, son of Amun and Mut.

• Osiris, Isis, and Horus: The most popular and venerated trinity throughout Egypt, including the southern region, representing resurrection, magic, motherhood, and the heavens.

• Khnum: God of creation, represented with a ram's head, widely worshipped in the region of the Nile cataracts (Elephantine, in the far south of Pathros).

3) Zoan (Tanis) – there were Pharaoh's greatest advisors and princes (Isa. 19: 11,13; Isa. 30: 4). In the same region were the cities of Rameses (formerly called Avaris) and Pithom (Ex. 1: 11). Tanis was the capital of the Pharaohs from the 21st to the 23rd dynasties. A great temple of Amun was built in Tanis, using stones from the ruins of Pi-Ramesses.

The fact that it is written in Ex. 1:11 that the Jewish slaves built store cities like Pithom and Rameses, even before Pi-Rameses (or Per-Rameses, 'The House of Rameses') existed, since it was rebuilt by Rameses II (1279-1212 BC) in the 19th dynasty (1295–1185 BC), on the ancient city of Avaris, may simply mean that later biblical writers and translators of the original text of Moses decided to use the name that was best known at the time for this region where the Exodus took place. Pi-Ramesses was the capital of Lower Egypt until the end of the 20th Egyptian dynasty.

4) Thebes or No-Amon ('the city of the god Amon' – in Egyptian, n'iw(t)-'Imn) was a city in Upper Egypt, east of the Nile. Amun (also Amon, Ammon, Amen; in Ancient Egyptian: imn; Greek: Ἄμμων Ámmōn or Ἅμμων Hámmōn) was worshiped in Thebes and Tanis (Zoan). His name means 'the hidden one' or 'invisible', since it was originally the personification of the winds. From the 18th Dynasty (with Pharaoh Tutankhamon – 1336-1327 BC) he became the god of the Empire, being called Amun-Ra or Amun-Re (Amon-Re') because of its union with the cosmic god Ra (Re' or Atom, the sun god), and revered under creative and solar aspects. He defeated Montu, the solar god regarded as the destructive manifestation of the sun's heat. The cult of Amun ended with the destruction of Thebes in 661 BC by the Assyrians. In the 7th century AD, Thebes was rebuilt by the Arabs and renamed Luxor (also known as Karnak).

5) Sin (or Pelusium), in the Nile Delta; in Ezek. 30: 15 it is called the 'the stronghold of Egypt' (ma 'ōz miṣrayim), symbolizing Egyptian power. Pelusium or Sin (in Hebrew, סִין, Ciyn, Strong #5512), according to Gesenius (*), means 'mud', 'clay' or 'muddy place'. The city was known in antiquity for its swampy and marshy location. Sin is a name that comes from the same Egyptian root, sjnw.

(*) Heinrich Friedrich Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) was a German orientalist, Biblical critic, theologian, and Hebraist, famous for his Hebrew grammar text and his Biblical Hebrew lexicon.

The city was known by other names, such as Sena, Per-Amon, Per-Amun ('temple of Amon' or 'house of Amon'), Pelousion (Πηλούσιον in Classical Greek), Sin (in Chaldean and Hebrew), Seyân (in Aramaic), Farama or Al-Farama (some Arabic historical sources, derived from Coptic names) and Tell El-Farama (in Egyptian Arabic and Modern Arabic).

Pelusium, like Tahpanhes, was a fortified city, housing Egyptian defense garrisons. Pelusium was located slightly further east than Tahpanhes.

The gods worshipped there were:

• Amon (or Amun) or Zeus-Amon (a Greek fusion of the Egyptian god of the sun and air, Amon, with Zeus) was worshipped there. He was the main deity of the city, associated with the sun and creative power.

• Bastet: The cat goddess of protection and the home. Their cult was so strong in Pelusium that Cambyses II used this devotion to his army's advantage in the famous Battle of Pelusium, placing cats at the front of the battle so that the Egyptians did not attack them, for fear of killing the animals.

6) On (Heliopolis, in Greek; or Ôn, ʾOn, אֹן, in Hebrew, the 'City of the Sun'; in Egyptian, Iwnw, transl.: Iunu, 'the pillars,' because of the obelisks). It is also called

Bethshemesh or Beth Shemesh ('The House of the Sun' or 'the temple of the Sun', Jer. 43: 13), and mentioned in Isa. 19: 18 ('City of the Sun'). Beth Shemesh (or Ain-Shemesh, 'The House of the Sun') was a town northeast of the mountains of Judah, in possession of Dan (Josh. 15: 10). In it, there was a great worship of the Sun.

The ancient city of Heliopolis is currently located about 15–20 meters (49–66 ft) below the streets of the middle and lower-class suburbs to the north of Cairo. It was the great center of worship to the sun in Egypt, where the sun god Ra or Atom received special honor . There is a remaining monument of Heliopolis, which is the obelisk of the temple of Ra-Aton, still in its original place, in the modern suburb of Cairo, Al-Matariyyah.

Ezekiel a wordplay with On ('ôn or Ôn, אן, owen), e Áven ('âven, awen, אָוֶן, Strong #206, 205) – Ezek. 30:17. Aven was the name of three places: one in Cele-Syria, one in Egypt (On) and one in Palestine (Beth-Aven, referring to Bethel), meaning: idolatry, vanity, wickedness; more specifically, an idol; false idol, affliction, evil, iniquity, lamentations, among other meanings. Beth-Aven Beyth 'Aven, Strong #1007) means: 'House of vanity' or 'house of iniquity', 'house of wickedness.'

7) Pi-Beseth (Hebrew; Ezekiel 30:17) or Bubastis (or Per-Bast, in Egyptian), means 'dwelling of the Goddess Bastet'. Bastet or Ailurus (Greek word for 'cat') was the goddess of fertility, protector of women, goddess of protection and the home, and also represented the sun (Ra). It was also located in Lower Egypt, near the delta.

8) Tahpanhes – The Targum identifies Tahpanhes with Hanes (Jer. 2: 16; Jer. 43: 7-9), where Pharaoh had a palace. Hanes is also mentioned in Isa. 30:4, but its actual location is unknown. The Septuagint identifies Tahpanhes with Daphnae Pelusiae (from Herodotus' Histories, modern Tell Defenneh), an important fortified city on Egypt's eastern border, on the lower Nile, northeast of the Delta, near the Sur desert. Pelusium was located further east of Tahpanhes. Daphnae, in Greek, means, in Greek, 'laurel grove.' Herodotus states that it was a fortress against the Arabs and Assyrians. Pelusium was located further east of Tahpanhes.

According to historical records, Tahpanhes (Tehaphnehes or Tahpanhes, תְּחַפְנְחֵס, Strong #8471; Jer 2:1; Jer 43:7; Ezek 30:18) was founded around 664 BC by Pharaoh Psamtik I, father of Necho II, of the 26th dynasty (Sais), and functioned as a strategic military outpost and garrison city on Egypt's eastern border against Asian threats and to control the main caravan trade routes to Syria. This military outpost was guarded by Greek and Carian mercenaries.

The meaning of the name Tahpanhes remains uncertain, but it appears to be of Egyptian origin, tḥ p-nḥsy or t'ḥrnt-p'nḥsy, as suggested by biblical scholar John L. McKenzie. This Egyptian name means 'Fortress of the Nubian' or 'Palace of the Nubian.'

William Foxwell Albright (1891–1971, archaeologist) states that it means 'Fortress of Pinehas' or 'Fortress of Penhase,' the name of an Egyptian officer, a general of Ramses II (written in Hebrew as Pinehas).

As an important military and commercial base, the city venerated the deities of Lower Egypt:

- Ra: The sun god, who was frequently worshipped in the cities of the Delta region.
- Amun-Ra: A fusion of Ra and Amun, the king of the gods.
- Other foreign and Semitic gods, in addition to local protective deities of Egypt.

In summary:

God would destroy the idols and the images in Memphis and it would be in constant distress, for it would be besieged in daylight. Pathros would be devastated. Zoan would be consumed by fire. Thebes would be invaded and would lose its hordes. The armies of

Pelusium would be wiped out and it would writhe in agony; its pride as stronghold of Egypt would cease. The young men of Heliopolis and Bubastis would fall by the sword, and the cities themselves would go into captivity. Tahpanhes, which was also a defensive city and with military garrisons, would also see its pride disappear. It would be covered with clouds, darkening the day, which could mean clouds of a fire. The inhabitants of its villages would go into captivity.

Pharaoh's Arms Are Broken

20 In the eleventh year, in the first month on the seventh day, the word of the Lord came to me:
21 "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. It has not been bound up to be healed or put in a splint so that it may become strong enough to hold a sword.
22 Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt. I will break both his arms, the good arm as well as the broken one, and make the sword fall from his hand.
23 I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries.
24 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him like a mortally wounded man.
25 I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall limp. Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he brandishes it against Egypt.
26 I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them through the countries. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

In verse 20, Ezekiel returns to the date of 587-586 BC (7th day of the 1st month of the 11th year).

Then, God tells him: "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. It has not been bound up for healing or put in a splint so as to become strong enough to hold a sword." (Ezek. 30: 21).

In the ancient culture of the Near East, arms symbolized strength and the ability to exercise power.

The arms here represent the military strength and political power of Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt.

"Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh" – This occurred in Egypt's failed attempt to prevent the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem months earlier (Ezek. 29: 6-7).

The Babylonians temporarily left the city to pursue the Egyptian army (Jer 37:5-9) and then resumed the siege of the city.

"It has not been bound up for healing or put in a splint so as to become strong enough to hold a sword.", that is, this Egyptian force, which tried to help Jerusalem against Babylon, became defenseless and would never recover.

Pharaoh could not regroup his troops or reorganize a nation that was already showing its decadence and fragility.

But the Lord was against him and would break both his arms, the strong one and the one that was already broken.

The strong arm represents the power that still remained to him; the remaining military strength and influence of Egypt, which were still intact, but which would soon be destroyed by the king of Babylon.

God promised to destroy both to show that Egypt's sovereignty would be completely annihilated.

The sword falling from his hand signifies that Egypt would be unable to defend itself or offer protection to its allies.

It was the end of his reign as ruler of a superpower, which was fully fulfilled later (Ezek. 29: 15).

God, then, was removing Egypt's capability to resist or stop the Babylonian conquest.

The Egyptians would be scattered throughout the surrounding lands, while the Lord would strengthen the arm of the king of Babylon to utterly destroy Pharaoh. When Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt after the siege of Tyre ended, Hophra had already been killed in a civil war, due to the revolt of his general Ahmose.

Chapter 31

Ezek 31 – NIV

A Cedar in Lebanon

[1] In the eleventh year, in the third month on the first day, the word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: "'Who can be compared with you in majesty?
[3] Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage.
[4] The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field.
[5] So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters.
[6] All the birds of the air nested in its boughs, all the beasts of the field gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade.
[7] It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters.
[8] The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the pine trees equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with its branches—no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty.
[9] I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God.

In chapter 31, another prophecy begins, referring to the fate of Egypt and comparing it to another superpower that came before it, Assyria.

Two months after the previous prophecy, that is, on the 1st day of the 3rd month (May-June) of the 11th year of the captivity (587-586 BC), Ezekiel compared the greatness of Pharaoh to that of the Assyrians, for he considered himself equal to them in glory and greatness, just as the cedar of Lebanon was greater than all the trees.

Then God compared Assyria to a very tall cedar tree with beautiful branches, foliage that provided much shade, and thick boughs. It was nourished by waters that came from the depths of the earth; and from its base these waters flowed like streams to all the trees of the field. And so it grew and was above them all.

The cedar can reach one hundred and thirty-one feet high and the ancient writers used it as a symbol of the stature of a man (Ezek. 31: 3; Am. 2: 9), also of strength, majesty and power (Song 3: 9), pride, hardness, inflexibility (Ps. 29: 5), dignity and honor (Isa 41: 19).

The waters were the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. These copious rivers made the fields fertile and stimulated the development of large cities along trade routes.

The birds of the air made nests in its branches. Wild animals gave birth beneath it, and all nations lived under it.

The other nations created by God are compared to trees in a garden ("trees in the garden of God" or "tree of Eden"), but none of them were like the majestic cedar.

In this way, God shows Pharaoh the wealth of Assyria.

Although Egypt was great, it was not the leading nation in the world.

10 “‘Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because it *[the great cedar]* towered
on high, lifting its top above the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height,
11 I handed it over to the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its
wickedness. I cast it aside,
12 and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the
mountains and in all the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land. All
the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it.
13 All the birds settled on the fallen tree, and all the all the beasts of the field were among
its branches.
14 Therefore no other trees by the waters are ever to tower proudly on high, lifting their
tops above the thick foliage. No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a
height; they are all destined for death, for the earth below, among mortal men, with those
who go down to the pit [NIV 2011: realm of the dead].

But God also begins to show that in the same way that Assyria exalted itself and fell at the hand of another powerful nation (Babylon, allied with Media and Scythia), and all the nations that lived under its dominion were scattered, all who exalt themselves will be destined for death and will go to the depths of the earth, along with those who died before them.

15 “‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: On the day it was brought down to the grave
[Hebrew; Sheol] I covered the deep springs with mourning for it; I held back its streams,
and its abundant waters were restrained. Because of it I clothed Lebanon with gloom, and
all the trees of the field withered away.
16 I made the nations tremble at the sound of its fall when I brought it down to the grave
[Sheol] to be with those who go down to the pit. Then all the trees of Eden, the choicest
and best of Lebanon, the well-watered trees, were consoled in the earth below.
17 Those who lived in its shade, its allies among the nations, had also gone down to the
grave with it, joining those killed by the sword.

Then, God says that all nations were astonished at its fall, as on a day of mourning; and they trembled because of the power of the Lord. Many died along with the great cedar and, in the same way, went to the grave (Sheol: grave, hell, pit, the world of the dead), where others already were, pierced by the sword, that is, because of their similar sins, they also received the same judgment from God.

18 “‘Which of the trees of Eden can be compared with you in splendor and majesty? Yet
you, too, will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth below; you will lie
among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword. “‘This is Pharaoh and all his
hordes, declares the Sovereign Lord.’”

If Assyria, the greatest of nations, had perished before the Babylonians, a lesser kingdom would also be defeated.

This pointed to Egypt, the Pharaoh, and all his multitude, his hordes.

Here comes the Lord’s question: to whom does Pharaoh compare in glory and greatness among other nations?

Like many nations and powerful rulers, he too will descend into the grave, like all other mortals, the uncircumcised killed by the sword in God’s judgment. His pomp would be reduced to nothing.

Egyptian Circumcision

Telling Pharaoh that he would go to the same place as the uncircumcised was an affront to his honor, for the Egyptians, though not very frequently, also practiced circumcision.

The Greek historian Herodotus recorded that the Egyptians were circumcised and that they did so for reasons of hygiene.

The only known depiction of the practice was found in the tomb of the Egyptian physician Ankh-Mahor (Ankh-ma-hor or Ankhmahor) at Saqqara. He was a vizier and priest to the 6th Dynasty Pharaoh Teti (also known as Othoes), who died around 2333–2330 BCE. His tomb, discovered in 1899 by Victor Loret, displays bas-relief representations of surgical and medical scenes from ancient Egypt, as well as a rare circumcision scene
[Source: https://madainproject.com/tombs_of_the_nobles_(saqqara)].

The Egyptians generally circumcised pre-adolescent boys, unlike the Hebrews, who performed the procedure on the eighth day of life. Thus, Egyptian circumcision served as an initiation ritual, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The procedure was associated not only with hygiene but also with purity (especially for priests) and was common among the upper social classes and pharaohs.

A comment about Apries (Hophra)

In fact, we can say that the tragic end of Apries (Hophra) was literally fulfilled.

He was a warrior sovereign who supported the peoples of the Syria-Palestine region in their fight against the Babylonians. However, his support was not enough to prevent the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BC) in 586 BC.

In Jer. 44:30, God said that He would deliver him into the hands of his enemies, into the hands of those who sought his death.

“Into the hand of them that seek his life – KJV” refers to his own general, Ahmose or Amasis, who in 570 BC was made pharaoh by his soldiers after quelling a rebellion within the Egyptian army, which had been defeated by the Greeks because of Hophra’s support for the ruler of Cyrene (on the Libyan coast).

Apries (Hophra) gathered an army of mercenaries against Ahmose, and the two fought battle northwest of the Egyptian Delta, but Apries had to retreat.

After a second failed attempt, he left Egypt in 570 BC, and sought refuge in a foreign country.

He attempted to regain power again in 567 BC, with the aid of a shipped force (probably Greek and maybe Carian), but according to the historian Herodotus, he was handed over to the people by Ahmose, and they strangled him.

Ahmose II (Amasis) managed to contain Nebuchadnezzar II’s advance into Egypt, and prevented him from extending his empire there.

Thus, he maintained Egyptian sovereignty during his reign (570-526 BC).

Perhaps for this reason, the Bible uses words or verbs, both in Ezekiel and Jeremiah, showing that the Lord granted Nebuchadnezzar the right to invade, devastate the land, destroy Egyptian men, animals, and gods, as payment for his work in other nations (Tyre, for example), therefore, as His instrument of judgment and discipline.

The most commonly used nouns and verbs are: sword, desolation, desert, captivity, to take spoil, to take his multitude, to steal his prey, to set fire, to destroy foundations, to destroy the land, to implant terror, to humble pride.

But true dominion over the land of Egypt came later with Cambyses (525 BC), who incorporated that nation into the Achaemenid Empire, defeating the Egyptians at the Battle of Pelusium. The reigning Pharaoh was Amasis' son, Psammetichus III, who reigned for only six months (526-525 BC). Captured by Cambyses in Memphis, he was taken to Susa in chains, and later committed suicide by drinking bull's blood [source: 'The Histories', Herodotus, Book III, sections 14 and 15].

In this way, the prophecy of Ezek. 29: 15 would be fulfilled, when God would make it a humble kingdom, so that it would no longer exalt itself or exercise its sovereignty over other nations.

Jer. 43:11-12 says that Nebuchadnezzar will come and strike; there will be death, captivity, sword, fire; and the verse ends by saying: "he shall go forth from thence in peace (KJV)" or he will depart from there unscathed (NVI)" (v. 12), which suggests that he entered but did not remain.

And Jer. 46: 26 writes that God delivered Egypt into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, but afterwards the land will be inhabited as before, which may suggest the later efforts of Ahmose to rebuild the stability of the nation.

So, just as the destruction and fall of Tyre began with Nebuchadnezzar and were finally completed by Alexander the Great, the fall and humiliation of Egypt also began with Nebuchadnezzar with his attacks and raids of plunder and ended with its domination and annexation to the Persian Empire. And even afterward, with Alexander and the Ptolemies, the romans and the muslins, and that nation never again attained the power it had in the past.

The same thing happened with Babylon. Its fall began with the capture of the city by Cyrus, but only ended with Emperor Hadrian.

Chapter 32

Ezek 32 – NIV

A lament for Pharaoh

1 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month on the first day, the word of the Lord came to me:
2 "Son of man, take up a lament concerning Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him: "'You are like a lion among the nations; you are like a monster in the seas thrashing about in your streams, churning the water with your feet and muddying the streams.

The prophecy of Ezekiel 32 is given in the 12th year of captivity (585 BC), on the 1st day of the 12th month (February-March), about 17 years before the Babylonian invasion of Egypt, when Ahmose II (or Amasis II) was already in power (570-526 BC). Apries died around the same time as the invasion. However, the prophecy continues to be addressed to him. It is not a lament of divine sorrow, but a declaration of the inevitability and justice of His judgment upon human pride and rebellion.

The prophecy was given more than a year after the fall of Jerusalem, when any hope Judah had of obtaining help from Egypt had already vanished.

Here God said that Pharaoh had been compared to a lion among the nations, but he was nothing more than a crocodile [NIV: monster] in the waters. He stirred the waters with his feet, muddling the rivers.

3 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'With a great throng of people I will cast my net over you, and they will haul you up in my net.
4 I will throw you on the land and hurl you on the open field. I will let all the birds of the air settle on you and all the beasts of the earth gorge themselves on you.
5 I will spread your flesh on the mountains and fill the valleys with your remains.
6 I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh.
7 When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light [NKJV: "When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light"].
8 All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign Lord.

With a vast multitude of peoples, the Lord would cast His net [Babylon and allied nations] upon him, and they would pull him into it.

He would leave him on the ground, in the open field, where his flesh would serve as food for the birds of the air and the animals of the earth.

His flesh would be spread over the mountains, and with the rest, He would fill the valleys. And he would soak the earth with his blood all the way, from the mountains to the valleys.

This language refers to the destruction of life in Egypt by the invading peoples.

• Ezek 32: 4: "I will hurl you on the open field": It was literally fulfilled in the deserts of Libya, where the slain of Hophra's army were left to be devoured by fowls and beasts. The Egyptian army was defeated by the Greeks when Hophra offered support to the ruler

of Cyrene, around 570 BC (Matthew Poole – A Commentary on the Holy Bible, Volume 2). But certainly, during Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt, the scene of dead soldiers was repeated.

• Ezek 32: 7: "When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light" [NKJV: "When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light"] – And when He extinguished him, He would cover the sky and extinguish the stars; He would cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon would not show its light, that is, the cloud of God's wrath would cover him.

The Hebrew verb used here is kabah, כָּבָה, Strong #3518, which means: go out, put out, quench; to expire or to extinguish (fire, light, anger). It is used figuratively for the death of Pharaoh, but concretely in the sense of snuffing out a wick or a lamp.

According to theologian Ralph H. Alexander, this darkness can be interpreted as if the great sun god of Egypt, along with the gods of the stars and the moon, were powerless to help.

But we can also explain it this way:

All Pharaohs referred to themselves, as sons of Ra, the sun god. And the Lord tells him that as a sun god, he would be extinguished, so that none of his brilliance was seen. This expression symbolizes the end of the 'light' and glory of Egypt.

The LORD would place a thick cloak of darkness over the whole earth, that is tribulation, the cloud of His wrath.

These expressions from Ezek. 32: 7-8 bear a strong resemblance to what Moses did in Egypt. Here it may symbolize the destruction of a nation or kingdom. The same language was used in Isa. 13:10, signifying a situation where all will be gloomy and discouraged, where men will have no hope because of the destruction they will experience. When they try to raise the hope of the soul, they will soon be disappointed. Those being punished will think that the powers of heaven are against them. Their comfort and hope will fail.

9 I will trouble the hearts of many peoples when I bring about your destruction among the nations, among lands you have not known.
10 I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you, and their kings will shudder with horror because of you when I brandish my sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life.

And many peoples of nations he did not know would be afflicted by the news of his destruction.

The kings of those nations would tremble when God brandished His sword of judgment before them.

And they would be worried about their own lives. The Lord would trouble the hearts of those nations.

11 "'For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "'The sword of the king of Babylon will come against you.
12 I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty men—the most ruthless of all nations. They will shatter the pride of Egypt, and all her hordes will be overthrown.
13 I will destroy all her cattle from beside abundant waters no longer to be stirred by the foot of man or muddied by the hooves of cattle.

14 Then I will let her waters settle and make her streams flow like oil, declares the Sovereign Lord.
15 When I make Egypt desolate and strip the land of everything in it, when I strike down all who live there, then they will know that I am the Lord.'
16 "This is the lament they will chant for her. The daughters of the nations will chant it; for Egypt and all her hordes they will chant it, declares the Sovereign Lord."

Then God clearly repeats once more that by the sword of the king of Babylon, all his people and his armies would be destroyed, and his pride would end.

Their flocks and herds would also perish along with the waters.

Then their rivers would calm down and flow like oil.

This illustrates the period immediately following the great slaughter, when the waters of the Nile and its tributaries would settle, that is, they would not show waves, because there would be no human or animal life to stir them.

Egypt is fertile because of the supply of silt brought by a turbid Nile. But without the mud there is no life or fertility.

"I will make her streams flow like oil" – the streams and canals would not become muddy and the water would run freely with nothing to impede its flow.

As a result of the Lord's judgments, the nations would know Him.

Egypt's Descent Into the Realm of the Dead

17 In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me:
18 "Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and consign to the earth below both her and the daughters of mighty nations, along with those who go down to the pit.
19 Say to them, 'Are you more favored than others? Go down and be laid among the uncircumcised.'
20 They will fall among those killed by the sword. The sword is drawn; let her be dragged off with all her hordes.
21 From within the realm of the dead the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, 'They have come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.'

Ezekiel 32:17-32 continues the prophecy and describes the Lord's judgment and the great slaughter that will fall upon Egypt and its allies.

It is the 15th day of the 1st month of the 12th year of the captivity (585 BC), when he prophesies that the Egyptians would die by the sword like the other nations. They would go to the same place.

The words he speaks mean death for the Egyptians, for they come from the mouth of God.

They are instructed to go down to Sheol [the realm of the dead] and resign themselves, along with the uncircumcised.

The powerful leaders who lay in their graves would treat them with contempt, for they too were there, along with all the wicked who had been slain by the sword before them.

22 "Assyria is there with her whole army; she is surrounded by the graves of all her slain, all who have fallen by the sword.
23 Their graves are in the depths of the pit and her army lies around her grave. All who had spread terror in the land of the living are slain, fallen by the sword.

24 “Elam is there, with all her hordes around her grave. All of them are slain, fallen by the
sword. All who had spread terror in the land of the living went down uncircumcised to
the earth below. They bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.
25 A bed is made for her among the slain, with all her hordes around her grave. All of
them are uncircumcised, killed by the sword. Because their terror had spread in the land
of the living, they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are laid among
the slain.
26 “Meshech and Tubal are there, with all their hordes around their graves. All of them
are uncircumcised, killed by the sword because they spread their terror in the land of the
living.
27 Do they not lie with the other uncircumcised warriors who have fallen, who went down
to the grave with their weapons of war, whose swords were placed under their heads? The
punishment for their sins rested on their bones, though the terror of these warriors had
stalked through the land of the living [KJV: And they shall not lie with the mighty that
are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war:
and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their
bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living].
28 “You too, O Pharaoh, will be broken and will lie among the uncircumcised, with those
killed by the sword.
29 “Edom is there, her kings and all her princes; despite their power, they are laid with
those killed by the sword. They lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to
the pit.
30 “All the princes of the north and all the Sidonians are there; they went down with the
slain in disgrace despite the terror caused by their power. They lie uncircumcised with
those killed by the sword and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.

The way Ezekiel speaks to Pharaoh and the hordes of Egypt shocked them, seeing that their bodies would be like ‘garbage’ in Sheol, without any care, instead of what they were accustomed to doing: decorating, mummifying, and preserving their dead in pyramids or in pompous tombs.

There are Assyria, Elam, Meshech and Tubal, Edom, the princes of the North, and the Sidonians.

They were all warlike peoples who had caused terror among the nations.

Then the prophet tells Egypt that its fate would be the same as the other’s.

The capital of Assyria fell at the hands of Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar in 612 BC.

Elam was a descendant of Shem and occupied the east and southeast of Assyria, in what is now Iran.

Meshech and Tubal were descendants of Japheth, who lived in ancient Anatolia, present-day Turkey.

“The princes of the North” refers to the lands north of Israel, such as Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia.

31 “Pharaoh—he and all his army—will see them and he will be consoled for all his hordes
that were killed by the sword, declares the Sovereign Lord.
32 Although I had him spread terror in the land of the living, Pharaoh and all his hordes
will be laid among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword, declares the
Sovereign Lord.”

Pharaoh would see all the peoples who were there in the realm of the dead and would take comfort in the fact that he was not the only one who would suffer that fate.

The judgments against Egypt and Pharaoh typify God's judgment upon the world and upon Satan and his instruments, for the Lord is the one who destroys the arrogance and pride that are in the world, attempting to bind the children of the Kingdom in their sins and keep them under his dominion.

What God has done in the past and continues to do today, defending those who are His and demonstrating His sovereignty over all things, He will do even more powerfully and visibly as the day of Jesus' second coming approaches. And these judgments He makes in the way He wills, using His instruments, both men and nations, as well as the forces of nature.

Chapter 33

Ezek 33 – NIV

Renewal of Ezekiel's Call as Watchman

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman,
3 and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people,
4 then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not heed the warning and the sword comes and takes their life, their blood will be on their own head.
5 Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head. If they had heeded the warning, they would have saved themselves.
6 But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes someone's life, that person's life will be taken because of their sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.'
7 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me.
8 When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for [Or in] their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood.
9 But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for [Or in] their sin, though you yourself will be saved.

In chapter 13, God reinforced to Ezekiel the responsibilities of the true watchman.

The Lord explained that if Ezekiel saw the danger coming, he should warn the people to turn away from their evil ways and avoid destruction. If he failed to warn the people, then their blood would be on his hands.

He was to convey the Lord's words to the people so that everyone would have the chance to choose their own path.

10 "Son of man, say to the Israelites, 'This is what you are saying: "Our offenses and sins weigh us down, and we are wasting away because of [Or away in] them. How then can we live?"'
11 Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?'
12 "Therefore, son of man, say to your people, 'If someone who is righteous disobeys, that person's former righteousness will count for nothing. And if someone who is wicked repents, that person's former wickedness will not bring condemnation. The righteous person who sins will not be allowed to live even though they were formerly righteous.'
13 If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done.
14 And if I say to a wicked person, 'You will surely die,' but they then turn away from their sin and do what is just and right—

15 if they give back what they took in pledge for a loan, return what they have stolen,
follow the decrees that give life, and do no evil—that person will surely live; they will
not die.
16 None of the sins that person has committed will be remembered against them. They
have done what is just and right; they will surely live.

Their offenses and sins against God weighed heavily upon them, and they fainted, but how could they live? (Ezek. 33:10).

In Hebrew, 'wasting away' means 'to rot, weaken, or languish'.

And the Lord answered them that if they turned from their wicked ways they would live, for He takes no pleasure in the death of anyone. They should do what is just and right.

17 "Yet your people say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But it is their way that is not
just.
18 If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and does evil, they will die for it.
19 And if a wicked person turns away from their wickedness and does what is just and
right, they will live by doing so.
20 Yet you Israelites say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' But I will judge each of you
according to your own ways."

But they did not find the Lord's ways right. Therefore, the Lord would judge them according to their deeds.

Jerusalem's Fall Explained

21 In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month on the fifth day, a man who had
escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has fallen!"
22 Now the evening before the man arrived, the hand of the Lord was on me, and he
opened my mouth before the man came to me in the morning. So my mouth was opened
and I was no longer silent.

On the 5th day of the 10th month (Tebeth, December-January) of the 12th year of the captivity, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem arrived in Babylon in the morning, announcing that the city had fallen. It took him 5 months to get there with the news.

On the 9th day of the 4th month (Tammuz – June-July) of the 11th year of the reign of King Zedekiah (586 BC), Jerusalem wall was broken through, and the king was taken captive (2 Kin. 25: 3-4; Jer. 39: 2-7; Jer. 52: 4-12).

On the 7th day of the 5th month (Av – July-August) of the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar (586 BC – 2 Kin. 25: 8 – 1 month after Zedekiah's exile) Jerusalem was completely devastated and burned, including the temple of the God of Israel.

Then God showed them the reason for Jerusalem's fall.

23 Then the word of the Lord came to me:
24 "Son of man, the people living in those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham
was only one man, yet he possessed the land. But we are many; surely the land has been
given to us as our possession.'
25 Therefore say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Since you eat meat with
the blood still in it and look to your idols and shed blood, should you then possess the
land?

[26] You rely on your sword, you do detestable things, and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife. Should you then possess the land?'
[27] "Say this to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: As surely as I live, those who are left in the ruins will fall by the sword, those out in the country I will give to the wild animals to be devoured, and those in strongholds and caves will die of a plague.
[28] I will make the land a desolate waste, and her proud strength will come to an end, and the mountains of Israel will become desolate so that no one will cross them.
[29] Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land a desolate waste because of all the detestable things they have done.'

The prophet spoke to the people who remained in the ruins of Jerusalem, telling them God's words: they had eaten meat with its blood, looked at idols, and practiced violence, committing murder and adultery; therefore, they were being punished.

Many would die by the sword, or by wild animals, or by plague. Their land would be desolate, and their pride would fall. Then they would know that He is the Lord.

It is unclear if the people who remained were the group of Ishmael, the army captain who had killed Gedaliah (Jer. 41: 2), or the group of Johanan who later fled to Egypt (Jer. 43: 5-7). Ezekiel likely dispatched the message through the person who brought him the news of Jerusalem's destruction or through some messenger who was not an exile.

[30] "As for you, son of man, your people are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, 'Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord.'
[31] My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.
[32] Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.
[33] "When all this comes true—and it surely will—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

God also revealed to Ezekiel that the people came to him, heard his words, but did not put them into practice. They did not want divine instruction, but entertainment.

Their hearts were not right, and the prophet was to them like a fine singer, but they did not believe what he said.

However, the day would come when they would learn that a prophet had been among them.

Chapter 34

Ezek 34 – NIV

Shepherds and sheep

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?
3 You eat the curds (that is, the best), clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals (i.e., the fattened calf, the fat animal), but you do not take care of the flock. [KJV: "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock."]

In ancient times, among Eastern nations, kings, princes, and civil magistrates were called 'shepherds.' In the Bible, for example, it is common to refer to kings, priests, and prophets by the title of shepherds. Therefore, in these verses, God was also addressing the nation's religious leaders: the high priest, the priests and Levites, and the prophets.

"Shepherds of Israel," then, referred to the political and spiritual leaders of Israel, who were selfish and cared neither for the Lord nor for His flock.

God condemns them for greed, exploitation of the people and omission.

They had everything they wanted and ate the best food, but they didn't take care of them as they should: "You eat the curds (that is, the best), clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals (the fattened calf, the fat animal), but you do not take care of the flock."

They cared only for their own interests, for acquiring wealth and honor; yet, they neglected the well-being of the people and even oppressed them with cruelty, failing to defend their possessions and property, and denying them their privileges and liberties (cf. Isa. 10:1-2).

And the ecclesiastical leaders, who was to attend to the ministry of the Word and counsel the flock with knowledge and understanding, had yielded to idolatry.

4 You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.
5 So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals.
6 My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.

They didn't strengthen the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. They didn't bring back the strays or searched for the lost, but ruled them harshly and brutally.

Because they had strayed from the Lord's path, the sheep suffered His judgment and were killed or fell into the hands of the enemy (Edom, Syria, Ammon, Moab), by whom they are scattered.

Now they were scattered everywhere (they had been deported), but without a single shepherd to guide them.

7 “‘Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord:
8 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock,
9 therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord:
10 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.

Then the Lord prophesied against them: He would take away their authority to lead them, and deliver His sheep from their hands. The Lord would remove them from their positions. They would no longer feed themselves and would no longer abuse the sheep. He would take their place and care for them as a shepherd should care.

The Lord’s care for His flock

11 “‘For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.
12 As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.
13 I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.
14 I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.
15 I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord.
16 I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

So, God says that He Himself would search for His sheep.

He would look after His sheep and would deliver them from all the places “where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness,” that is, the day of the destruction of Jerusalem. He would gather them again in the land of Israel, He would tend them, would give them provision, rest, and healing.

He Himself would judge His sheep with justice. “The sleek and the strong I will destroy” (Ezek. 34: 16) refers to those who enriched themselves at the expense of the poor and weak.

17 “‘As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats.
18 Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?
19 Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

20 "'Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.
21 Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away,
22 I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another.

• Ezek 34: 17: "As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats." – Now the Lord turns to His own flock, His own people, rather than the leaders. And He would judge between one and another: between the righteous and the wicked, between the weak and the strong, and between those who considered themselves very important and those who lacked the defense or strength to react.

His judgment would be entirely just and impartial.

Not all the sheep were alike. God knew each one of them, even those who were "abused" by the pastors, because they also had their free will and responsibility. The flock would be purged not only of bad leaders but also of bad members.

• Ezek 34: 18-19: "Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?" – They were sheep that paid no attention to the other sheep. They used the pasture and water as if they were exclusively theirs; in other words, they were selfish.

"Rams and goats" were people of greater power and authority, greater wealth and possessions, and superior wisdom and knowledge; they ate and drank the best, enjoyed their riches and assets, and held positions of honor and profit, along with the income those positions yielded, yet they oppressed and harmed the poor, the common people, and the less educated.

Because of their greedy nature, they oppressed the poor, taking away the little they had, or made their lives difficult through harshness and demands, so that they could not enjoy even the small portion they possessed. For example, merchants and landowners, slave owners and moneylenders, exploited those who worked for them, withheld what they needed and charged them interest, or denied them the fruits of the harvest that they could have reaped for themselves.

• Ezek 34: 20-22: "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another."

According to the Targum, "between the fat sheep and the lean sheep" means "between the rich man and the poor man."

The "fat sheep" could be those who were full of themselves, people who considered themselves healthy, righteous, and self-sufficient, who felt no need for repentance, and who were content to rely on their own righteousness, trusting in themselves while despising others.

The "lean sheep" were the weak, those who felt sick, immature, unprotected, and defenseless; those who were humble and simple in their own eyes, the meek, the weary, the hungry and thirsty for justice.

In the flocks of the ancient Middle East, sheep and goats grazed together. The strongest male goats and rams would often use their physical superiority and aggressiveness to shove, attack, and drive away the weaker, leaner sheep.

The prophet used this comparison to illustrate the behavior of those who drove away people they disliked or toward whom they felt animosity. They competed for power, driving out the weak sheep and removing them from their protection, so that their enemies could seize them.

23 I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will
tend them and be their shepherd.
24 I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the
Lord have spoken.

In verses 23-24, God speaks of the true shepherd, who is the Messiah, and He will come and will tend His sheep with justice.

God calls him "My servant David." And He will be prince among them; God's only begotten Son and His servant.

25 "'I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they
may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety.
26 I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill [Or I will make them and the places
surrounding my hill a blessing]. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers
of blessing.
27 The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops; the people
will be secure in their land. They will know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of
their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslaved them.
28 They will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them.
They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid.
29 I will provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims
of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations.
30 Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the house
of Israel, are my people, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Thus, God will make a covenant of peace with His sheep, and they will dwell securely and be protected (Jer. 31: 31-34; Heb. 8: 8-12) from wild beasts.

"Wild beasts" or "savage beasts" refers to foreign nations hostile to God's people (Ezek 34:25).

"I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. [Or I will make them and the places surrounding my hill a blessing]. I will send down showers in season; there will be showers of blessing." (Ezek 34: 26).

"And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." (Ezek 34: 26 – KJV).

"Surrounding my hill" refers to Mount Zion, and everything around it will be blessed and will also be a blessing, that is, the sheep and the places around the mountain (Ezek 34: 26).

Then God goes on to speak about the restoration of the land, with its prosperity through His "showers of blessings": The trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops (Ezek. 34: 27).

His people would know that He is God when He brought them back from exile, and they would know that He is God when all was fulfilled.

The Gentiles would no longer rule over them ["They will no longer be plundered by the nations"], nor would wild animals devour them, nor would they be consumed by famine, nor would they suffer shame before the Gentiles. They would be safe ["They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid."]

They, the sheep, His people, would be safe in their land.

This situation did not materially occur after the return from the Babylonian exile, but refers to the time of the Messiah's kingdom of peace, which began with the first coming of Jesus for all who took possession of His kingdom and placed themselves under that protection, and will be completed in the New Jerusalem, where all justice will be done.

They will also know that God is with them because they are His people.

[31] You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Sovereign Lord.'" [KJV: And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD].

They must remember that they are only human beings, but He is their God, and only in Him are salvation and blessing.

Chapter 35

Ezek 35 – NIV

A Prophecy Against Edom

1 The word of the Lord came to me:
2 "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir; prophesy against it
3 and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you and make you a desolate waste.
4 I will turn your towns into ruins and you will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

In chapter 35 (Ezek. 35: 1-15) there is a new prophecy against Edom (Mount Seir), because it rejoiced in the destruction of Israel and maintained the ancient hostility (Ezek. 25: 12-14).

Other prophets prophesied against Edom: Isa. 34: 1-10; Isa. 63: 1-6; Jer. 49: 7-22; Jl. 3: 19; Am. 1: 11-12; Obad. 1-9.

Edom, in this chapter, is a nation judged to pave the way for the blessing of God's people after His restoration.

Edom is the mountainous area south of the Dead Sea inhabited by the descendants of Esau (or Edom) when he took the land from Seir the Horite, who previously lived there. Therefore, Edom is frequently called Seir (Ezek. 35: 15; Ezek. 25: 8; Gen. 36: 8-9,20).

The capital of Edom was Bozrah (Botsra, Botzrah), today a small town in Jordan called Buseirah. Edom corresponds today to the territory south of Jordan.

5 "'Because you harbored an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax,…

"Ancient hostility" refers to the feud between Esau and Jacob, which began when Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of food.

Even though the Bible describes his reconciliation with Jacob when the latter returned from Haran, and even though Esau relinquished his hatred for his brother, he may have passed that feeling on to his descendants. That is why the Bible still describes this "ancient hostility" here in Ezekiel.

Ammon, Moab, and Edom, whose lands the Lord did not allow Israel to invade when they entered Canaan, disregarded this and later turned against Israel (2 Chr. 20: 10-11).

6 therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I will give you over to bloodshed and it will pursue you. Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you.
7 I will make Mount Seir a desolate waste and cut off from it all who come and go.
8 I will fill your mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines.
9 I will make you desolate forever; your towns will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

Because the Edomites did not abandon their thirst for blood (NIV: "Since you did not hate bloodshed"), the Lord said that blood would pursue them.

On Mount Seir, there would be desolation, and the Edomites would be killed by the sword. Their cities would never be inhabited.

The prophecy was literally fulfilled, especially in the main cities of the Edomites: Petra and Tema. Today, they are in ruins.

10 "'Because you have said, "These two nations and countries will be ours and we will take possession of them," even though I the Lord was there,
11 therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I will treat you in accordance with the anger and jealousy you showed in your hatred of them and I will make myself known among them when I judge you.

Edom desired to take control of Judah and Israel after the destruction caused by the Babylonians.

"These two nations and countries" refers to Israel and Judah (Ezek. 35: 10).

Although the Jews were exiled from their land, the Lord was there. He would guard and preserve His land against any people who wanted to take it.

We can see that in the Old Testament, the possession of territory, of a piece of land, was taken very seriously, especially the lands given by the Lord as an inheritance to His tribes or the individual lands of His sons, as in the case of Ahab and Naboth (1 Kin. 21: 1-29), or the territory of Anathoth rightfully belonging to Jeremiah (Jer. 32: 7-8). Thus, whoever took another person's land or acquired it during times of crisis had to return it in the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25: 10-17; 25-28). Even though the Jews had sinned and were in exile, their land had been a promise from God to the patriarch Abraham and, therefore, was holy land before the Lord, not to be transferred to other hands without His consent. And this can be a source of hope for us today, because something that belongs to us materially speaking, especially if it is the fruit of a promise from God, is under His dominion and cannot be transferred to anyone else, for God Himself guards our possessions. Wherever there has been some kind of theft in our lives, there will also be a reckoning. The Lord will give it back to us.

12 Then you will know that I the Lord have heard all the contemptible things you have said against the mountains of Israel. You said, "They have been laid waste and have been given over to us to devour."
13 You boasted against me and spoke against me without restraint, and I heard it.

The Lord heard their blasphemies and mentions their anger, hatred, and envy with which they treated Israel when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah.

14 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate.
15 Because you rejoiced when the inheritance of Israel became desolate, that is how I will treat you. You will be desolate, O Mount Seir, you and all of Edom. Then they will know that I am the Lord.'"

Edom became a vassal state of Assyria in 736 BC during the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC).

After the fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire at the end of the 7th century BC (612 BC), Edom regained its independence, controlling important trade routes, such as the Silk Road, which passed through Petra.

But it was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar five years after the fall of Jerusalem (581 BC).

Then, it fell into the hands of the Persians in 539 BC, and in the 3rd century BC it was conquered by the Nabataeans (their ancestor was Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael).

Judas Maccabeus subjugated them (2nd century BC) and John Hyrcanus I (2nd-1st century BC) forced them to be circumcised in order to be incorporated into the Jewish people.

The people of Edom were definitively destroyed by Titus in 70 AD.

Edom, in fact, is a symbol of the enemies of God's people, who will be judged severely at the second coming of Christ.

Chapter 36

Ezek 36 – NIV

A Prophecy to the Mountains of Israel

1 "Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'O Mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord.
2 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: The enemy said of you, "Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession."'
3 Therefore prophesy and say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because they ravaged and hounded you from every side so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations and the object of people's malicious talk and slander,
4 therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign Lord: This is what the Sovereign Lord says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the desolate ruins and the deserted towns that have been plundered and ridiculed by the rest of the nations around you—
5 this is what the Sovereign Lord says: In my burning zeal I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, for with glee and with malice in their hearts they made my land their own possession so that they might plunder its pastureland.'

Ezekiel 36 speaks of God's promises to the mountains of Israel.

Ezekiel gave the people hope for the future regarding new leadership (Ezek 34) and the judgment of their enemies (Ezek 35), and now he speaks of the restoration of Israel to its land (Ezek 36).

The mountains here refer to the land of Israel itself. It was symbolized by the mountains and the central mountain range of Palestine. Therefore, the enemy mocked Israel, saying that those mountains now belonged to them.

The surrounding peoples, as soon as Israel went into exile, tried to take the land for themselves: Ammon, Tyre (Ezek 25:3; Ezek 26:2), and Edom (Ezek 36:5; Ezek 35:10; Ezek 25:12).

Edom was specifically mentioned because of its history of animosity toward Israel.

For example, Ishmael, captain of the army of Judah, was employed by Baalis, king of the Ammonites, to murder Gedaliah (Jer. 40:14; 41:2), the governor whom Nebuchadnezzar had left to govern Judah. Ishmael intended to take the remaining captives in the land to Ammon and sell them as slaves. At the end of the story, Ishmael escaped with only eight men to Ammon (Jer. 41:15).

And Johanan, the other captain of the army of Judah, fled to Egypt with the captives he had freed from the hand of Ishmael, taking with him the prophet Jeremiah.

6 Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I speak in my jealous wrath because you have suffered the scorn of the nations.
7 Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I swear with uplifted hand that the nations around you will also suffer scorn.
8 "'But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home.
9 I am concerned for you and will look on you with favor; you will be plowed and sown,

10 and I will multiply the number of people upon you, even the whole house of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.
11 I will increase the number of people and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the Lord.
12 I will cause people, my people Israel, to walk upon you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children.

Israel suffered the mockery of the nations because it was judged by God and went into exile.

But the Lord swore with uplifted hand to the mountains, to the valleys, to the ravines, to the streams of water, to the desolate places and to the forsaken cities of the land of Israel, that the surrounding nations that mocked His people would also suffer mockery.

And the mountains of Israel would sprout branches again and produce their fruits for His people who were about to return from exile.

Since God owns eternity, a few decades for us are but seconds for Him.

The first exiles only returned under Cyrus' decree, about 50 years later (538 BC).

Because the Lord was with the mountains, and they would be plowed and sown.

The children of Israel would again dwell on the mountains, the cities would be inhabited, and the devastated places would be rebuilt.

He would also cause the animals to multiply, and they would be fruitful.

The Lord tells the mountains that they would be inhabited again, He would be favorable to them, and they would know that He is the Lord.

13 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because people say to you, "You devour men and deprive your nation of its children,"
14 therefore you will no longer devour people or make your nation childless, declares the Sovereign Lord.
15 No longer will I make you hear the taunts of the nations, and no longer will you suffer the scorn of the peoples or cause your nation to fall, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"

The mountains and land of Israel were mocked by foreigners, who said it was a land that devoured men, but the Lord gave a promise to reverse this, delivering the land from the taunts of the nations and the scorn of the peoples, and these mountains would no longer be a stumbling block to the Lord's people.

Restoration of Israel

16 Again the word of the Lord came to me:
17 "Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight.
18 So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols.
19 I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions.

After speaking of the restoration of the land of Israel, the Lord speaks of the inner restoration of His people.

The Lord told the prophet that His people's idolatry had caused them to shed blood, and therefore He punished them.

"Because they had shed blood in the land" – Ezekiel was probably referring to murders, judicial violence, and even the sacrifice of children in idol worship (Ezek. 16: 36; Ezek. 23: 37).

20 And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the Lord's people, and yet they had to leave his land.'
21 I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.
22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.
23 I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

In exile, they were mocked for their sins, and this profaned the name of the Lord, for they were His people. The mere fact that they were exiled showed that their God wasn't so good after all.

The actions of God's people either exalt or shame His name in the eyes of those who do not know Him.

But for the sake of His holy name, the Lord Himself would vindicate His holiness, and the nations would know that He is the Lord.

24 "'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land.

He would bring them out from among them and gather them again in the land of Israel. The return from exile would restore the Lord's reputation among the nations and annul the guilt of the Israelites.

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.
26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.
27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.
28 Then you will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

He Himself would purify His people from idolatry and all their impurities and give them a new heart and a new spirit.

Sprinkling pure water signified the purification and new birth brought by Jesus in the New Covenant, on the cross, and in the baptism of new converts on the Day of Pentecost, when His church began to act in His name.

"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean" (Ezek. 36: 25) symbolizes the purification from sin, God's forgiveness through atonement by blood; in the New Testament, the blood of Jesus.

A heart of stone symbolizes wicked insensitivity to the Lord, inflexibility to His will.

A heart of flesh speaks of receptiveness to the Word of God (Ezek. 36: 26), submission and conformity to His will.

This new nature would come with the New Covenant, as the Holy Spirit would work in this spiritual transformation.

God promised a new nature in the new covenant, where men and women are transformed into a new creation, according to the nature of Jesus himself (2 Cor. 5: 17; Eph. 4: 22-24).

He would put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk according to His laws (the promise of the Holy Spirit).

What He planned for that returning people was a tremendous spiritual renewal, so that His name would be known and exalted among the nations.

Such a profound degree of renewal had never been achieved by the people newly arrived from Babylon, but the prophecy points to the promise of the Messiah as shepherd of His people, as in Ezek 34, for only He could bring about this kind of spiritual transformation.

29 I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you.
30 I will increase the fruit of the trees and the crops of the field, so that you will no longer suffer disgrace among the nations because of famine.

They would dwell in their own land, and He would be their God.

Along with the purification of their souls, He would also bless their food and take away their hunger, so that they would no longer be ashamed before the nations.

The return of the Jews to their land began with the return under Zerubbabel, and continued under Ezra and Nehemiah and through the ages until the final and complete restoration in the last days under the Messiah.

From an agricultural standpoint, the land of Israel has been cultivated extensively since then, showing itself to the world as a fertile land, thanks the technological advancements in recent decades. However, the damaging effects of river pollution from pesticides and even radioactive material deposited after the two wars of the 20th century cannot be denied.

If we focus on Ezekiel, on God's short-term promise to His people, they could restore the fertility of that land, although it would require a great effort to rebuild their homeland, but it would be possible with God's blessing upon them once more.

And we can remember Galilee in the time of Jesus, which was a fertile land for cultivation of wheat, olives, grapes, etc..

31 Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices.
32 I want you to know that I am not doing this for your sake, declares the Sovereign Lord. Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel!
33 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt.
34 The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it.
35 They will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited."

36 Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the Lord have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.'

Then, when that happened, they would remember their evil ways and loathe themselves for their past sins.

And God makes it very clear that He does this not out of love for them, but out of love for His name, so that it will no longer be mocked among the Gentile peoples.

He again asks them to repent so that their purification may be genuine. Water symbolizes the Word of God, through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

And when He purifies them, the cities will be inhabited again, and the land that was once deserted will be plowed and built up again, and will be like the garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden is mentioned here to suggest great beauty, fertility, and productivity.

Then, at that time, the surrounding nations will know that it was He who rebuilt the destroyed cities and replanted the abandoned fields.

Just as He is saying, so it will be.

37 "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Once again I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel and do this for them: I will make their people as numerous as sheep,
38 as numerous as the flocks for offerings at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals. So will the ruined cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

God will once again answer the plea of His people and make His people as numerous as a flock of sheep, like those that were offered in dedication to Him in Jerusalem at His feasts. Flocks are a symbol of prosperity and abundance.

The ruined cities, now full of people and animals, would demonstrate the abundance and prosperity that God would bring to His land and His people—that is, a complete restoration.

The cities would be inhabited, and they will know that He is the Lord.

The worship of God and religious festivals would be restored in Jerusalem.

This promise of restoration was partially fulfilled when Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. But true restoration would only happen with the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. He brought redemption to Jews and Gentiles.

This verse from Ezek. 36: 38 is a message of hope and restoration for those who have suffered the consequences of sin and disobedience. Those who turn to Him, trusting in His love and mercy, receive peace and prosperity in every way.

Chapter 37

Ezek 37 – NIV

The Valley of Dry Bones

1 The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and
set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.
2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the
valley, bones that were very dry.
3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone
know."

Ezekiel 37 is a prophecy of restoration of the nation after the exile.

Once again Ezekiel was seized by the spirit, and the Lord took him to a valley of dry bones.

Ezekiel walked back and forth among them and saw they were too numerous, like the bones of those killed on a battlefield.

Then the Lord asked him, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

Ezekiel answered him, "O Lord GOD, you know."

Perhaps it was impossible to know, given the circumstances before their eyes, but the prophet's faith was in the living God. Ezekiel knew that the Almighty could give life to those bones.

4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word
of the Lord!
5 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath [The Hebrew
for this word can also mean wind or spirit] enter you, and you will come to life.
6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I
will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"
7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a
rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone.
8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was
no breath in them.
9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This
is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into
these slain, that they may live.'"
10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and
stood up on their feet—a vast army.

And the Lord commanded him to prophesy to the bones, and God would cause breath ('wind' or 'spirit') to enter them, and they would live.

The Lord would put tendons on them, cause flesh to come upon them, and cover them with skin, and they would live again.

The prophet prophesied, and then there was a noise, a sound of bones rattling against bones and coming together.

Tendons, flesh, and skin appeared, but the spirit was still missing from them.

And the Lord told him to prophesy again to the spirit in his name: "Come from the four winds, O spirit, and breathe into these slain, that they may live."

This passage talks about revival of a person in a state of spiritual death.

Ezekiel obeyed, and the spirit entered them, and they lived and stood on their feet, numerous as an army.

In this text, the breath, or spirit, sent by God to lifeless bodies symbolizes the Holy Spirit (v. 14), which brings renewal, regeneration, and rebirth.

11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'
12 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel.
13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them.
14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.'"

Then the Lord explained to him that these bones were the house of Israel, who said that their bones were dry, and they had no hope, for they were cut off.

"The whole house of Israel" did not refer only to the children of the kingdom of Judah, who were there beside the prophet, but also included the Israelites of the northern kingdom who were exiled by the Assyrians in 722 BC, almost 140 years earlier (if we consider that the date of this prophecy continues from that of chapter 32 – 585 BC). God had not forgotten them.

Again the Lord commanded the prophet to prophesy. The Lord would open their graves (symbol of Babylon and other lands of exile) and bring them out of them and bring them back to the land of Israel.

And they would know that He is the Lord, and that He called them "my people." He hadn't given up on them yet.

Once again God gives them the promise to put His Spirit in them, and they would live and be established in their own land. They would know that what He said, He Himself would make happen.

One Nation Under One King

15 The word of the Lord came to me:
16 "Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Belonging to Joseph (that is, to Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.'
17 Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.

On the second of the chapter (Ezek. 37: 15-28), the Lord explains that the nation will be united again like in the times of David.

The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah had been separated since the time of King Rehoboam. The Lord declares that He will reunite the two kingdoms and make them one nation under one king.

The Lord told Ezekiel to take two pieces of wood and write on them "For Judah (Judah and Benjamin) and "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim (that is, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom). The tribe of Ephraim was the most influential tribe in the northern kingdom. Several times in the Old Testament the northern kingdom was called Ephraim.

Joseph represents the ten tribes in general; they were in the hand of Ephraim, that is, under the rule of Jeroboam.

For us Christians, this prophecy was already fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus, when Israel and Judah (the converted Jews throughout the nation) were spiritually united under His love, according to the other prophecies of Ezekiel about 'David', the Messiah (Ezek. 17: 22-23; Ezek. 34: 23-24; Ezek. 37: 22, 24). Politically speaking, the divisions between the north and the south remained even in the New Testament, when the animosity between Jews and Samaritans was clear.

18 "When your countrymen ask you, 'Won't you tell us what you mean by this?'
19 say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in Ephraim's hand—and of the Israelite tribes associated with him, and join it to Judah's stick. I will make them into a single stick of wood, and they will become one in my hand.'
20 Hold before their eyes the sticks you have written on
21 and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land.
22 I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms.
23 They will no longer defile themselves with their idols and vile images or with any of their offences, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God.
[NKJV: They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God].

And when the people asked Ezekiel what that meant, he was to say that the Lord would take the piece corresponding to the ten tribes and join it to Judah and make them one piece.

Israel, scattered among the nations, would be brought to his own land, and there they would be one nation with one king for them all, that is, the Messiah. They would never again be divided into two kingdoms.

They would be purified from their idolatries, their sins, and their apostasies. Then, yes, they would be His people, and He would be His God.

24 "'My servant David *[referring to Jesus]* will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.
25 They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever.
26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever.
27 My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people
[KJV: My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people].

[28] Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.'"

Again, God speaks of His servant David who will reign over them as a shepherd, guiding them in God's commandments.

They will dwell securely in the land that was promised to Jacob, and David, "the Servant," will be their prince forever.

A covenant of peace would be made between them and God, and He would put His sanctuary among them (Zeph. 3: 17-20, Heb. 8:1-2; 6-13).

And this would be an everlasting covenant.

For Ezekiel, an Old Testament priest, and the Babylonian exiles, no restoration could be complete without some kind of temple, as this would be a way for God to demonstrate that He was not dead and that Israel was still His people. Therefore, the prophet mentions the 'sanctuary' or 'tabernacle,' even though from God's point of view, this sanctuary was 'spiritual' (with His 'servant David' reigning over them). However, the second temple was physically erected so that the Jews could see themselves restored.

"My tabernacle" or "My dwelling place" or "My sanctuary," as God mentions here and which will be with them, is Jesus Himself, as He Himself said in Lk. 17: 20-21: "the kingdom of God is within [Or among] you.'" (NIV)

Paul also says that we are the temple of the living God, for the Spirit of God dwells in us (2 Cor. 6: 16). And God also says (Ezek. 37: 27): "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (see Lev. 26: 12; Jer. 32: 38).

Jesus came, He was in the midst of His people as the Tabernacle of the Living God (Heb 9: 11-12), but they did not recognize Him.

All the Jews who received Him into their hearts were spiritually united under His rule and shepherding.

Introduction to Chapter 38

From my point of view, starting in chapter 38, Ezekiel ascends to a higher level in the prophecies, that is, to a greater temporal distance and a higher spiritual level than before, because the Lord is referring to very distant times, to the last days and to His eternal restoration of Israel.

Ezekiel 38 contains a prophecy about an invasion of Israel by a coalition of nations in the "last days" (Ezek. 38: 16), led by a character named Gog, and coming from the far north (Ezek. 38: 6 – "from the north") of the Earth.

The meaning of the name Gog remains uncertain.

They will come to attack a peaceful and prosperous Israel, recently restored from a state of desolation, but God promises to intervene on behalf of His people, delivering them in a supernatural way, no longer through an armed army. It will be the end of the adversaries and oppressors of His people. The prophet Zechariah also refers to this day when God Himself fights for His people (Zech. 14: 3).

The chapter begins with God speaking to the prophet Ezekiel, telling him to prophesy against Gog, the leader of the nation of Magog.

None of the Old Testament prophets mention Gog or Magog, but it is no coincidence that the apostle John used this reference, seemingly forgotten by all other biblical writers, to refer to the same situation, where the Lord has a final battle to defeat the enemies of His people. John was Jewish and knowledgeable about the Scriptures and Jewish prophecies. He did not misuse or innovate by using the same names.

In Revelation (Rev. 20: 7-10), John writes: "When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Thus, Gog and Magog symbolize the enemies of God, the Lamb, and His people, the peoples of all nations of the world, followers of the beast, who do not submit to Christ. Ezekiel also described them, but in a different way.

The multitude will come, but God will kill them in His supernatural way (Ezek 38: 19-23; Ezek 39: 6, 17-20 cf. Rev. 19: 19-21).

Ezek. 38: 18-20 speaks of an earthquake that will shake the entire planet and bring destruction to evil.

The prophet Zechariah (Zech 14: 4-5) also mentions an earthquake on the day of the Messiah's coming: "you will flee as you fled from the earthquake of the days of Uzziah."

Ezek. 38: 22-23 speaks of plague, bloodshed, torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on Gog and his troops and on the many nations with him.

Ezek. 39: 6 speaks of fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands.

Rev. 20: 9 also speaks of fire from heaven that descended and consumed the armies of Gog.

Rev. 16: 18-21 (the 7th plague) also speaks of earthquake, hail, and fire: "Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of

his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, [Or about 45 kilograms; a little more than 1 talent] fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible."

Ezek. 39: 17-20 speaks of every kind of bird and all the wild animals that will devour the bodies of Gog's troops.

Rev. 19: 17, 18, 21 also speaks of the supper of God, representing the destruction of the armies of the Beast.

Ezekiel writes (Ezek. 38: 8): "**After many days** you will be called to arms [KJV: After many days thou shalt be visited]. **In future years** [KJV: **in the latter years**] you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety."

In Ezek. 38: 15-16, he writes: "You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. **In days to come** [KJV: **in the latter days**], Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes."

This can be translated another way in Rev. 20: 7-9: "When **the thousand years** are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, in order to gather them for battle; they are as numerous as the sands of the sea. They marched up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from heaven and consumed them."

Both books (Ezekiel and Revelation) speak of a great multitude, like the sand of the sea or a cloud, that in the last days ("the thousand years") will come for its own defeat and God's ultimate victory over evil. "The thousand years," under the amillennialist view, is not the "material millennium" considered by the Jewish people or dispensational premillennialism, but the time between the first and second coming of Christ, in which His one Church (Jews and Gentiles) had its chance to do His work on earth, establishing His kingdom.

There was never in God's plan a time reserved especially for the Jews, with the temple materially rebuilt on Mount Zion, attempting to restore the kingdom of Israel as it was in its golden age with David and Solomon. This would re-establish the Jewish church as the center of God's Church, distinct from the Gentile Church, but Paul wrote that on the cross God made the two peoples one people, one church. Jesus broke down the enmity between Jews and Gentiles on the cross (Eph. 2: 14-22).

Therefore, there can be no longer a distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 10: 12-13), but only one church. The Jews will turn to Jesus in the same way as the Gentiles, before or during the Great Tribulation (Rom. 11: 5, the remnant). The NT church was a continuation of the Church of God begun in the OT.

The theological error of Dispensationalism is to make the distinction between natural Israel and the NT Church (spiritual Israel) in God's plan. In fact, God will not fulfill the promises to them in the millennium; we are already living in the millennium, when the Lord himself gives them the chance to understand His work of redemption, for when the "many days" (Ezek. 38: 8) are fulfilled on God's clock, the saints, the purified, the separated ones will have the peace they seek definitively in the New Jerusalem, spiritual, no longer physical.

Considering all of this, from my point of view, the defeat of Gog (the last enemy of God's people) is Armageddon and the seventh plague (judgment for the wicked).

Chapter 38

Ezek 38 – NIV

A Prophecy against Gog

[1] The word of the Lord came to me:
[2] "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of [the prince of Rosh'] Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him
[3] and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of [the prince of Rosh'] Meshech and Tubal.

In the Septuagint, 'prince of Rosh' means 'chief prince' or 'greater prince.'

Magog was Gog's original kingdom, although he also acquired Meshech and Tubal, to be called their 'chief prince', or 'greater prince.'

The name 'Magog' means 'expansion, extension' [Evandro de Souza Lopes – Os nomes bíblicos e seus significados, CPAD, 8ª edição 2002].

Magog is one of the sons of Japheth (Gen. 10: 2), whose descendants occupied the territory from Spain to Asia Minor, from the Mediterranean islands to southern Russia, an area near the Black Sea or the Caspian Sea.

Some associate Magog with the Scythians, a group of nomadic tribes originating from northern Siberia, near the Black and Caspian Seas, who at the end of the 8th century BC moved to northern Persia and to the region north of Assyria (the Urartu region). Scythia today corresponds to the following countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, formerly part of the USSR, and maintained its empire until the 3rd century BC.

Meshech (in the Masoretic text: meshekh or mshkh; in the LXX: Mosoch) is one of the sons of Japheth (Gen. 10:2; 1 Chr. 1:5), mentioned in these and other texts in association with Tubal. The book of 1 Chr. 1:17 describes another Meshech, son of Shem by Aram. In Gen. 10:23, the name of this son of Shem, in Masoretic, is written as Mash (probably meaning 'withdrawn').

The descendants of Meshech are later mentioned as a people who exported slaves and copper (Ezek. 27:13) to Tyre, as a warlike people threatening from the north (Ezek. 32: 26; Ezek. 38:2-3; Ezek. 39:1), as typical of a barbarian society (Ps. 120:5: "to sojourn in Meshech" [KJV] is a symbol of living in a barbaric and hostile place). The name Meshech (Hebrew: מֶשֶׁךְ – Méšek) means "possession," "inheritance," or "price paid." Some scholars also associate the name with the root meaning "to extend" or "to drag," which may relate to the nomadic and warlike nature of his descendants.
[source: https://olivromaravilhoso.com.br/personagens-meseque/].

Another suggested meaning is "taken away." [Evandro de Souza Lopes – Os nomes bíblicos e seus significados, CPAD, 8ª edição 2002].

Along with Javan, Ezekiel (Ezek. 27:13) groups Meshech and Tubal as Greek nations of Asia Minor.

The close association of Meshech with Tubal identifies them with the people referred to as Musku (or Mushki) and Tabal or Muska and Tubla (according to other sources) in Assyrian inscriptions, and as Tibarenoi and Moschoi by Herodotus.
Herodotus (Greek historian and geographer, 485-425 BC) mentions the Moschoi as a people who inhabited the 19th satrapy of Darius I and were part of a contingent of Xerxes I's army (the list of satrapies varies considerably among ancient writers and historians).

The mush-ka-a-ia are first mentioned in the annals of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BC) at the end of the 12th century BC, and probably the king of the mushki, in the annals of Ashurnasirpal II (Ashur-nasir-pal II, 883–859 BC) and Sargon II (722-705 BC). During the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib (705-681 BC), their territories extended south to Cilicia and north to the middle of Commagene, an ancient Greco-Iranian kingdom east of Cilicia and southeast of Cappadocia in eastern Anatolia. Commagene was part of the Seleucid Empire until 162 BC, it gained temporary independence, and became part of the Roman Empire in 17 AD. Later, the Mushki were forced to retreat northward to the Black Sea. It was in this region of Asia Minor that Xenophon (430-354 BC, Greek historian, writer, and military leader, disciple of Socrates and contemporary of Artaxerxes II – 436-358 BC) and his Greek troops encountered some of their remnants.

Classical geographers knew them by the names Mosqui and Tibareni, and their location was already closer to the Black Sea.

Thus, Meshech refers to a people who perhaps spoke an Indo-European language and who entered the Near East from the northern steppes, establishing themselves as rulers in an area of eastern Anatolia (present-day Turkey) and the Caucasus, therefore, close to Magog.

Modern Georgians belong to the race of Meshech and Tubal. Meshech and Tubal, in modern Russian, can be written as Moscow (Moskva, Москва) and Tobolsk (Tobol'sk, Тобольск) – Ezek 38: 2 [according to Roger Liebi (Th.D., Whitefield Theological Seminary)].

[Basic Source of research: J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2nd edition 1995]

4 I will turn you around, put hooks in your jaws and bring you out with your whole army – your horses, your horsemen fully armed, and a great horde with large and small shields, all of them brandishing their swords.
5 Persia [Iran today], Cush and will be with them, all with shields and helmets,
6 also Gomer with all its troops, and Beth Togarmah from the far north with all its troops – the many nations with you.
7 Get ready; be prepared, you and all the hordes gathered about you, and take command of them.

God says that He will put hooks in his jaws, implying that Gog is described as an immense animal, perhaps a crocodile, that would be controlled by means of hooks (in the Bible, a monstrous animal is a symbol of an empire).

The nations that accompany Gog are listed (Ezek. 38:5-7) as Persia (modern-day Iran), Cush (modern-day Ethiopia and Sudan), Put (today Libya or Algeria), Gomer (identified with the Cimmerians, who inhabited the northern Black Sea and the Caucasus and were replaced by the Scythians after the 7th century BC, today Cappadocia in Turkey and parts of Ukraine and Russia (north of the Black Sea) and all their troops; the house of Togarmah (Armenia, near the Black Sea), on the northern side of Israel.

Summarizing: Iran, Ethiopia, Sudan, Libya or Algeria, Turkey, Armenia, and parts of Ukraine and Russia.

8 After many days you will be called to arms [KJV: After many days thou shalt be visited]. In future years [KJV: in the latter years] you will invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel, which

had long been desolate. They had been brought out from the nations, and now all of them live in safety [KJV: they shall dwell safely all of them].
9 You and all your troops and the many nations with you will go up, advancing like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land.

The period of Gog's invasion signifies a time distant from that experienced by the prophet:

Ezek 38: 8 – "after many days."
Ezek 38: 16 – "In days to come [KJV: in the latter days]."

"They shall dwell safely all of them" or "all of them live in safety" (Ezek. 38: 8) indicates that Israel is in its land, they were gathered from the nations, God is protecting them, and therefore they live there without worry.

In this passage, it is difficult to interpret a restricted historical period as merely the return from Babylonian captivity; nor can it be interpreted exactly as a "millennium" from the Jewish point of view, with Christ dwelling in a glorified body in a land that is not yet fully purified, and with sinful human beings, living together simultaneously.

"A land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel" may refer to the first phase of the Great Tribulation, where, by God's own hand, the Jews are returning to their land for the final outcome of the rapture. For a land and a people who have suffered indescribably for centuries and are finally free from war, this is a consolation. However, it is a temporary, fictitious peace compared to the true peace of the New Jerusalem.

Thus, Gog and his army will come to attack a peaceful and prosperous Israel, which has recently been restored from a state of desolation.

Ezekiel uses the image of a "cloud covering the land" to describe the great multitude that accompanies Gog.

Gog is no longer an instrument in God's hands to discipline His people, but it is through him that the Lord will judge the enemies of His people once and for all.

10 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'On that day thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil scheme.'
11 You will say, 'I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people – all of them living without walls and without gates and bars.
12 I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land [In Hebrew, in the navel of the earth].
13 Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages [In the original: 'her strong lions', or 'young lions'; NRSV: 'all its young warriors'] will say to you, 'Have you come to plunder? Have you gathered your hordes to loot, to carry off silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods and to seize much plunder?'"

Gog decided to attack Israel, taking advantage of its weakness (Ezek. 38:11: "I will invade"), but God allowed this to exalt His name. He would use supernatural methods to defend His people, strong enough to demonstrate His wrath. God did not inspire Gog to plot evil against Israel, He only allowed him to give vent to his iniquity, to his evil design, for his desire was only to plunder, destroy, and take the spoils. Then, other nations also want to participate in this invasion, such as Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and the daring princes and leaders, or bloodthirsty young men, if they can steal and keep the spoils for themselves as well ['her strong lions', or 'young lions'].

Sheba refers to Yemen, in southwestern Arabia; and Dedan corresponds to modern Al ‘ulã, 113 kilometers southwest of Taima‘, in Arabia. The merchants of Tarshish probably refer to Spain.

God will invade Israel

14 “Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say to Gog: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord
says: In that day, when my people Israel are living in safety, will you not take notice of
it?
15 You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of
them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army.
16 You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. **In days to
come** [KJV: **in the latter days**], Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations
may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.
17 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: You are the one I spoke of in former days by my
servants the prophets of Israel. At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring
you against them.

God confirms here that upon learning that the people are feeling safe and without wars, Gog will come with his entire multitude to intimidate and inspire terror, but God remains in control of the situation, and will allow this situation to avenge Himself on His enemies and so that all nations may know and glorify Him: “I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.”

As for verse 17, the prophets before Ezekiel did not mention this exact name (Gog), but they always spoke about the Gentile nations that, in the last days, would ally themselves against God’s people. Ezekiel is actually saying that the final battle of Gog is not a new thing, but the confirmation of what the previous prophets had predicted about the forces opposed to God. It is true that other prophets were referring to imminent threats from pagan peoples, precisely because God was allowing them to discipline His people.

Jeremiah, for example, prophesied that the enemy would come from the north, referring to Babylon (Jer. 4: 6; Jer. 6: 1, 22; Jer. 1: 13-15: the iron pot).

Isaiah does not explicitly state that the enemy would come from the north, but he made it clear that it was Assyria, in the region of Mesopotamia, north of Israel.

Joel spoke of an invasion of locusts (a symbol of an enemy army) that would come to devastate, but in the end it would be destroyed in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and there would be a reversal to the prosperity of the Lord through the outpouring of the Spirit (Jl 2:28-32). Joel also described manifestations of nature that may have an apocalyptic meaning (Jl. 2:30-32; Rev. 6:12-13).

Zephaniah warned of God’s judgment for sins (“The Great Day of the Lord,” Zeph. 1:14-16), but that it would open the way for righteousness and all humanity would worship the Lord (Zeph. 3:1-20).

18 This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger
will be aroused, declares the Sovereign Lord.
19 In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake
in the land of Israel.
20 The fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the beasts of the field, every creature that moves
along the ground, and all the people on the face of the earth will tremble at my presence.

The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground.

On the day Gog enters the land of Israel, God, in His fury, will shake the earth with a powerful earthquake. All of nature will tremble, not only the animals of the earth and all men, but also the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky. The enemies will have nowhere to seek shelter because everything will be overthrown.

The prophet Zechariah (Zech 14: 4-5) also mentions an earthquake on the day of the Messiah's coming: "you will flee as you fled from the earthquake of the days of Uzziah."

John also spoke of it in Revelation, when referring to the 7th plague in particular: "Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, [Or about 45 kilograms; a little more than 1 talent] fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible." (Rev. 16: 18-21).

21 I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign Lord. Every man's sword will be against his brother.
22 I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.
23 And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.'"

"On all my mountains" (Ezek. 38:21) is very similar to what Isaiah writes (Isa. 14: 25): "I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders," once again showing His sovereignty over everything and over that land which the enemies invaded, and exposing them to shame right there.

God will confound the enemies so that they kill themselves, as it was in the time of Gideon with the Midianites (Judg. 7:21-22), or as the confusion described by Zechariah (Zech. 14: 13). In Rev. 19: 15, John speaks of the sharp sword of the Lord that comes out of his mouth to strike down the nations, or as Paul writes in 2 The. 2: 8 ("the Lord Jesus will destroy *[the lawless one]* with the breath of his mouth") and Isaiah (Isa. 11: 4b) writes: "he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked."

The judgment described in Ezek. 38: 22-23 (plague and bloodshed; torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on Gog's troops and the many peoples who were with him) is repeated with the destruction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim; with the plagues of Egypt and especially with the seventh plague described by John in Rev. 16: 17-21. The descriptions in the texts are quite similar, as well as the use of the character's name "Gog" and his people "Magog" by John to describe this definitive defeat of the enemies of God's people.

With this judgment, God gives a final proof of His greatness and holiness in the eyes of many nations (Ezek. 38: 23). With this, all will know that He is the Lord.

Chapter 39

Ezek 39 – NIV

The Fall of Gog

[1] "Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against you, Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.
[2] I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north and send you against the mountains of Israel.
[3] Then I will strike your bow from your left hand and make your arrows drop from your right hand.

The Lord repeats here that He is against Gog and that He will bring him from the far north to the mountains of Israel.

When the biblical prophets speak of battles in the distant future, they refer to weapons and tactics known in the time in which they lived (sword, bow and arrows, horses and horsemen).

• Ezek 39: 3: "I will make your arrows drop from your right hand" – This means that God Himself will strip him of his war strength, leaving him powerless, unable to fight back.

[4] On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all your troops and the nations with you. I will give you as food to all kinds of carrion birds and to the wild animals.
[5] You will fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Again the Lord says that Gog and his army will fall on the mountains of Israel and become food for the carrion birds and the wild animals. The defeat will be total; there will be no place for God's enemies to flee and find shelter ("You will fall in the open field"). This scene is similar to the fall of Sennacherib in Isa. 14:25 ("I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down. His yoke will be taken from my people, and his burden removed from their shoulders"), when the Angel of the Lord single-handedly decimated the Assyrians so that they could not invade Jerusalem.

[6] I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in safety in the coastlands, and they will know that I am the Lord.
[7] I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the Lord am the Holy One in Israel.
[8] It is coming! It will surely take place, declares the Sovereign Lord. This is the day I have spoken of.

"In the coastlands" refer to the distant nations and allied peoples of Magog who dwell safely, far from the center of the battle in Israel, but who will be struck by divine judgment.

"Fire" here ("I will send fire on Magog") may refer to lightning or to a more overt manifestation of His wrath, as it was in Egypt and is suggested in Revelation.

Once again, the same statement is made about the purpose of this ultimate punishment: "I will make known my holy name among my people Israel. I will no longer let my holy name be profaned, and the nations will know that I the Lord am the Holy One

in Israel," that is, both His own people will truly know Him, and the wicked nations will know that He is the one who rules, and that His name is holy, it cannot be profaned with irreverence or with the evil actions of His people. This battle against Gog demonstrates the sovereignty and majesty of God.

9 Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and use the weapons for fuel and burn them up – the small and large shields, the bows and arrows, the war clubs and spears. For seven years they will use them for fuel.
10 They will not need to gather wood from the fields or cut it from the forests, because they will use the weapons for fuel. And they will plunder those who plundered them and loot those who looted them, declares the Sovereign Lord.

The chapter now goes on to describe the consequences of the battle. The people of Israel will spend seven months burying the dead and clearing the land. They will use the invading army's weapons as fuel for their fires, and the plunder will be so great that it will take seven years to take everything. The verse doesn't refer exactly to the fact that modern weaponry can be used as fuel for the fire. But it emphasizes that there was a complete destruction of the enemies, despite them having such a large number of soldiers and weapons considered invincible.

The burial of Gog's hordes

11 On that day I will give Gog a burial place in Israel, in the valley of those who travel east toward the Sea [referring to the Dead Sea]. It will block the way of travelers, because Gog and all his hordes will be buried there. So it will be called the Valley of Hamon Gog [meaning, the 'hordes of Gog.' Hamonah means 'Horde'].
12 For seven months the Israelites will be burying them in order to cleanse the land.
13 All the people of the land will bury them, and the day I display my glory will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign Lord.
14 Men will be regularly employed to cleanse the land. Some will go throughout the land and, in addition to them, others will bury those that remain on the ground. At the end of the seven months they will begin their search.
15 As they go through the land and one of them sees a human bone, he will set up a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog.
16 near a town called Hamonah [Hamonah means 'Horde']. And so they will cleanse the land.'"

This passage is difficult to interpret literally if we know beforehand that this is a definitive battle for God's people and that after this, only the inauguration of the new heavens and the new earth remains.

The seven years of verses 9 and 10 can be compared to the seven months of verses 12 and 14. In fact, the number 7 suggests the totality and closure of the war, that the destruction was total.

Burying the bones in the Law of Moses was always a measure of hygiene and ritual purification (Lev. 5: 2,3; Lev. 21: 1-4; Num. 6: 6). Ezekiel, being a priest and writing up to this point about how important purification is for someone to be able to enter God's presence, could not fail to mention this, that is, even if they were the bones of the enemy, they should be buried as a sign that the land of Israel and its people would no longer be contaminated by sin (touching a corpse was a sign of impurity, as touching sin is also for the Lord). Verse 12 makes it clearer: "to cleanse the land."

When he writes "All the people of the land will bury them," this means that each person would be responsible for purifying themselves from their sins, from everything that brought contamination upon themselves.

Verses 14 and 15, regarding the "Men will be regularly employed" (separated men to oversee the cleansing work), it may refer to the priests' responsibility in maintaining the goal of holiness among the people.

The most important thing is that the "burial of Gog" symbolizes the total destruction of the enemy; his evil, his name, his terror among God's people will be forever cast into oblivion. No one will talk about him anymore, nor will they fear him, because the remnant of his presence and his evil deeds will be erased from the minds and hearts of God's children.

And that day will be memorable, as will be the day of Jesus' victory over evil (1 Cor. 15: 24-28; Rev. 19: 1-4; Rev. 15: 3-4) and our new life with Him in eternity, because the Lord was glorified: "will be a memorable day for them, declares the Sovereign Lord" (Ezek. 39: 13).

The great sacrifice of the Lord

17 "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'Call out to every kind of bird and
all the wild animals: Assemble and come together from all around to the sacrifice I am
preparing for you, the great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. There you will eat flesh
and drink blood.
18 You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth as
if they were rams and lambs, goats and bulls – all of them fattened animals from Bashan.
19 At the sacrifice I am preparing for you, you will eat fat till you are glutted and drink
blood till you are drunk.
20 At my table you will eat your fill of horses and riders, mighty men and soldiers of every
kind', declares the Sovereign Lord."

The Lord here emphasizes His control over His victory against fierce enemies. This 'supper' would be a sacrifice prepared by Himself for the birds of prey and carnivorous animals at His table, in the mountains of Israel.

"Rams, lambs, goats, bulls – all of them fattened animals from Bashan" describes the power of these men, for the flocks of Bashan were the strongest and most important animals of ancient Israel, grazing in the rich pastures east of Galilee. This description is very similar to that used in Rev. 19: 17-21 to describe Christ's victory over the followers of the beast.

21 "I will display my glory among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment
I inflict and the hand I lay on them.
22 From that day forward the people of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God.
23 And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because
they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their
enemies, and they all fell by the sword.
24 I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, and I hid my face
from them.
25 Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'I will now restore the fortunes of Jacob
and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy
name.

[26] They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when
they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid.
[27] When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the
countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many
nations.
[28] Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile
among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind.
[29] I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of
Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.'"

Once again it is confirmed that the judgment aimed to exalt His name above the nations and above His own people, and to make it clear that the exile and all the punishments they suffered were because of their sin of idolatry, rebellion, and obstinacy. Therefore, the Lord hid His face from them, but now He turned to His people because they were purified.

There would be no more exile; and peace from that moment on would be lasting, no longer fictitious or temporary. He concludes again with the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit. His people will forget their shame and their betrayals when they dwell in their land (Ezek. 39: 26). The people will dwell in the land in peace as a people restored in their relationship with the Lord, in the new heavenly Jerusalem.

Introduction to the final chapters (Ezek. 40-48)

God gave Ezekiel a vision (572 BC) of the new temple (Ezek 40–43), as well as emphasized the duties of the priests (restoration of the Levitical priesthood) and the Mosaic laws (Ezek. 44–46), including the sanctification of the Sabbath and the feasts, and the instructions for leaders and magistrates. The final visions show the division of the land among the tribes (Ezek 48).

Jesus came, fulfilled the prophecies as king and priest, taught the right path through His own life, and restarted a work of restoration among His people so that all who are His may have the climax of perfection and holiness in the New Jerusalem.

His coming abolished the Mosaic model of priestly service and restructured it on other foundations. Therefore, the intention of God and Ezekiel was not to reestablish the sacrifices as they were made in the Old Testament, but rather to teach the people the correct pattern of worship in the way they understood it, and thus prepare them for the coming of Jesus.

The temple seen by Ezekiel was never built. The second temple, that of Zerubbabel (rebuilt in 536 BC), was an attempt to rebuild what had been built by Solomon. However, whether erected or not, Ezekiel's temple gave the people a new hope of feeling like the chosen people again. It was a real promise of having their spiritual life restored. They saw the temple as the place where God was with them, a physical place of worship, not as we feel the Holy Spirit today through Jesus, for we are His living sanctuary.

Ezekiel's temple reveals many things to us, such as God's precision, meticulousness, His attention to detail, and especially His high standard of holiness that, until today, we still cannot fully understand. It teaches us about God's mercy and His desire to maintain continuous communion with us.

This way:

• Ezekiel's temple is a SYMBOL of a perfect place to worship God and to have a full relationship with Him, and the reward after so much suffering.

• The exact and meticulous (though not complete) measurements for the temple's enclosures and chambers are a SYMBOL of God's meticulousness and precision, putting things in their proper places, so that His people understand that every act or activity performed has importance and meaning in our lives and in His overall context for humanity.

• The city he described and the division of land among the tribes are a SYMBOL of the right of every child of God to be preserved and rewarded in the heavenly abode, where there will be room for everyone, without competition or theft of property or citizenship rights:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God [Or 'you trust in God']; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms [KJV: mansions; Strong #3438, μονή, moné: lodging, dwelling-place, room, abode, mansion]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (Jn. 14: 1-3).

Chapter 40

Ezek 40 – NIV

The measure of length used in the OT was the cubit, which is the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger of a man, ranging from 44.4 to 45 cm (called 'common cubit' or 'short cubit').

Ancient measurements of the cubit varied somewhat among different peoples: the Babylonian cubit was equal to 50.30 cm; the long cubit or Egyptian royal cubit ranged from 52.40 to 52.50 cm.

In Ezekiel, the cubit is equivalent to 51.8 cm or 20.4 inches (1 inch = 2.54 cm), that is, a common cubit plus a handbreadth – Ezek. 40: 5; 43: 13.

Consequently, the 'measuring reed' or 'measuring rod' (Ezek. 40: 3; 41: 8) is equivalent to 3.11 meters, since it is equal to six cubits of Ezekiel. This cubit of Ezekiel is also called Mosaic cubit or Primitive cubit or long cubit (the Egyptian royal cubit), used for sacred purposes, as it was in the Tabernacle of Moses and in the Temple of Solomon [2 Chr. 3: 3: the cubit 'according to the old measure' (NABRE) or 'the cubit of the old standard' (NIV) or 'according to the former measure' (NKJV), translated as 'after the first measure' in KJV].

The New Temple Area

[1] In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city—on that very day the hand of the Lord was on me and he took me there.
[2] In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city.
[3] He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand.

4 The man said to me, “Son of man, look carefully and listen closely and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the people of Israel everything you see.”

In the 25th year of the exile (572 BC), fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem, the Lord again gave Ezekiel a vision, where he was taken to the land of Israel to a high mountain (see Rev. 21:10), and on the south side of the mountain were some buildings that had the appearance of a city.

There he saw a man with the appearance of bronze, standing at the gate of the building, with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hands. And he told Ezekiel to pay attention to everything that was shown to him so that he could tell the house of Israel.

The linen cord was for measuring large distances and circular shapes. The measuring rod (or ‘measuring reed’) is used to measure flat surfaces, for example, a wall. The length of the measuring rod in the book of Ezekiel is 3.11 meters.

There has never been a mountain as high north of Jerusalem in Israel to this day. We might think of Mount Hermon, where the transfiguration of Jesus took place, north of Galilee, but it was never exactly the territory of Israel. Mount Hermon, whose peak reaches 2,814 meters in height, is part of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, on the border between Lebanon and Syria. And that already speaks in favor of a spiritual temple, not a physical one.

The East Gate to the Outer Court

5 I saw a wall completely surrounding the temple area. The length of the measuring rod in the man’s hand was six long cubits (51.8 cm), each of which was a cubit and a handbreadth. He measured the wall; it was one measuring rod thick and one rod high (3.11 m).

Ezekiel saw an outer wall surrounding the entire house. The width of the wall was 1 rod, that is, 3.11 meters, and the height was 3.11 meters.

6 Then he went to the east gate. He climbed its steps and measured the threshold of the gate; it was one rod deep (3.11 m).

And he went to the east gate and went up the steps. The threshold of the gate was 3.11 meters deep.

7 The alcoves for the guards [NKJV: Each gate chamber] were one rod (3.11 m) long and
one rod wide, and the projecting walls between the alcoves were five cubits thick [NKJV:
between the gate chambers was a space of five cubits (2.59 m)]. And the threshold of the
gate next to the portico facing the temple was one rod deep (3.11 m).
8 Then he measured the portico of the gateway;
9 it [the portico of the gateway] was eight cubits (4.144 m) deep and its jambs [NKJV: the
gateposts] were two cubits (1.036 m) thick. The portico of the gateway faced the temple.
10 Inside the east gate were three alcoves [NKJV: three gate chambers] on each side; the
three had the same measurements, and the faces of the projecting walls [NKJV: the
gateposts] on each side had the same measurements.
11 Then he measured the width of the entrance of the gateway; it was ten cubits (5.18 m)
and its length was thirteen cubits (6.734 m).
12 In front of each alcove was a wall one cubit high (51.8 cm), and the alcoves were six
cubits square [NKJV: the gate chambers were six cubits on this side and six cubits on that
side (3.108 m)].
13 Then he measured the gateway from the top of the rear wall of one alcove to the top of
the opposite one; the distance was twenty-five cubits from one parapet opening to the
opposite one [NKJV: Then he measured the gateway from the roof of one gate chamber
to the roof of the other; the width was twenty-five cubits (12.95 m), as door faces door].
14 He measured along the faces of the projecting walls [the gateposts] all around the inside
of the gateway—sixty cubits (31.08 m). The measurement was up to the portico facing
the courtyard. [NKJV: and the court all around the gateway extended to the gatepost].
15 The distance from the entrance of the gateway to the far end of its portico was fifty
cubits (25.9 m).
16 The alcoves [gate chambers] and the projecting walls inside the gateway were
surmounted by narrow parapet openings all around, as was the portico; the openings all

around faced inward. The faces of the projecting walls [NKJV: gatepost] were decorated with palm trees.

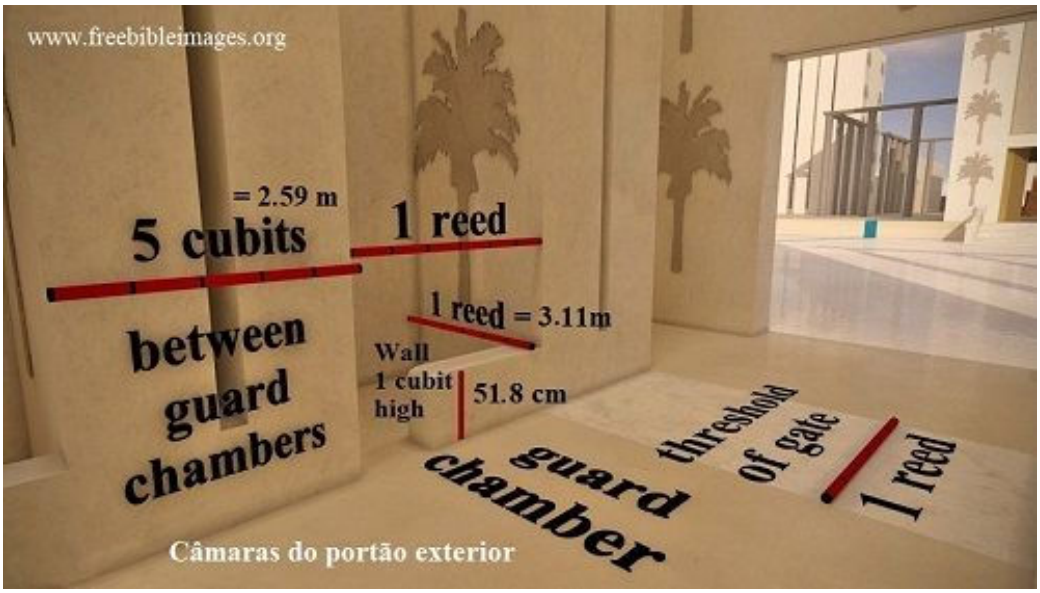
Ezekiel entered through the east gate, and inside it were 3 chambers (Hebrew: ta, תָּא, Strong #8372, 'cells' or 'guard rooms') for the temple guards (the gatekeepers) on each side, six in total, with the length equal to the width, that is, 1 measuring rod or 6 cubits (3.11 m), and they were separated by pillars 2.59 m (5 cubits) long. This shows us that there is constant control of who enters and who leaves the temple.

In front of each chamber stood a small wall one cubit (51.8 cm) high. The pillars and guard chambers contained narrow side openings from top to bottom, on both sides of the gate. The faces of the columns (or pillars) were decorated with palm trees.

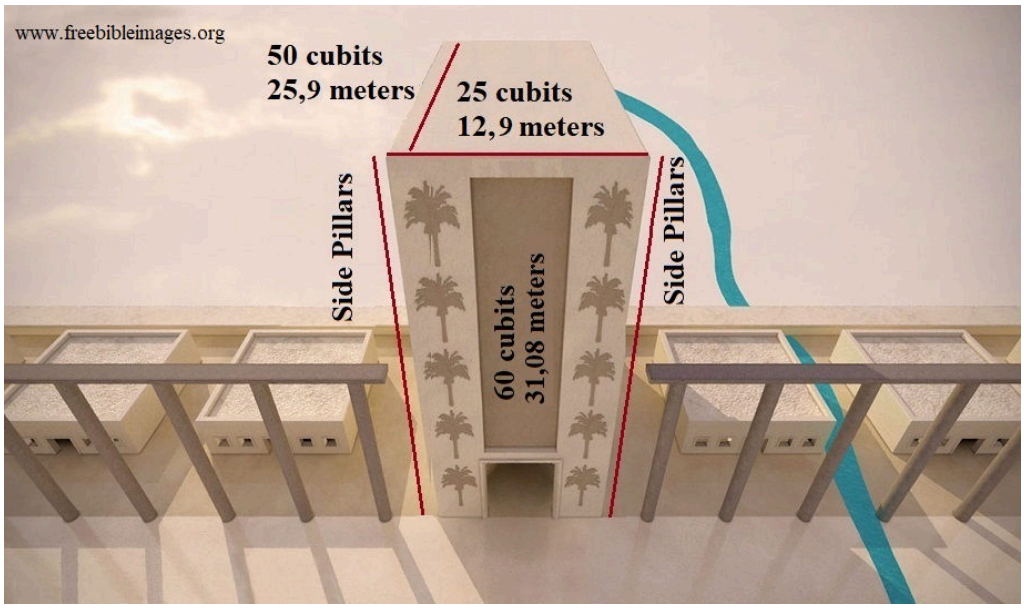
Turning the face to the gate through which he had entered, its width was 5.18 m (10 cubits) and its height, 13 cubits (6.734 m).

At the end of this corridor, there was a portico that faced the temple. It was 8 cubits (4.144 m) deep and its side pillars were 2 cubits (1.036 m) thick.

The portico also had narrow windows on its sides, on both sides. The threshold of the door next to the portico, facing the temple, was three meters (3.11 meters = 1 reed) deep.

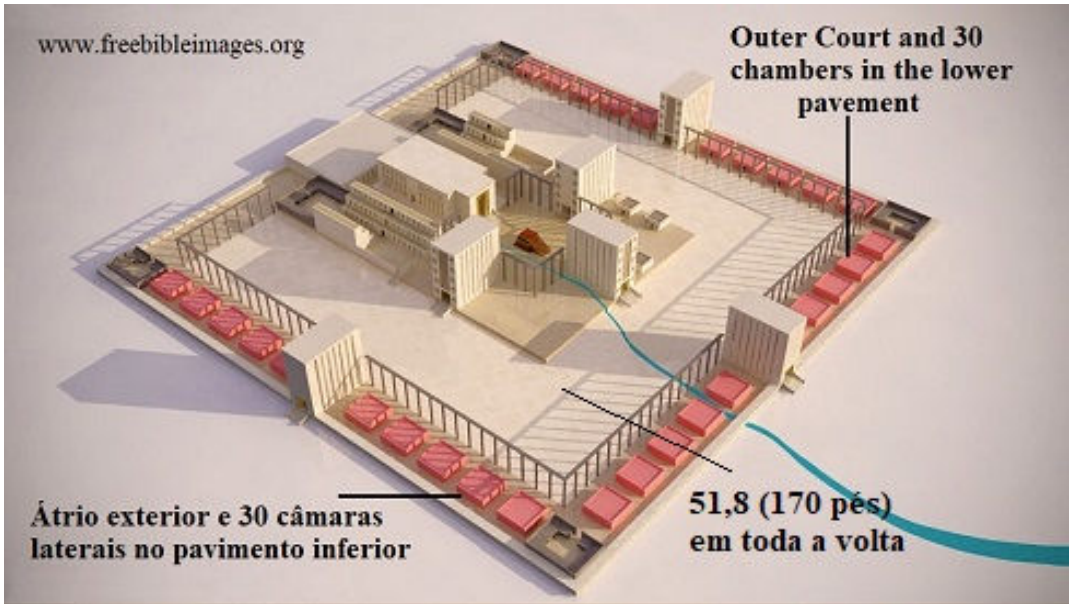


This entire eastern gate, viewed from the outside, was 31.08 meters high, 12.9 meters wide, and 25.9 meters long.



The Outer Court

17 Then he brought me into the outer court. There I saw some rooms and a pavement that had been constructed all around the court; there were thirty rooms [NKJV: chambers] along the pavement.
18 It abutted the sides of the gateways and was as wide as they were long; this was the lower pavement [NKJV: The pavement was by the side of the gateways, corresponding to the length of the gateways; this was the lower pavement].
19 Then he measured the distance from the inside of the lower gateway to the outside of the inner court; it was a hundred cubits (51.8 m) on the east side as well as on the north.



In the outer courtyard there were 30 rooms (chambers) around, on the north, east and south sides, all around the courtyard and its floor was at a lower level than the inner courtyard. There were no such rooms on the western side of the temple.

The width of this courtyard was 51.8 meters on the east and north sides, and from the inner opening of the eastern gate of the outer courtyard to the opening of the eastern gate of the inner courtyard. Later on, we will see that the distance is also the same in relation to the south gate.

These rooms or chambers served primarily to house the priests and Levites who watched over and served in the temple.

They were intended for sacred meals, where the priests ate the sacrificial offerings brought by the people, that is, the grain offerings and the sin offerings.

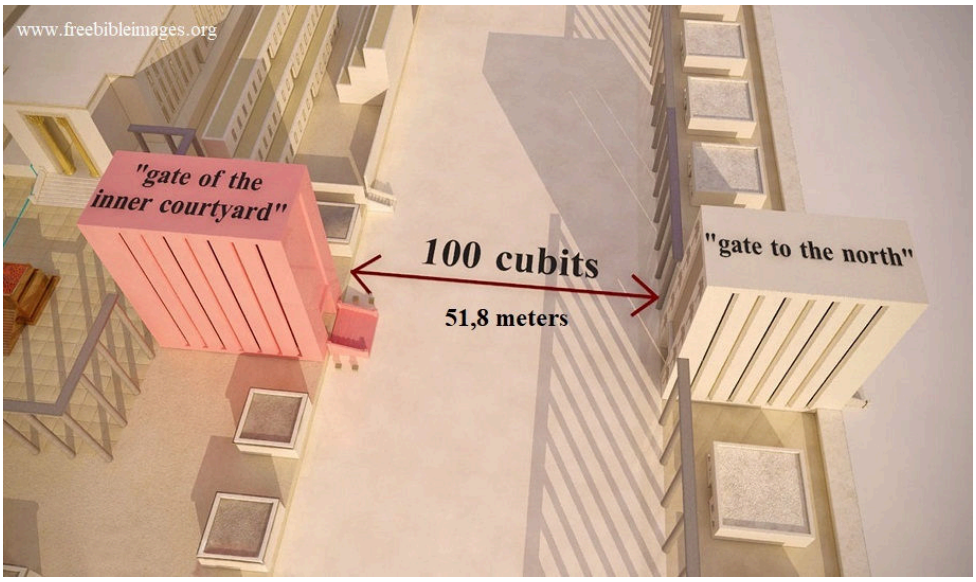
This allowed worshippers to participate in religious activities and wait in the courtyards, which were adorned with a pavement.

When Ezekiel is in the outer courtyard, he sees thirty chambers. The chambers are located on a pavement that surrounds the court. This pavement is next to the three gates and is as wide as the length of the gates (Ezek 40:18), that is, 50 cubits (25.9 meters; Ezek. 40: 15).

This is “the lower pavement,” because the inner courtyard, which is higher, also has a pavement.

The North Gate

[20] Then he measured the length and width of the north gate, leading into the outer court.
[21] Its alcoves—three on each side—its projecting walls and its portico had the same measurements as those of the first gateway. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide (25.9 x 12.9 meters).
[22] Its openings [NKJV: windows], its portico and its palm tree decorations had the same measurements as those of the gate facing east. Seven steps led up to it, with its portico opposite them.
[23] There was a gate to the inner court facing the north gate, just as there was on the east. He measured from one gate to the opposite one; it was a hundred cubits (51.8 m).



Then he measured the length and width of the north gate to the outer courtyard.

Its structure and measurements were the same as those of the east gate: 25.9 m long, 12.5 m wide and 31.08 meters high.

The narrow windows, the portico, and the decoration with palm trees were the same as those of the east gate.

The steps to climb to it were 7, like those of the eastern gate.

There was a gate to the inner courtyard, both on the north and the east side of the temple.

And the distance between the outer and inner gates was 51.8 meters, which is the width of the Outer Courtyard.

The South Gate

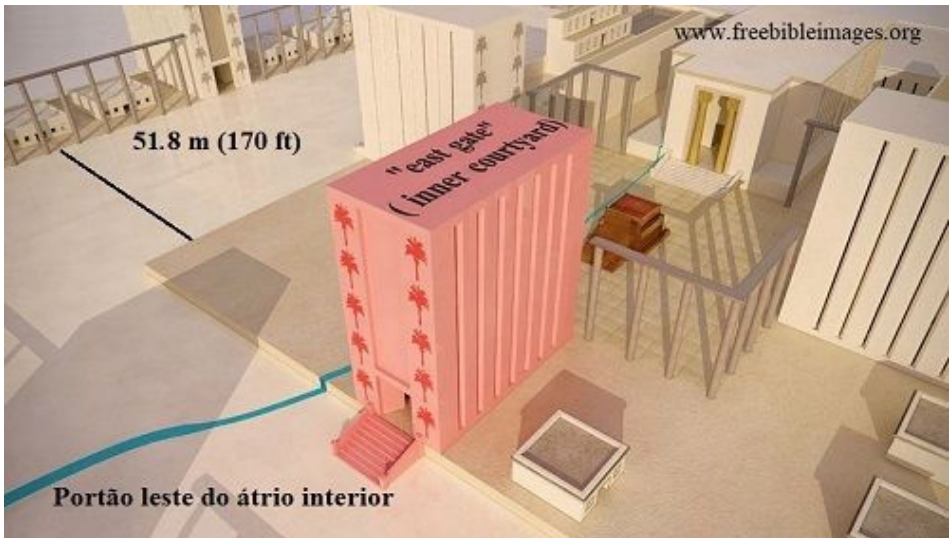
24 Then he led me to the south side and I saw the south gate. He measured its jambs and its portico, and they had the same measurements as the others.
25 The gateway and its portico had narrow openings all around, like the openings of the others. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide (25.9 x 12.9 m).
26 Seven steps led up to it, with its portico opposite them; it had palm tree decorations on the faces of the projecting walls on each side.
27 The inner court also had a gate facing south, and he measured from this gate to the outer gate on the south side; it was a hundred cubits (51.8 m).

There was a door to the south, and all its measurements were the same as the others. It also had narrow openings around it. The number of steps to climb to it was seven too. The inner courtyard also had a door that led to the south, and the distance between the two doors was also 51.8 meters.

Gates to the Inner Court

28 Then he brought me into the inner court through the south gate, and he measured the south gate; it had the same measurements as the others.

[29] Its alcoves, its projecting walls [NKJV: its gate chambers, its gateposts] and its portico had the same measurements as the others. The gateway and its portico had openings all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide (25.9 x 12.9 m).
[30] (The porticoes of the gateways around the inner court were twenty-five cubits wide and five cubits deep – 12.9 meters x 2.59 m)
[31] Its portico faced the outer court; palm trees decorated its jambs, and eight steps led up to it.
[32] Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gateway; it had the same measurements as the others.
[33] Its alcoves, its projecting walls and its portico had the same measurements as the others. The gateway and its portico had openings all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide (25.9 x 12.9 m).
[34] Its portico faced the outer court; palm trees decorated the jambs on either side, and eight steps led up to it.
[35] Then he brought me to the north gate and measured it. It had the same measurements as the others,
[36] as did its alcoves, its projecting walls and its portico, and it had openings [NKJV: windows] all around. It was fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits wide (25.9 x 12.9 m).
[37] Its portico faced the outer court; palm trees decorated the jambs on either side, and eight steps led up to it.

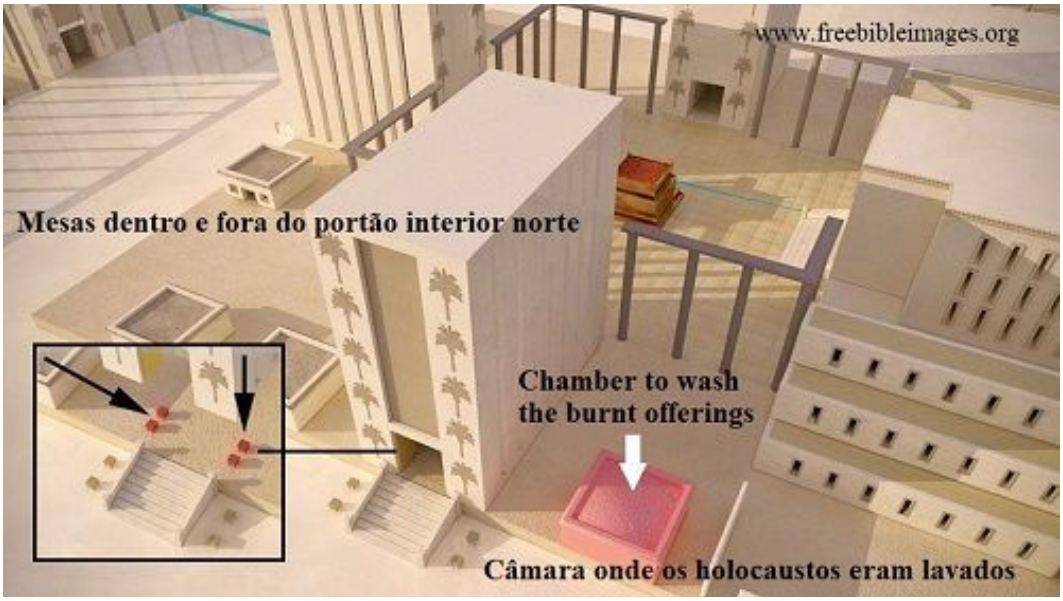


The Gates around the inner courtyard (East, North and South) were 12.9 meters wide and 25,9 meters long, the same as the outer gates, but there were 8 steps to climb to them. The porticoes of the gateways around the inner court were twenty-five cubits wide and five cubits deep – 12.9 meters x 2.59 m.

The Rooms for Preparing Sacrifices

[38] A room with a doorway was by the portico in each of the inner gateways, where the burnt offerings were washed [NKJV: There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering].
[39] In the portico of the gateway were two tables on each side, on which the burnt offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings were slaughtered.

[40] By the outside wall of the portico of the gateway, near the steps at the entrance of the north gateway were two tables, and on the other side of the steps were two tables.
[41] So there were four tables on one side of the gateway and four on the other—eight tables in all—on which the sacrifices were slaughtered.
[42] There were also four tables of dressed stone for the burnt offerings, each a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide and a cubit high (77 x 77 x 51.8 cm). On them were placed the utensils for slaughtering the burnt offerings and the other sacrifices [NKJV: There were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, one cubit and a half long, one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high; on these they laid the instruments with which they slaughtered the burnt offering and the sacrifice.
[43] And double-pronged hooks, each a handbreadth long (3 1/2 inches or 9 cm; some say 7.5 cm), were attached to the wall all around *(the room)*. The tables were for the flesh of the offerings [NKJV: Inside *(that chamber inside the portico)* were hooks, a handbreadth wide, fastened all around; and the flesh of the sacrifices was on the tables].



Next to the inner north gate, there was a chamber where the burnt offerings were washed (Ezek. 40: 38; cf. Lev. 1: 9; 2 Chr. 4: 6).

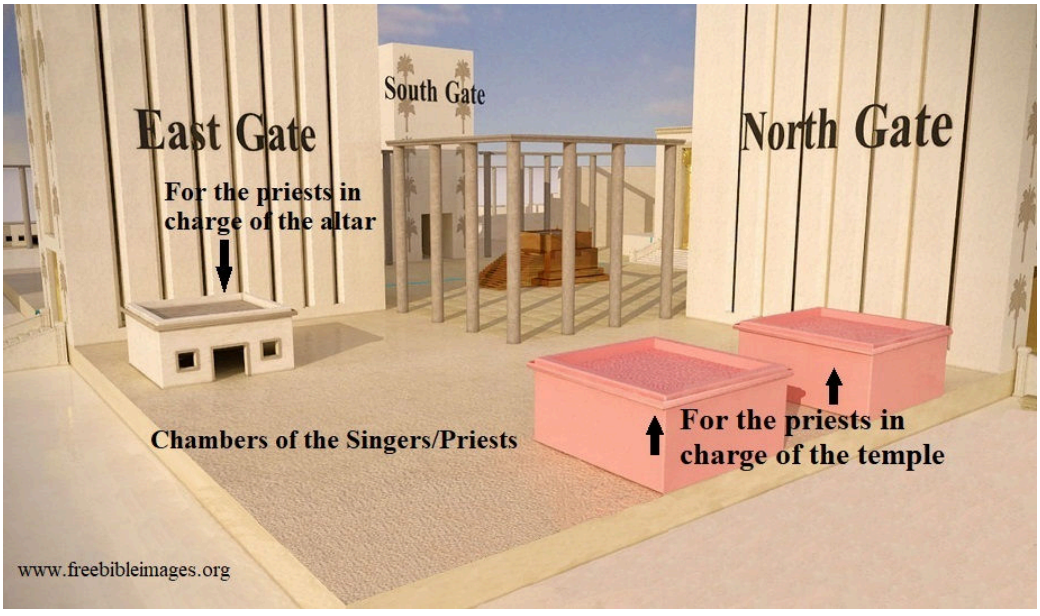
In the portico of the gateway [in the north inner gate] were two tables on each side, on which the burnt offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings were slaughtered. And outside, near the steps of the north gate were also two tables, on each side. So there were four tables on one side of the gateway and four on the other—eight tables in all—on which the sacrifices were slaughtered.

The tables were of hewn stone, each a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half wide (77 x 77 cm) and a cubit high (51.8 cm).

The chamber inside the portico in the north inner gate had double-pronged hooks, each four fingers long (9 cm; other say 7.5 cm), attached to the wall all around, but on the tables themselves was the meat for the sacrifices.

We can see that when we talk about the outer eastern gate, there was a portico 4.2 m deep (8 cubits) before entering the outer courtyard of the temple. And here, in verse 30, it is written that at the inner gates of the temple, there was a portico in front of each gate, before passing through the three side chambers, and this portico (as if it were another chamber) was 2.59 meters (5 cubits) deep. For it is in one of these vestibules (or porticoes or porches), especially here at the north gate of the temple, that these slaughtering tables and hooks on these walls were located. The KJV says that the instruments for slaughtering the burnt offering and the sacrifice were placed on the four tables of hewn stone. But they were kept hanging on hooks on the walls of that chamber. Or these hooks were where the slaughtered sacrifices were hung so that the blood could drain out.

Rooms for the Priests



44 Outside the inner gate, within the inner court, were two rooms, one [Septuagint; Hebrew ‘were rooms for singers, which were’] at the side of the north gate and facing south, and another at the side of the south [Septuagint; Hebrew east] gate and facing north.
45 He said to me, “The room facing south is for the priests who guard the temple,
46 and the room facing north is for the priests who guard the altar. These are the sons of Zadok, who are the only Levites who may draw near to the Lord to minister before him.”

47 Then he measured the court: It was square—a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide (51.8 m). And the altar was in front of the temple.

Inside the inner courtyard there were two rooms (‘chambers of the priests’ or ‘singers’) before the inner gate, one beside the north gate and facing south. And another beside the south gate [Hebrew east] and facing north.

The room facing south was for the priests in charge of the temple [the priests who worked in the Temple].

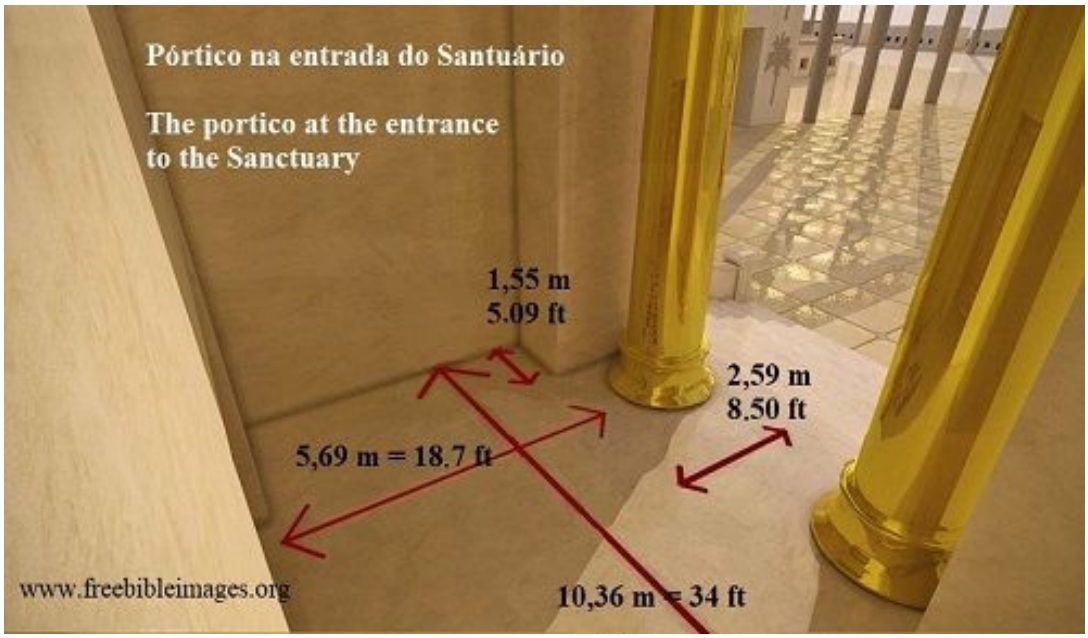
And the room facing north was for the priests in charge of the altar, the sons of Zadok, who could approach the Lord to minister before him [the priests who performed the service of the altar].

These chambers in Ezekiel 40 are service and guard rooms, located at the gates of the inner courtyard, as service posts near the altar.

They seem to be rooms directly supporting the day-to-day functioning of the sanctuary and the altar.

The inner courtyard was square, one hundred cubits long and one hundred cubits wide. And the altar was in front of the temple (the sanctuary itself).

The Temple (The Sanctuary)



48 He brought me to the portico of the temple and measured the jambs of the portico [NKJV: the doorposts of the vestibule]; they were five cubits wide on either side (2.59 m). The width of the entrance was fourteen cubits (7.252 m) and its projecting walls were [NKJV: the gateway] three cubits (1.55 m) wide on either side.

49 The portico was twenty cubits (10.36 m) wide, and twelve [Septuagint; Hebrew eleven] cubits (5.698 m) from front to back. It was reached by a flight of stairs, [Septuagint: Ten steps led up to it] and there were pillars on each side of the jambs.

The man took him to the portico of the temple and measured the doorposts of the portico, and they were 2.59 meters wide (5 cubits).

And the width of the wall on the sides of the entrance was 1.55 meters (3 cubits) wide on each side.

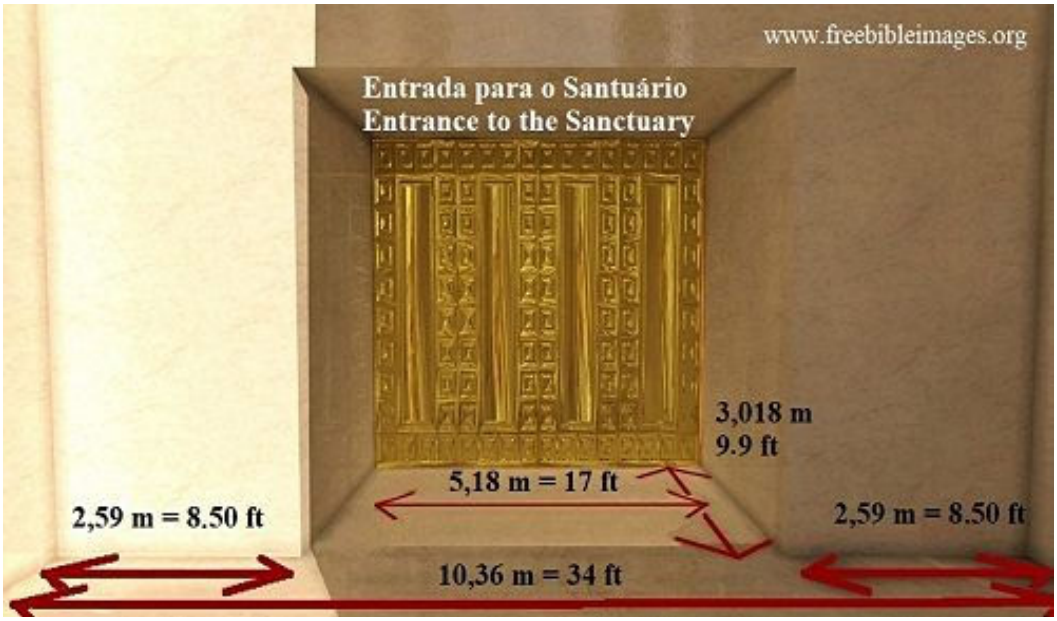
The portico was twenty cubits (10.36 m) wide, and eleven cubits (5.698 m) deep. There was a staircase of ten steps that provided access to it, and two columns on each side of the pillars.

Chapter 41

Ezek 41 – NIV

Dimensions of the Sanctuary

[1] Then the man brought me to the main hall and measured the jambs; the width of the jambs was six cubits (3.108 m) on each side.
[2] The entrance was ten cubits wide (5.18 m), and the projecting walls on each side of it were five cubits (2.59 m) wide. He also measured the main hall; it was forty cubits long and twenty cubits wide (about 20.72 meters long and 10.36 meters wide).



The doorposts of the temple were 6 cubits (3.108 m) wide on both sides. The width of the entrance to the temple was 10 cubits (5.18 m), and the walls on each side were 2.59 m wide (5 cubits).

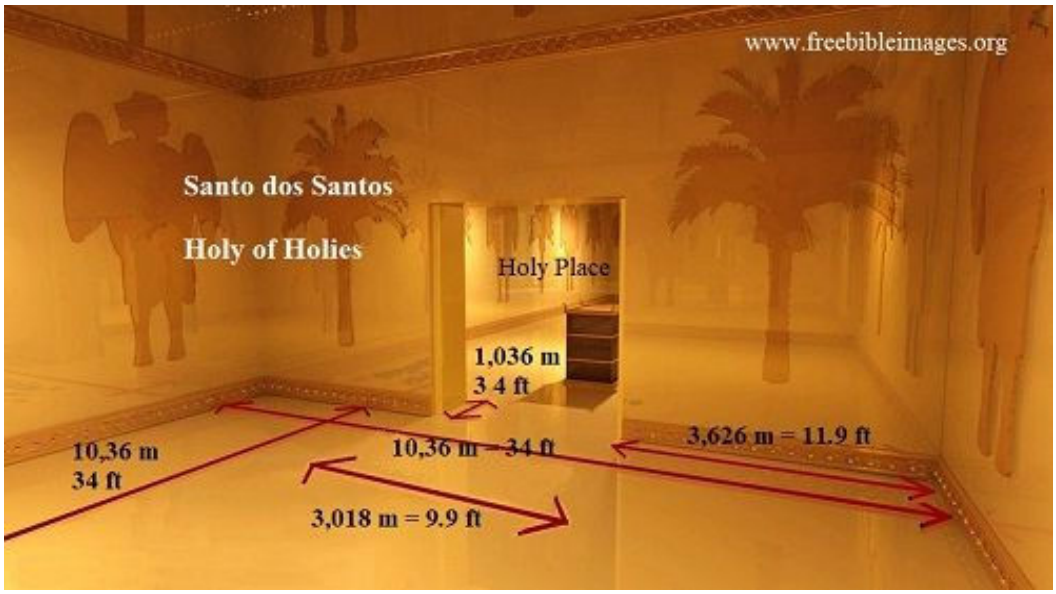
The man showed Ezekiel the measurements of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

The Holy Place was 20.72 m long (40 cubits) and 10.36 m wide (20 cubits).

It is interesting to recall the measurements of the Holy Place in the temples of Solomon (1 Kin. 6: 16-17) and Herod. The Holy Place (Hekal) had the same measurements: 40 cubits (20.52 meters) long and 20 cubits (10.36 meters) wide.

The measurements of the Holy Place

[3] Then he went into the inner sanctuary and measured the jambs of the entrance; each was two cubits wide (1.036 m). The entrance was six cubits wide (3.108 m), and the projecting walls on each side of it were seven cubits wide (3.626 m).
[NKJV: Also he went inside and measured the doorposts, two cubits; and the entrance, six cubits high; and the width of the entrance, seven cubits].
[4] And he measured the length of the inner sanctuary; it was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits across the end of the main hall. He said to me, "This is the Most Holy Place."



Then he went into the inner sanctuary and measured the doorposts, and they were 1.036 meter wide (2 cubits). The width of the entrance to the door was 3.108 meters (6 cubits), and the width of the side walls beside the entrance were 3.626 meters (7 cubits) on each side.

The inner sanctuary (the Holy of Holies) was the same length and width: 20 cubits (10.36 m), the same width as the outer sanctuary (the Holy Place).

Again, comparing it to the Holy of Holies in the temples of Solomon and Herod, Solomon's was a perfect cube measuring 10.36 x 10.36 meters x 10.36 meters high. Herod's measured 10.36 x 10.36 meters x 20.50 meters high.

The angel told him that this was the Most Holy Place.

The side chambers on the wall

5 Then he measured the wall of the temple; it was six cubits thick (3.108 m), and each
side room around the temple was four cubits wide (2.072 m).
6 The side rooms were on three levels, one above another, thirty on each level. There were
ledges all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side rooms, so that
the supports were not inserted into the wall of the temple.
7 The side rooms all around the temple were wider at each successive level. The structure
surrounding the temple was built in ascending stages, so that the rooms widened as one
went upward. A stairway went up from the lowest floor to the top floor through the middle
floor.
8 I saw that the temple had a raised base all around it, forming the foundation of the side
rooms. It was the length of the rod, six long cubits (3.11 m).
9 The outer wall of the side rooms was five cubits thick (2.59 m). The open area between
the side rooms of the temple
10 and the priests' rooms was twenty cubits wide all around the temple (10.36 m).
11 There were entrances to the side rooms from the open area, one on the north and another
on the south; and the base adjoining the open area was five cubits wide (2.59 m) all
around.
[NABRE: "The side chambers had entrances to the open space, one entrance on the north and the other on the south. The width of the wall surrounding the open space was five cubits."]
[NKJV: "The doors of the side chambers opened on the terrace, one door toward the north and another toward the south; and the width of the terrace was five cubits all around."]
[He was speaking of the width of the platform around the temple and its chambers, not the open area between the temple and the other side buildings].

The temple wall was 3.108 meters thick (6 cubits).

Next to the temple, there were 3 floors of rooms, each 4 cubits (2.072 meters) wide. And there were 30 rooms on each floor.

The side chambers of the temple were wider on the upper floors. And winding stairway led from the lower floor to the upper floors.

The temple was built on a base, which formed the foundation of the side chambers. This base was 3.11 m high (the length of the rod, or six long cubits; the bible writes length) and 2.59 m wide (thick).

The outer wall of the side chambers of the temple were 5 cubits (2.59 m) thick, and there was a space 20 cubits wide (10.36 m) between this chambers and the priests' chambers in the side buildings.

On the side of the temple wall, there was a door for entry into the chambers, both on the north and south sides.

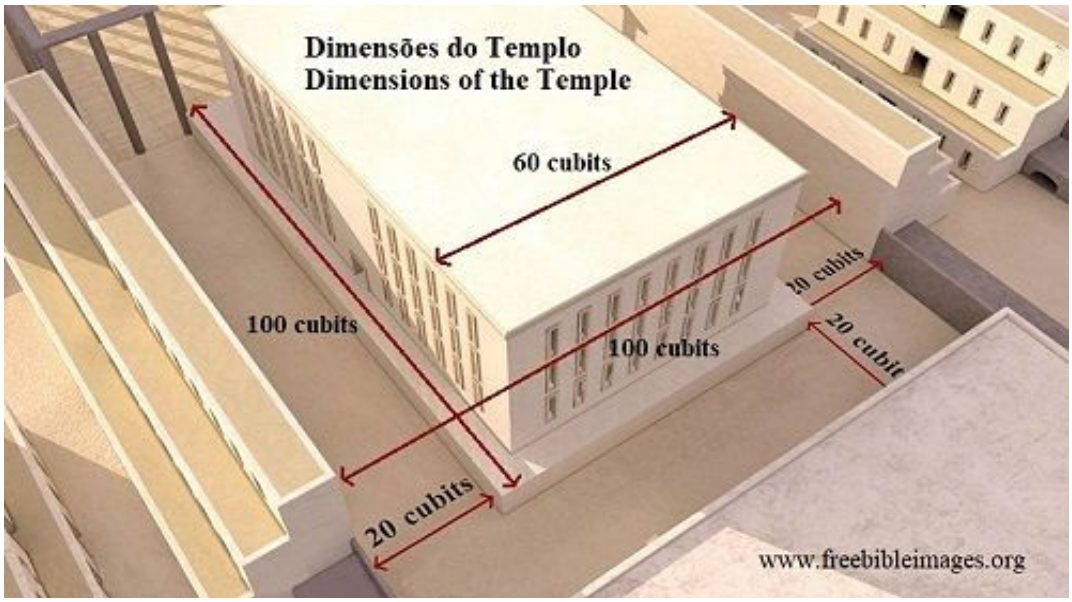
The building at the western end

[12] The building facing the temple courtyard on the west side was seventy cubits wide (36.26 m). The wall of the building was five cubits thick (2.59 m) all around, and its length was ninety cubits (46.62 m).

On the western side of the temple, behind the sanctuary building, there was another building 36.26 m (70 cubits) wide, and its walls were 5 cubits (2.59 m) thick. Its length was 90 cubits (46.62 m), 100 cubits in total, counting the width of the walls and the open space of 20 cubits between the building and the temple on the western side.

Dimensions and Design of the Temple Area

[13] Then he measured the temple; it was a hundred cubits long (51.8 m), and the temple courtyard and the building with its walls were also a hundred cubits long (51.8 m).
[14] The width of the temple courtyard on the east, including the front of the temple, was a hundred cubits (51.8 m).
[15a] Then he measured the length of the building facing the courtyard at the rear of the temple, including its galleries on each side; it was a hundred cubits (51.8 m).



The temple itself was 100 cubits (51.8 m) long and 100 cubits (51.8 m) wide, counting the open space of 20 cubits on both sides.

We can make a comparison with the measurements of the Tabernacle and the temple of Solomon and Herod.

The cubit used at the time of the construction of the Tabernacle of Moses was the long cubit or Egyptian royal cubit, around 51.8 to 52.50 cm, used in royal or temple constructions, the same one used here by Ezekiel (Ezek. 40: 3; 41: 8) and by Solomon in the construction of the temple [2 Chr. 3: 3: the cubit 'according to the old measure' (NABRE) or 'the cubit of the old standard' (NIV) or 'according to the former measure' (NKJV), translated as 'after the first measure' in KJV].

• The tabernacle of Moses: 30 cubits long, 10 wide, and 10 high – [Ex. 26: 15-16; Ex. 26: 18; 20; 22; 23; 25; Ex. 36: 20-34, considering the measurements and number of boards].

• Solomon's temple: 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high (1 Kin. 6:2; 2 Chr. 63: 3), plus 10 cubits deep and 20 cubits wide for the portico (1 Kin. 6:3; 2 Chr. 3: 4). If we include the measurements of the outer side storerooms, the portico, and the estimated thickness of the walls, the total size of the structure was perhaps 70 cubits long and 50 cubits wide [source: enduringword.com].

• Herod's temple: 100 cubits long, 70 cubits wide, and 100 cubits high. The Portico was 100 cubits long, 100 cubits high, and 11 cubits wide (deep), and extended fifteen cubits further north and fifteen cubits south, therefore it was 30 cubits longer than the Sanctuary.

Ezekiel's temple was 100 cubits long and 60 cubits wide, plus 40 cubits of open space on the sides (= 100), which places it closer in size to Herod's temple, except for the

western building which was also 100 cubits long and wide, totaling 200 meters from East to West.

15b The main hall, the inner sanctuary and the portico facing the court,
16 as well as the thresholds and the narrow windows and galleries around the three of them—everything beyond and including the threshold was covered with wood. The floor, the wall up to the windows, and the windows were covered.

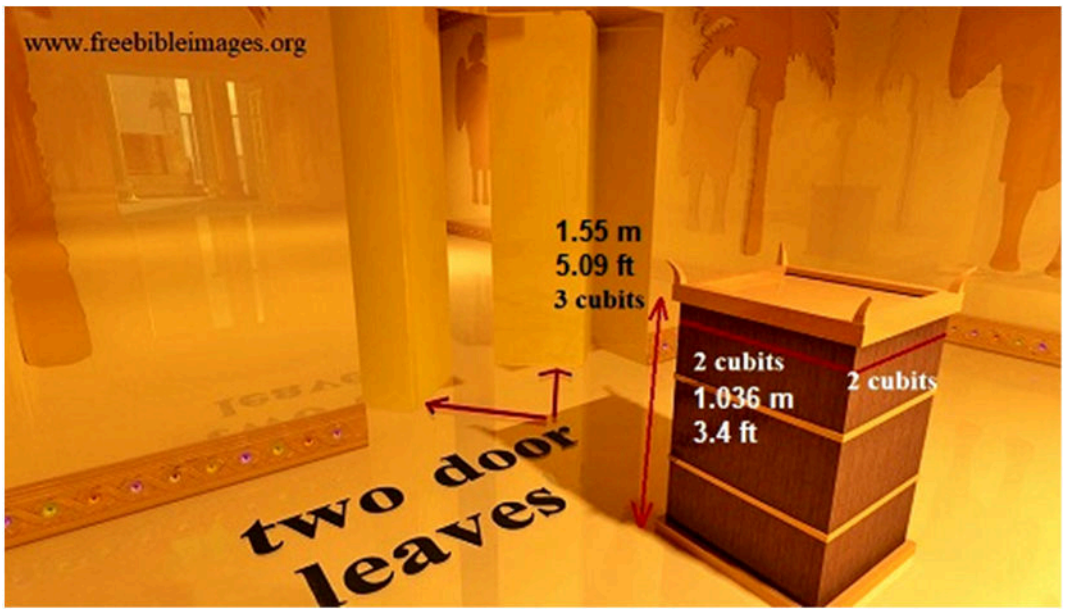
> The temple itself, the Holy of Holies, and the portico were overlaid with wood. The slatted windows around the temple were also made of wood.

17 In the space above the outside of the entrance to the inner sanctuary and on the walls at regular intervals all around the inner and outer sanctuary

18 were carved cherubim and palm trees. Palm trees alternated with cherubim. Each
cherub had two faces:
19 the face of a human being toward the palm tree on one side and the face of a lion toward
the palm tree on the other. They were carved all around the whole temple.
20 From the floor to the area above the entrance, cherubim and palm trees were carved on
the wall of the main hall.

The interior had carved images of cherubim and palm trees interspersed. Each cherub had two faces: face of a man and of a lion cub, and each looked towards a palm tree.

21 The main hall had a rectangular doorframe, and the one at the front of the Most Holy
Place was similar.
22 There was a wooden altar three cubits (1.554 m) high and two cubits (1.036 m) square
[Septuagint; Hebrew long]; its corners, its base [Septuagint; Hebrew length] and its sides
were of wood. The man said to me, “This is the table that is before the Lord.”
23 Both the main hall and the Most Holy Place had double doors.
24 Each door had two leaves—two hinged leaves for each door.
25 And on the doors of the main hall were carved cherubim and palm trees like those
carved on the walls, and there was a wooden overhang on the front of the portico [NKJV:
Cherubim and palm trees were carved on the doors of the temple just as they were carved
on the walls. A wooden canopy was on the front of the vestibule outside].
26 On the sidewalls of the portico were narrow windows with palm trees carved on each
side. The side rooms of the temple also had overhangs [NKJV: There were beveled
window frames and palm trees on one side and on the other, on the sides of the vestibule—
also on the side chambers of the temple and on the canopies].



The door of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies were rectangular; double doors with two hinged leaves.

In the Holy Place, just before the entrance to the Holy of Holies, there was an altar made of wood 3 cubits high and 2 cubits long and wide.

It was different from the Altar of Incense or the Ark of the Covenant.

At its base and around the top, the covering was made of wood.
The man said to Ezekiel, “This is the table that is before the Lord.”

Perhaps the table looked more like this:

On the doors of the Holy Place also were carved cherubim and palm trees, and there was a wooden overhang on the front of the portico [NKJV: A wooden canopy]. This canopy was supported by columns.

There were narrow windows on both sides of the Portico, and the side chambers of the temple and on the canopies.

Chapter 42

Ezek 42 – NIV

The Rooms for the Priests

1 Then the man led me northward into the outer court and brought me to the rooms
opposite the temple courtyard and opposite the outer wall on the north side.
2 The building whose door faced north was a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide.
[51.8 m meters long and 25.90 meters wide]
3 Both in the section twenty cubits [10.36 meters] from the inner court and in the section
opposite the pavement of the outer court, gallery faced gallery at the three levels.
4 In front of the rooms was an inner passageway ten cubits wide and a hundred cubits long
[about 5.18 meters wide and 51.8 meters long]. Their doors were on the north.
5 Now the upper rooms were narrower, for the galleries took more space from them than
from the rooms on the lower and middle floors of the building.
6 The rooms on the top floor had no pillars, as the courts had; so they were smaller in
floor space than those on the lower and middle floors.
7 There was an outer wall parallel to the rooms and the outer court; it extended in front of
the rooms for fifty cubits [25.90 meters].
8 While the row of rooms on the side next to the outer court was fifty cubits long [25.90
meters], the row on the side nearest the sanctuary was a hundred cubits long [51.8 meters].
9 The lower rooms had an entrance on the east side as one enters them from the outer
court.
10 On the south side along the length of the wall of the outer court, adjoining the temple
courtyard and opposite the outer wall, were rooms
11 with a passageway in front of them. These were like the rooms on the north; they had
the same length and width, with similar exits and dimensions. Similar to the doorways on
the north
12 were the doorways of the rooms on the south. There was a doorway at the beginning of
the passageway that was parallel to the corresponding wall extending eastward, by which
one enters the rooms.
13 Then he said to me, “The north and south rooms facing the temple courtyard are the
priests’ rooms, where the priests who approach the Lord will eat the most holy offerings.
There they will put the most holy offerings—the grain offerings, the sin offerings and the
guilt offerings—for the place is holy.
14 Once the priests enter the holy precincts, they are not to go into the outer court until
they leave behind the garments in which they minister, for these are holy. They are to put
on other clothes before they go near the places that are for the people.”
15 When he had finished measuring what was inside the temple area, he led me out by the
east gate and measured the area all around:
16 He measured the east side with the measuring rod; it was five hundred cubits [250
meters].
17 He measured the north side; it was five hundred cubits [250 meters] by the measuring
rod.
18 He measured the south side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod [250
meters].
19 Then he turned to the west side and measured; it was five hundred cubits [250 meters]
by the measuring rod.

[20] So he measured the area on all four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide [250 meters x 250 meters], to separate the holy from the common.

Ezekiel was now taken to the buildings of the northern outer courtyard of the temple, which faced the sanctuary building.

The building that faced north and was closest to the sanctuary was approximately 50 meters long and 25 meters wide.

It had three levels, and there was another building with three levels opposite the first, approximately 25 meters long.

Between them, there was a corridor approximately 5 meters wide and 50 meters long.

The upper rooms of the buildings were narrower, as they did not have columns in the middle of them like the lower floors.

There was also a wall approximately 25 meters long separating the northern building from the outer courtyard.

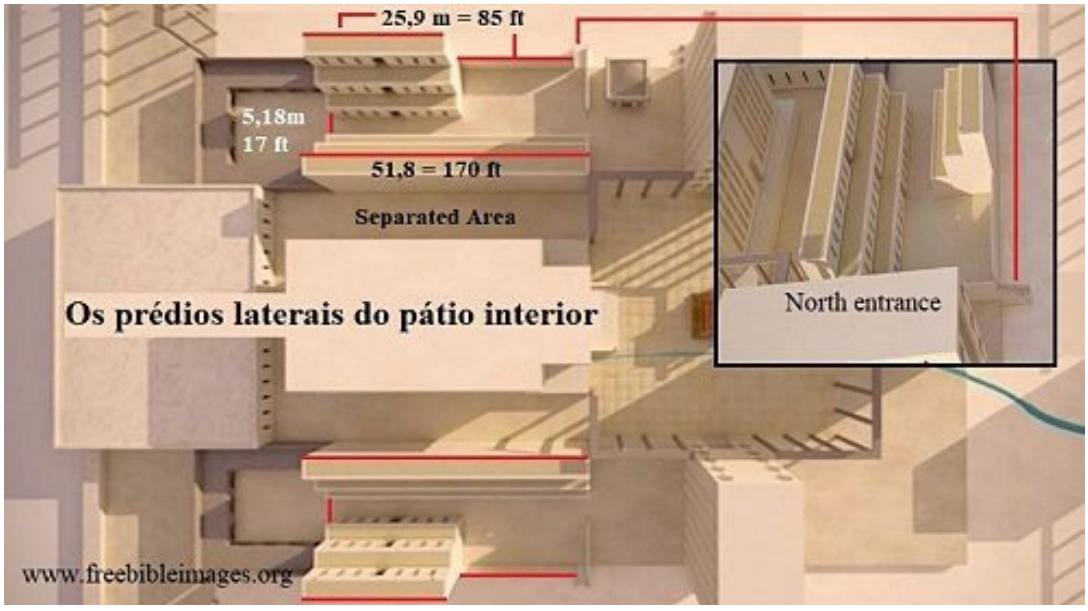
To enter these buildings, there was a door on the lower floor, coming from the east.

On the other side of the temple, on the south side of the wall, there were also two buildings with the same characteristics and with the entrance doors at the beginning of the corridor, also for those coming from the east on the south side.

Then, the man told Ezekiel that all these rooms in the inner courtyard were for the priests who served the Lord and where they would eat and keep the most holy offerings, that is, the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings.

These rooms also had space to store the priestly garments.

Whenever they left the sacred precinct, they should change their garments before passing to the outer courtyard, to the places reserved for the people.



In summary:

These two blocks of buildings to the north and south were located within the sacred precinct, but outside the main temple building.

They were holy chambers because there the priests would eat the most holy things, that is, the grain offerings, the sin offerings, and the guilt offerings.

They would not only eat there, but also keep these same offerings in the building.

The priests were to change their sacred garments for ordinary clothes before going out to the outer courtyard, where the people would be.

After showing him the temple area, the man led Ezekiel outside through the east gate of the temple.

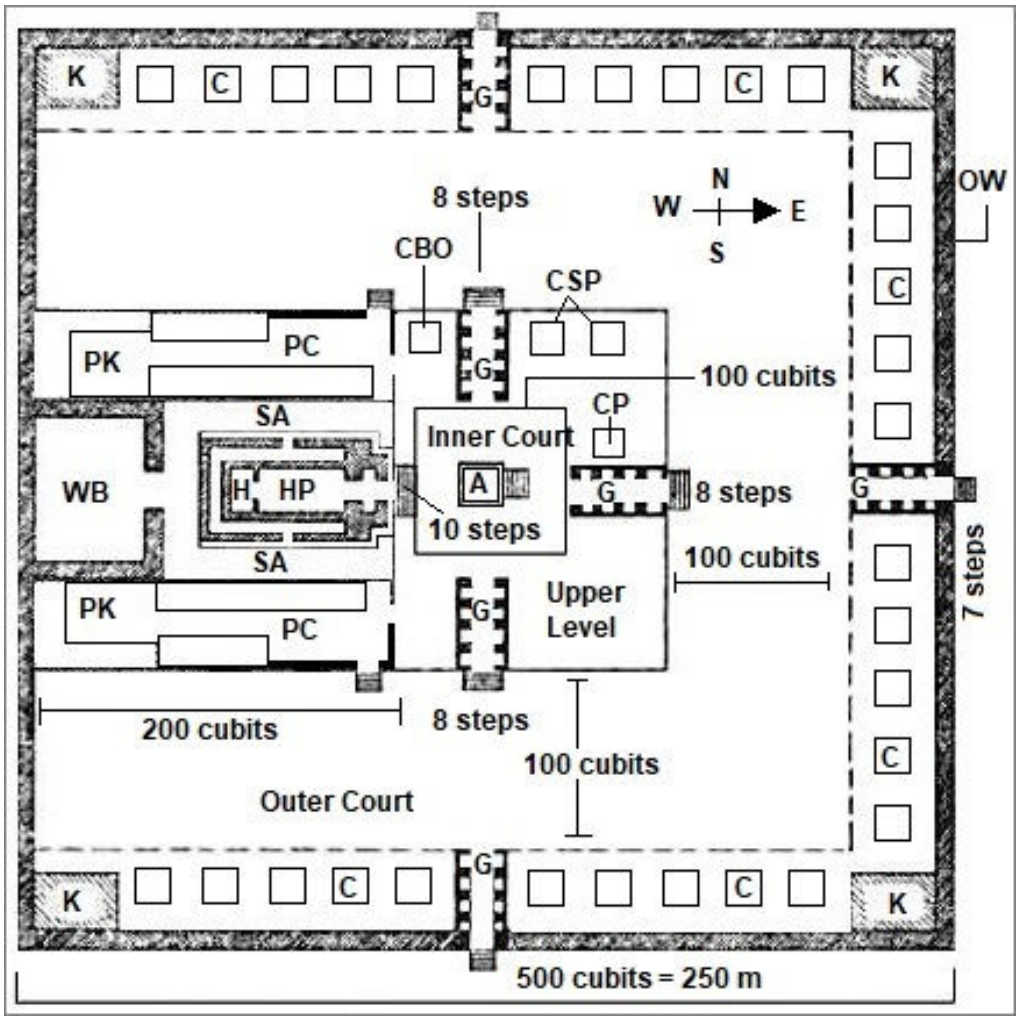
And he measured the area around it.

On the east side he measured 500 cubits (250 meters) in length.

This measurement was the same on the north side, the south side, and the west side.

Around this area there was a wall, separating this area from the area outside it, to create a separation between the holy and the profane.

The word "reeds," used in Masoretic texts and many current versions, refers to the tool used (the measuring reed or measuring rod) and not the unit of measurement.



Plan of Ezekiel's temple (Ezek. 40, 41 and 42):
G = Gates
K = Levites kitchens
C = Chambers around the Outer Court

CBO = Chamber to wash the burnt offerings
CSP = Chambers for Singers and Priests
CP = Chambers for Priests in charge of the altar
PC = Priests Chambers; the priests' chambers had three floors
PK = Priests Kitchen
WB = Western Building (Ezek. 41: 12)
SA = Separated Area
HP = Holy Place
H = Holy of Holies
A =Altar
OW = Outer wall – 6 cubits high x 6 cubits wide x 500 cubits long (250 meters) in each of the four sides of the temple
Inner Court = 100 cubits wide in four sides
Outer Court = 100 cubits wide to the North, East, South

The outer courtyard is on a higher level (7 steps) than the area outside the temple, just as the inner courtyard is on a higher level (8 steps, the "upper level" described in the figure) than the outer courtyard. And the sanctuary area itself rises even higher (10 steps) in relation to the inner courtyard.

Ezek. 40: 5: cubit (a cubit plus a handbreadth) = 51.8 cm or 20,4 inches.

'Measuring reed' or 'measuring rod' = 6 cubits (3.11 meters or 3.40 yards).

Chapter 43

Ezek 43 – NIV

God's Glory Returns to the Temple

1 Then the man brought me to the gate facing east,
2 and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory.
3 The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he [Some Hebrew manuscripts and Vulgate; most Hebrew manuscripts I] came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown.
4 The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east.
5 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

After measuring the area, the man took Ezekiel to the (exterior) door that faced east, and the prophet saw the glory of the Lord coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory.

The appearance of the vision was the same as what he had seen on the banks of the Chebar River and when the Lord came to destroy the city.

Ezekiel fell facedown to the ground. The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing east, the same gate through which the visions began (Ezek 40: 6).

Then, the Spirit of the Lord took him into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

While the bronze man was beside him, he heard a voice speaking to him from inside the temple.

6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me from inside the temple.
7 He said: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name — neither they nor their kings — by their prostitution [Or their spiritual adultery] and the lifeless idols [Or the corpses] of their kings at their high places."
8 When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger.
9 Now let them put away from me their prostitution and the funeral offerings for their kings, and I will live among them forever.

The glory of the Lord had already entered the temple, the sanctuary, and the altar, filling the entire House. Then Ezekiel heard His voice saying that He had chosen the restored temple as His place with His people forever, now a purified people, free from idolatry.

When the Lord states that they and their kings would no longer defile His holy name by their prostitution [Or their spiritual adultery] and the lifeless idols [Or the corpses] of their kings at their high places. He was referring to the sinful acts of idolatry concerning the high places, practiced by the people and kings of Judah before the captivity. But He

also says: “When they placed their threshold next to my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they defiled my holy name by their detestable practices. So I destroyed them in my anger,” that is, God is no longer referring to the sacrifices on the high places, but to the idolatrous practices within the Temple, as Ahaz, Manasseh, and the more recent kings of Judah had done and were rebuked by the prophet, when he described the abominations of the civil and religious leaders in the very House of God and mentioned the ‘idol of jealousy’ or ‘image of jealousy’ and the women weeping for Tammuz right there, inside the temple.

This means that they entered through the same place to perform a divided worship (“their threshold next to my threshold”) and human doctrines walked side by side with the law of the Lord (“their doorposts beside my doorposts”). This last expression may also refer to the extra walls and chambers that were later built in the temple courtyard to worship idols alongside the sacred altar.

In Solomon’s temple, there were no walls separating the altar of burnt offerings and the outer court, except for the reference mentioned in 2 Chr. 4: 9 (“He made the courtyard of the priests, and the large court and the doors for the court, and overlaid the doors with bronze”), where the doors mentioned here could refer to the side doors of the sanctuary, perhaps, where the storerooms and treasury chambers of the temple were located, and where things pertaining to the priesthood were also kept, or the priests’ quarters around the rear of the temple. However, over the years, the original architectural design of Solomon’s Temple was altered due to the constructions of King Manasseh (Jer. 15: 4; 2 Chr. 33: 4, 7) and other idolatrous monarchs. This explains the many gates mentioned in Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9 (Ezek. 8:3, 5, 7, 12, 14; Ezek. 9:2, 3). In other words, in Ezekiel’s time, it was a temple already modified for idolatrous practices.

10 “Son of man, describe the temple to the people of Israel, that they may be ashamed of
their sins. Let them consider its perfection,
11 and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them the design of the
temple—its arrangement, its exits and entrances—its whole design and all its regulations
[Some Hebrew manuscripts and Septuagint; most Hebrew manuscripts regulations and
its whole design] and laws. Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to
its design and follow all its regulations.
12 “This is the law of the temple: All the surrounding area on top of the mountain will be
most holy. Such is the law of the temple.

And He told him to show the plan of this temple to the house of Israel and not to omit any detail, for this was the law of the temple. God tells him that it was so that His people might be ashamed of their iniquities. This is because they would remember the First House of God, which was built to show His holiness, but they themselves defiled it with their idolatries.

The Altar of the burnt offerings

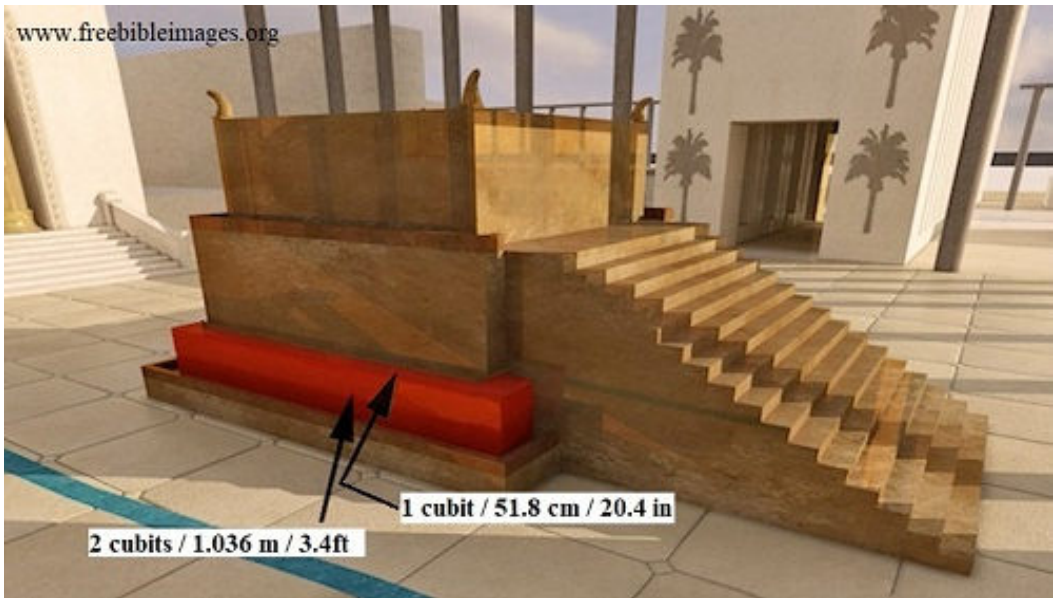
13 “These are the measurements of the altar in long cubits, that cubit being a cubit and a
handbreadth: Its gutter is a cubit deep and a cubit wide, with a rim of one span [That is,
about 11 inches or about 27,94 centimeters] around the edge. And this is the height of the
altar:
14 From the gutter on the ground up to the lower ledge it is two cubits high (1.036 m)
and a cubit wide (51.8 cm), and from the smaller ledge up to the larger ledge it is four
cubits high (2.072 m) and a cubit wide (51.8 cm).

15 Above that, the altar hearth is four cubits high (2.072 m), and four horns project upward from the hearth.
16 The altar hearth is square, twelve cubits (6.21 m) long and twelve cubits wide (6.21 m).
17 The upper ledge also is square, fourteen cubits long and fourteen cubits wide (7.25 meters), with a rim of half a cubit (25.9 cm) and a gutter of a cubit (51.8 cm) all round. The steps of the altar face east."

From verse 13 onwards, God begins to describe the bronze altar.

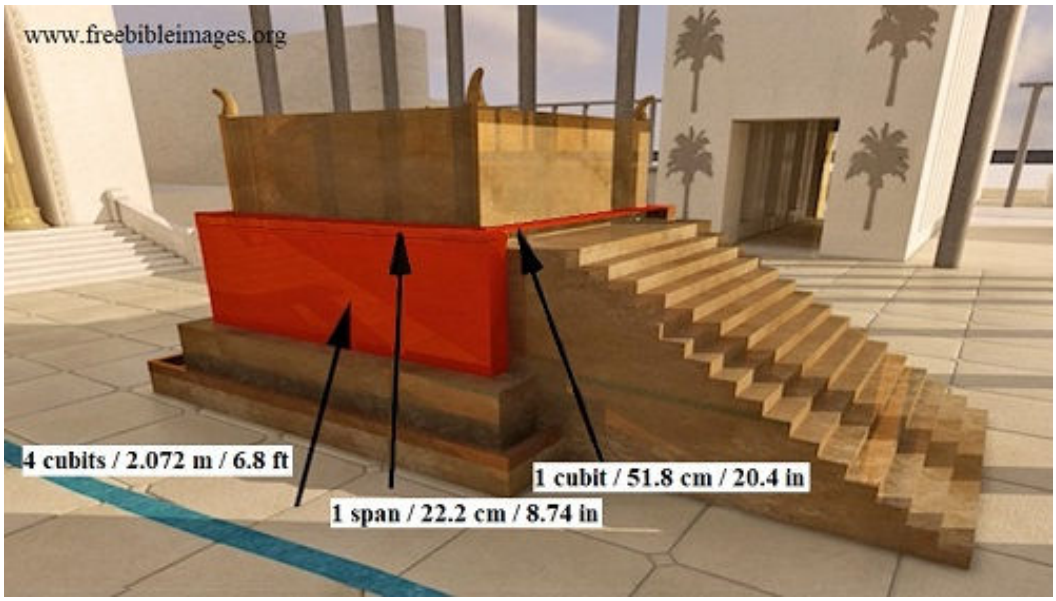
On the ground, there was a base 51.8 cm high and 51.8 cm wide (1 cubit), with a rim (gutter or overhang) of half a cubit (25.9 cm) around it.

This base served to contain the blood of the sacrifices (therefore, it was hollow to contain the blood of the sacrifice, a gutter or trough).



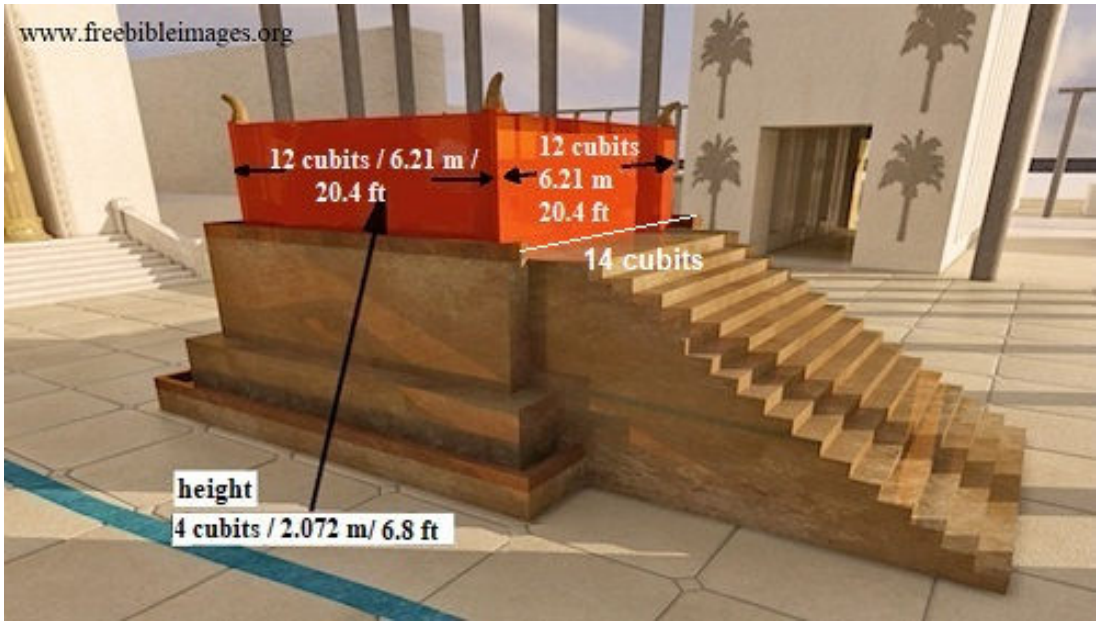
First Level (Lower Base / Protrusion): from the gutter it is 1.036 meter high (2 cubits) and 51.8 cm wide (1 cubit).

Second Level (Larger Projection): Above the first projection, it rises another 4 cubits (2.072 m), maintaining a rim of 1 span and a width of 1 cubit.



The Furnace (The Upper Altar): The upper part, where the fire burned, measured 6.21 meters long (12 cubits), 6.21 meters wide (12 cubits) and 2.072 meters high (4 cubits).

Upper Projection Area: 14 cubits (7.25 m) on the four sides and 51.8 cm (1 cubit) wide from the edges of both sides.

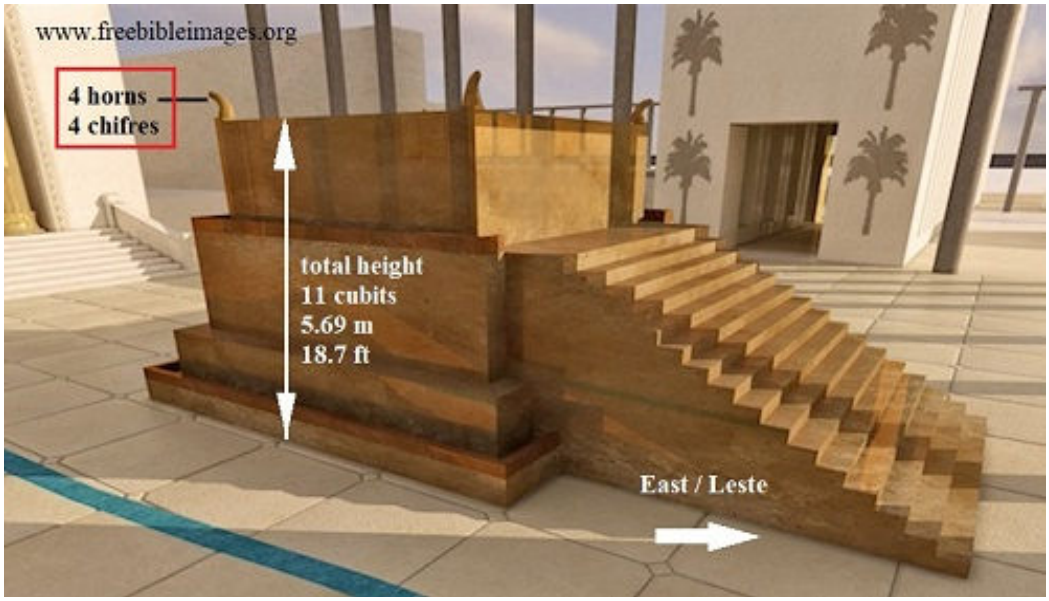


Four horns projected upward, one at each of the four corners of the furnace. The structure had steps facing east. The structure was tall, designed to be seen from the entire inner courtyard.

Unlike the prohibition in Ex. 20:26, the size of this altar required steps, emphasizing its grandeur. They were facing east, indicating the return of God's glory that came from the east (Ezek. 43: 2). This was intended for the people and the priests, who were to worship the Lord facing the temple, unlike their countrymen who turned their backs to the temple and faced east to worship the sun god.

Comparing with the size of other bronze altars in the bible (altar of the burnt offerings), we will have this:

The altar in the Tabernacle of Moses – 2.5m x 2.5m x 1.5m
The altar in the temple of Solomon – 9m x 9m x 4.5m
The altar in the temple of Herod – 12m x 12m x 4.5m
The altar in the temple of Ezekiel – 6.21m x 6.21m x 5.69m (11 cubits)



The consecration of the altar

18 Then he said to me, "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: These will be the regulations for sacrificing burnt offerings and splashing blood against the altar when it is built:
19 You are to give a young bull as a sin offering to the Levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who come near to minister before me, declares the Sovereign Lord.
20 You are to take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the upper ledge and all around the rim, and so purify the altar and make atonement for it.
21 You are to take the bull for the sin offering and burn it in the designated part of the temple area outside the sanctuary.
22 "On the second day you are to offer a male goat without defect for a sin offering, and the altar is to be purified as it was purified with the bull.
23 When you have finished purifying it, you are to offer a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect.

[24] You are to offer them before the Lord, and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and sacrifice them as a burnt offering to the Lord.
[25] "For seven days you are to provide a male goat daily for a sin offering; you are also to provide a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without defect.
[26] For seven days they are to make atonement for the altar and cleanse it; thus they will dedicate it.
[27] At the end of these days, from the eighth day on, the priests are to present your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar. Then I will accept you, declares the Sovereign Lord."

From verse 18 onward, Ezekiel mentions the consecration of the altar (as Moses did in Leviticus 8).

It is not Ezekiel who will consecrate the altar. God commanded him to instruct the Levite priests of the lineage of Zadok in this task. They were the ones in charge of performing the ritual of purification and atonement.

On the 1st day, the priests descended from Zadok would offer a bull as a sin offering. The blood would be placed on the four horns of the altar and on the four corners of the ledge around the altar. And the bull would be burned outside the sanctuary; this would serve for atonement and purification (Ezek. 43: 21 cf. Ex. 29: 14; Lev. 8: 17; Lev. 4: 11-12).

On the 2nd day, they would offer a male goat without blemish as a sin offering, and purify the altar, as they did with the bull.

For seven days they would sacrifice a goat as a sin offering, a young bull, and a ram without blemish as a burnt offering.

From the eighth day onward, the altar would be ready to receive the burnt offerings and peace offerings of the people, and the Lord would be favorable to them.

Chapter 44

Ezek 44 – NIV

The Priesthood Restored

[1] Then the man brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, the one facing east, and it was shut.
[2] The Lord said to me, "This gate is to remain shut. It must not be opened; no one may enter through it. It is to remain shut because the Lord, the God of Israel, has entered through it.
[3] The prince himself is the only one who may sit inside the gateway to eat in the presence of the Lord. He is to enter by way of the portico of the gateway and go out the same way."

In chapter 44, the Lord reinforces the duties of the priests (restoration of the Levitical priesthood), such as how the Levites should serve in the sanctuary.

The man took Ezekiel to the outer gate of the temple, and he saw that the gate was closed. It was to remain closed.

He explained that it was because the Lord, the God of Israel, had entered through it (Ezek. 43: 2,4). God would never again leave His sanctuary (Ezek. 43: 7; Ezek. 43: 9), as Jesus said that He remains with us until the end of time (Matt. 28: 20; Heb. 13: 5b).

Regarding the prince, he also would not pass through the gate, but he could sit there in the portico because he was a prince to eat bread before the Lord. The term prince, in Hebrew, can refer to a king or member of royalty, or to a representative of God (Gen. 23: 6). But prince here referred to the ruler, who would eat the peace offerings there.

In the 2nd temple built by Zerubbabel, but restored by Herod, the eastern gate was known as the Golden Gate. After the destruction of the temple by Titus in 70 AD, the temple remained without walls for many centuries and, when the Ottomans restored it in the 16th century, this eastern gate, the Golden Gate, was blocked with a wall and remains closed to this day, because of an Islamic tradition.

This closed gate today may be the fulfillment of that prophecy, for Jesus, as high priest, entered through that gate for the last time on Palm Sunday.

Spiritually speaking, the east symbolizes the spiritual. We, as servants of God, removed by His mercy from the spiritual things that surrounded us in the idolatry of the world, now have the assurance that Jesus has entered our spirit and will forever be with us; therefore, nothing more from the spiritual world can have access to our soul and our spirit.

For the people of Ezekiel's time, who had allowed uncircumcised men into the temple of the Lord, this was a promise of restoration, that is, God was remaking His communion with His people, and sin would be left out, because only the glory of God could pass through the east gate of the temple.

[4] Then the man brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple. I looked and saw the glory of the Lord filling the temple of the Lord, and I fell facedown.
[5] The Lord said to me, "Son of man, look carefully, listen closely and give attention to everything I tell you concerning all the regulations regarding the temple of the Lord. Give attention to the entrance to the temple and all the exits of the sanctuary.
[6] Say to rebellious house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Enough of your detestable practices, O house of Israel!

7 In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised
in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, desecrating my temple while you offered me food,
fat and blood, and you broke my covenant.
8 Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge
of my sanctuary.
9 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is
to enter my sanctuary, not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites.

Next, the man led the prophet through the north gate of the temple, and he saw the glory of the Lord there and fell face down to the ground.

And the Lord began to speak about who could or could not enter this temple, now holy and perfect, made only for the Lord's people.

The Lord commanded him to say this to the rebellious children, who had once defiled His House with the prostitution of idols. This was finished: "Enough of your detestable practices, O house of Israel!"

Foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, had participated in His holy rituals, therefore they would be excluded.

According to the theologian Dr. Ralph H. Alexander, religions of the ancient Near East frequently used foreign prisoners as temple servants to aid the priests, and probably Israel had adopted of this practice, and therefore, the Lord rebuked them.

By partaking of His bread, the fat, and the blood of the offerings (Lev. 7: 22-27), they had profaned that place and violated the Covenant.

But we can think also that idolatrous priests had participated in the sacred services: "Instead of carrying out your duty in regard to my holy things, you put others in charge of my sanctuary." (v. 8)

From then on, no foreigner could enter God's sanctuary.

This helps to understand the inscription of the Soreg in the Court of the Gentiles in Herod's temple, which stated that if they crossed that point they would be killed.

It also helps to understand why people who do not yet have a true surrender to Jesus nor awareness of His sacrifice are disqualified from participating in the Lord's Supper in church.

The sin of the world cannot be associated with the new life in Christ, lived by the Christian.

10 "'The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from
me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin.
11 They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving
in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before
the people and serve them.
12 But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the house of Israel
fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the
consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign Lord.
13 They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or
my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices.
14 Yet I will put them in charge of the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be
done in it [NIV 2011: And I will appoint them to guard the temple for all the work that is
to be done in it].

God now addresses the Levite priests and makes a separation of services.

The Levites, who had strayed from the Lord's commandments during the time Israel was defiled with its idols, now had a word from the Lord.

They were guilty, not only of having participated in idolatry, but also of failing to guide the people, becoming a stumbling block to them.

Instead of calling the people back to God, they stayed away and led others away from Him.

These Levites could no longer be priests, but would serve in general activities in the temple complex, as gatekeepers, to slaughter the burnt offerings and other types of offerings and receive them from the people (Ezek. 44: 10-11), until they were in charge of the praise and maintenance of the lamps in the outer courtyard.

They would not approach to serve the Lord in the priesthood within the inner court, located on the highest level, that of the altar of burnt offering (Ezek. 44: 13-14), nor would they touch the sacred things from the inner court inward.

They had lost the dignity of the higher priestly services, such as those performed in the holy place of the temple or tabernacle, where they could carry the sacred vessels.

They would suffer the consequences of their sin ("they must bear the consequences of their sin").

The duties of the priests

15 "'But the Levitical priests, who are descendants of Zadok and who faithfully carried
out the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near
to minister before me; they are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood,
declares the Sovereign Lord.
16 They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister
before me and serve me as guards [NIV 1984: and perform my service].

The prophet now speaks of the sons of Zadok, whom God set apart to stand before Him in the inner sanctuary, at the altar of burnt offering, to offer sacrifices to Him.

The sons of Zadok were descendants of the priest Zadok, son of Ahitub, a descendant of Eleazar, the third son of Aaron (1 Chr. 6: 3; 1 Chr. 6: 50-53).

They had remained faithful when the others turned away from God.

During the time of Absalom's rebellion against David, Zadok and Abiathar (a descendant of Ithamar) remained loyal to David (2 Sam. 15: 24).

Later, however, Abiathar was exiled from his priestly office because he participated in Adonijah's treachery to take the throne from Solomon's hands.

Solomon, therefore, gave the office of high priest to Zadok in the first temple (1 Kin. 2: 27; 1 Kin. 2: 35).

As an honor for his faithfulness to David, God gave his descendants the right to approach Him to serve Him, offering on the altar the fat and blood of the offerings, which were intended only for the Lord.

17 "'When they enter the gates of the inner court, they are to wear linen clothes; they must
not wear any woolen garment while ministering at the gates of the inner court or inside
the temple.
18 They are to wear linen turbans on their heads and linen undergarments around their
waists. They must not wear anything that makes them perspire.
19 When they go out into the outer court where the people are, they are to take off the
clothes they have been ministering in and are to leave them in the sacred rooms, and put

on other clothes, so that the people are not consecrated through contact with their garments.

But God reminded Ezekiel of the responsibilities and guidelines given to them in the book of the Law. Then, he begins to speak of linen garments (Ezek. 44: 17-19; Ex. 28: 42; Lev. 16: 4; Lev. 21: 10; Hag. 2: 12).

The priest wore linen tunics, undergarments, a belt, and a linen turban during his service. Linen signifies righteousness and holiness (Ps. 132: 9; Rev. 19: 8). Priests were not to wear woolen clothing so that they would not sweat, because in ancient times sweat was a symbol of impurity, and it speaks of man's effort (Gen. 3: 19). And God wanted His priests to serve Him by resting in Him and working in partnership with Him, not through the sweat of their own human effort.

Ezek. 44: 19 repeats that the priests should change their garments before leaving the inner court for the area designated for the people (Ezek. 42: 14). Here in Ezek. 44: 19, the Bible writes: "so that they do not sanctify the people with their garments."

The priestly garments were consecrated, holy; therefore, both the garments and the altar sanctified everything they touched or that touched them (Ex. 29: 37). This was planned by God to give them the idea of separation between the holy and the profane, that is, holiness required special conditions.

20 "'They must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but they are to keep the hair of their heads trimmed.

Ezekiel go on mentioning other duties of the priests.

Ezek. 44: 20: not to shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but to trim their hair (Lev. 21: 5). Shaving the head (or disheveled the hair) along with tearing clothes was customary in the ritual of mourning (Lev. 21: 10).

Letting one's hair grow long indicated that the person was taking a Nazirite vow (Num. 6: 1-8) or an act of carelessness and vanity (as in the case of Absalom) that could bring bad consequences later.

21 No priest is to drink wine when he enters the inner court.

The priest was forbidden to drink wine when serving in the inner court (Lev. 10: 9), lest to be taken over by any spirit other than the Spirit of the Lord and lose his self-control and self-discipline.

22 They must not marry widows or divorced women; they may marry only virgins of Israelite descent or widows of priests.

The high priest could not marry a widow (Lev. 21: 14), only a virgin from his own people. But there was an exception: Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC), son of John Hyrcanus I and grandson of Simon Maccabee (143-135 BC) inherited the throne of his brother Aristobulus I (104-103 BC) because he married his widow, Salome Alexandra, according to the levirate law). This is still a much-debated issue among rabbis, as the Hasmonean lineage has presented some discrepancies with Mosaic law.

The priests (Lev. 21: 7, Ezek. 44: 22) could marry widows, provided they were widows of another priest.

Common priests and men of the people could marry widows to fulfill the law of levirate marriage (Deut. 25: 5-10).

Like the high priest, they could not marry a prostitute or a dishonored (non-virgin) or divorced woman (Lev. 21: 7, 13-14).

23 They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common and show
them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.
24 "'In any dispute, the priests are to serve as judges and decide it according to my
ordinances. They are to keep my laws and my decrees for all my appointed feasts, and
they are to keep my Sabbaths holy.

The priests were also to act as judges in disputes and arguments (Deut. 17: 8-13; Deut. 21: 5), according to the Lord's commandment, not according to their own judgment. And this was a way to teach the people the difference between the holy and the common, the unclean and the clean (Lev. 10: 10; Mal. 2: 7), not only in religious matters.

They were also to keep the statutes concerning the feasts ordained by the Lord ("My appointed feasts"), and the Sabbath as a day sanctified by Him for deeper communion with His children. Observance of the Sabbath was a central point in the covenant between God and his people.

25 "'A priest must not defile himself by going near a dead person; however, if the dead
person was his father or mother, son or daughter, brother or unmarried sister, then he may
defile himself.
26 After he is cleansed, he must wait seven days.
27 On the day he goes into the inner court of the sanctuary to minister in the sanctuary, he
is to offer a sin offering for himself, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Ezek. 44: 25-27 concerns the recommendations for mourning and touching a corpse.

Priests could not touch corpses for anyone from the people, except for very close relatives: father, mother, son, daughter, brother, and virgin sister (Lev. 21: 1-4). He was considered unclean for seven days (Num. 19: 11). After fulfilling the purification ritual (the purifying water – Num. 19: 1-22), he had to wait another seven days and offer his sin offering to the Lord (Ezek. 44: 27). Then he could enter the inner court to serve in the holy place.

But for the high priest, this rule was a little stricter. He could not approach any dead body, not even his father or mother, son, daughter, brother, or sister (Lev. 10: 6-7; Lev. 21: 11-12). This is what happened to Aaron, in the case of the death of his sons, Nadab and Abihu. Touching a corpse was a sign of ceremonial impurity, and the high priest was considered to be at a higher level of holiness.

The division of the lands

28 "'I am to be the only inheritance the priests have. You are to give them no possession
in Israel; I will be their possession.
29 They will eat the grain offerings, the sin offerings and the guilt offerings; and
everything in Israel devoted to the Lord will belong to them.

Ezekiel 44: 28-31 speaks about the provisions for the priests.

The Lord begins with the same phrase given to Moses about the priestly inheritance, that is, they would not have possessions in Israel like the other tribes, for He was their inheritance (Num. 18: 20).

They did not inherit property or cities, but the Lord would be their provider, since they had been set apart only to serve Him.

The Lord gave them the grain offerings, the sin offerings, the guilt offerings, and everything that was consecrated to Him (Num. 18: 8-19).

The Hebrew term used here is 'herem', which means 'dedicated, consecrated' (Lev. 27: 28-29). For example, man or animal consecrated to the Lord could not be redeemed, otherwise it would be killed.

In Ezek. 44: 29 and Num. 18: 14, the offerings to God, and given to the priest by Him, are called herem and qödhesh ('holy'), for what a man sets aside entirely for God (herem), He receives and sets aside for Himself and that thing becomes qödhesh, holy to Him, and therefore it can no longer be redeemed by man.

That's why 'herem' (In Hebrew) or 'anathema' (In Greek) was a thing that was devoted to God, but became accursed to anyone who touched it or used it for another purpose. This is what happened to Achan, who touched on the condemned things (or 'the devoted things' or 'the things devoted to destruction' or 'the accursed thing'), after the fall of Jericho (Josh. 6: 18; Josh. 7: 1, 11, 12, 15) an was killed.

30 The best of all the firstfruits and of all your special gifts will belong to the priests. You are to give them the first portion of your ground meal so that a blessing may rest on your household.

The firstfruits ("the first" or "the best") were to be given to the priests. And if the people did this, their houses would be blessed.

31 The priests must not eat anything, bird or animal, found dead or torn by wild animals.

The priests would not eat the meat of birds or animals found dead or torn apart by wild animals. They were considered impure.

Chapter 45

Ezek 45 – NIV

Note: NVI uses the measure of 50 cm, instead of 51,8 cm as I am using. So I will use the cubit of 50 cm in this chapter and in chapter 48.

The division of the land

The portion for the Levites

1 "'When you allot the land as an inheritance, you are to present to the Lord a portion of
the land as a sacred district, 25,000 cubits [12.5 km] long and 10,000 [Septuagint says
20,000] cubits [10 kilometers] wide; the entire area will be holy.
2 Of this, a section 500 cubits [250 meters] square is to be for the sanctuary, with 50 cubits
[25 meters] around it for open land.
3 In the sacred district, measure off a section 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km] and 10,000
cubits [5 kilometers] wide. In it will be the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place.
4 It will be the sacred portion of the land for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and
who draw near to minister before the Lord. It will be a place for their houses as well as a
holy place for the sanctuary.
5 An area 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km] and 10,000 cubits wide [5 km] will belong to the
Levites, who serve in the temple, as their possession for towns to live in.

The portion for the whole house of Israel.

6 "'You are to give the city as its property an area 5,000 cubits wide [2.5 kilometers] and
25,000 cubits long [12.5 km], adjoining the sacred portion; it will belong to all Israel.

The portion of the prince.

7 "'The prince will have the land bordering each side of the area formed by the sacred
district and the property of the city. It will extend westward from the west side and
eastward from the east side, running lengthwise from the western to the eastern border
parallel to one of the tribal portions.
8 This land will be his possession in Israel. And my princes will no longer oppress my
people but will allow the people of Israel to possess the land according to their tribes.

The Holy portion of the land given to the Lord was granted to the priests, descendants of Zadok, and was 25,000 cubits long x 10,000 cubits wide [12.5 x 5 km]. In the center of this Holy portion would be the area for the sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. The rest would be the land of the priests, for their houses.

The sanctuary of 500 cubits (250 m) on each side (Ezek. 42: 16-20) would have an open area of 50 cubits around it (25 meters), that is, 525 cubits in total (275 meters).

The Levites will also receive a portion measuring 25,000 cubits long x 10,000 cubits wide (12.5 x 5 km), for towns to live in ['cities for habitation' in the Septuagint]. This strip of land is adjacent the sacred portion of the priests.

South of the portion of the Levites, there is another strip of land of equal length (25,000 cubits, or 12.5 km) and 5,000 cubits wide (2.5 km) reserved as the portion of the whole house of Israel.

Thus, the entire area is 25,000 cubits long and 25,000 cubits wide, divided widthwise into three areas: two of 10,000 cubits and one of 5,000 cubits wide.

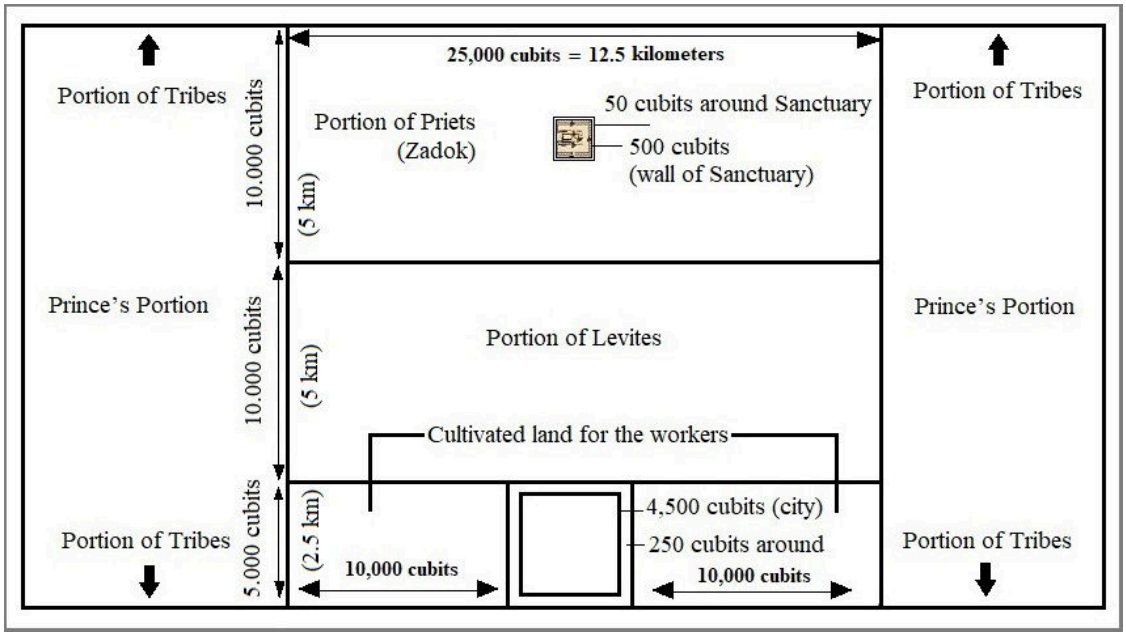
The land of the sons of Zadok stayed to the north.

The land of the Levites stayed in the center.

The city stayed to the south.

At least that is the order in which the Bible describes the portions.

The portion of the prince would be the land on each side of the sacred area and the city.



A call for justice and fairness

9 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: You have gone far enough, princes of Israel!
Give up your violence and oppression and do what is just and right. Stop dispossessing
my people, declares the Sovereign Lord.
10 You are to use accurate scales, an accurate ephah [An ephah was a dry measure having
the capacity of about 3/5 bushel or about 22 liters] and an accurate bath. [A bath was a
liquid measure equaling about 6 gallons or about 22 liters.]
11 The ephah and the bath are to be the same size, the bath containing a tenth of a homer
and the ephah a tenth of a homer; the homer is to be the standard measure for both.
12 The shekel [A shekel weighed about 2/5 ounce or about 12 grams] is to consist of
twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels plus twenty-five shekels plus fifteen shekels equal one
mina. [That is, 60 shekels; the common mina was 50 shekels. Sixty shekels were about 1
1/2 pounds or about 690 grams].

God commands the princes to no longer oppress His people.

The Lord told them to remove oppression and violence from their lives and to practice justice and righteousness (NIV: what is just and right).

And that they should not seize what belonged to the people anymore, for previous kings had appropriated the lands of their subjects.

The Lord emphasizes the importance of honesty and justice in business transactions and provides guidelines for weights and measures.

They were to use honest measures:

Ephah is a unit of dry measure, equivalent 20-40 liters.

Bath is a measure of capacity, equivalent 20-40 liters.

They will be equal and will correspond to 1/10 of the barrel (homer), a measure of capacity for dry goods between 200-400 liters.

The shekel = 12g or 20 gerahs.

20 shekel + 25 shekel + 15 shekel = 60 shekels = 1 mina (50 shekels or 600 grams).

The shekel weighed approximately 11.5 g (some say 12 g).

In Babylon, 24 gerahs made up a shekel, but Ezekiel established the standard at 20 gerahs; However, 60 shekels made up a pound, which is in accordance with what is described in this verse. In Ezekiel's system, this pound weighed around 680 g.

Traders were urged to use precise measures of the ephah (35 liters) and the bath (23-34 liters), both defined as one-tenth of the homer (200-400 liters).

They were no longer to deceive the people when weighing goods (Lev. 19:35, 36; Am. 8: 5; Mic. 6: 10-12).

The offering of the prince.

13 "'This is the special gift you are to offer: a sixth of an ephah [2.7 kilograms] from each homer of wheat and a sixth of an ephah [2.3 kilograms] from each homer of barley.
14 The prescribed portion of olive oil, measured by the bath, is a tenth of a bath [2.2 liters] from each cor (which consists of ten baths or one homer, for ten baths are equivalent to a homer).
15 Also one sheep is to be taken from every flock of two hundred from the well-watered pastures of Israel. These will be used for the grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the people, declares the Sovereign Lord.
16 All the people of the land will participate in this special gift for the use of the prince in Israel.
17 It will be the duty of the prince to provide the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths—at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel. He will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel.

Then, He states the measure to be used for the offerings of the princes or magistrates:

Wheat and barley – 1/6 of an ephah of each homer.

Olive oil – 1/10 of a bath of each homer or cor.

Flock of 200 sheep – 1 sheep from the well-watered pastures of Israel (NRSV: the rich pastures of Israel).

All this for the grain offering and the burnt offering and for the fellowship offering.

This was so that the magistrates made atonement for the people.

The people would give this as a contribution to the prince for this purpose.

The prince would be responsible for the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, the drink offerings at the New Moon Festivals and on the Sabbaths, at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel.

The New Year offerings

18 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: In the first month on the first day you are to take a young bull without defect and purify the sanctuary.
19 The priest is to take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the upper ledge of the altar and on the gateposts of the inner court.
20 You are to do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who sins unintentionally or through ignorance; so you are to make atonement for the temple.

As a New Year offering the prince was to bring on the 1st day of the 1st month 1 bull without blemish and purify the sanctuary. The priest would take the blood and put it on the doorposts of the temple and on the 4 corners of the altar ledge and on the doorposts of the inner court (NIV: on the doorposts of the inner courtyard).

On the 7th day of the month he would atonement for the sins of ignorance or unintentional sins (ARA: of the simple) of any person.

This act of annual purification of the sanctuary on the 1st day of the 1st month is somewhat difficult to interpret here, since the month of Nisan or Abib, the 1st month of the religious calendar, was not commonly a day of atonement. The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16: 29) occurred on the 10th day of the 7th month, Ethanim or Tishri, after Rosh Hashanah, the Day of the Sounding of Trumpets, commemorating the Civil New Year (Num. 29: 1). Therefore, this celebration of Ezekiel could not refer to something already written in the Torah. The fact is that Jesus has already made atonement for all of us through His death on the cross.

The Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles

21 "'In the first month on the fourteenth day you are to observe the Passover, a feast lasting seven days, during which you shall eat bread made without yeast.
22 On that day the prince is to provide a bull as a sin offering for himself and for all the people of the land.
23 Every day during the seven days of the Feast he is to provide seven bulls and seven rams without defect as a burnt offering to the Lord, and a male goat for a sin offering.
24 He is to provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull and an ephah for each ram, along with a hin [3.8 liters] of olive oil for each ephah.
25 "'During the seven days of the Feast, which begins in the seventh month on the fifteenth day, he is to make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings and oil.

Passover (Feast of unleavened bread) occurred on the 14th day of the 1st month and they ate unleavened bread for seven days. On this day the prince, for himself and for the people, would give a bull as a sin offering.

Daily, during the seven days, a burnt offering was offered to the Lord with seven bulls and seven rams without blemish. And one goat each day as a sin offering.

For each bull and for each ram, the grain offering was made with 1 ephah (not 1/6 of an ephah) and 1 hin of oil for each ephah (the hin was a measure of capacity for liquids, ranging between 3 and 6 liters).

In verse 25, Ezekiel is referring to the Feast of Tabernacles, which takes place from the 15th to the 21st day of the 7th month (Lev. 23: 34, 'Ethãnïm or Tishri). On the 22nd day, a solemn closing ceremony of the feast takes place (Lev. 23: 33-36).

At the Feast of Tabernacles, the prince would do the same during the seven days of the feast.

During the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament, animal sacrifices were offered to the Lord during the seven days of the festival (Num. 28: 16-25; Num. 29: 12-38).

Atonement is the overall purpose of all these sacrifices. On the basis of this atonement, the Lord can dwell in His sanctuary in the midst of His people.

Chapter 46

Ezek 46 – NIV

On Saturdays and New Moon Festivals

1 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: The gate of the inner court facing east is to be
shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day and on the day of the New Moon it
is to be opened.
2 The prince is to enter from the outside *[the outer court]* through the portico of the
gateway and stand by the gatepost. The priests are to sacrifice his burnt offering and his
fellowship offerings. He is to worship at the threshold of the gateway and then go out, but
the gate will not be shut until evening.
3 On the Sabbaths and New Moons the people of the land are to worship in the presence
of the Lord at the entrance of that gateway.

Ezekiel 46 continues the subject of offerings, now focusing on the Sabbaths and the New Moon festivals, that is, the beginning of the months.

The east gate of the outer court must always remain closed (Ezek. 44: 2). The inner gate "shall be shut six working days," but must be opened on the seventh day, the Sabbath day (Ezek. 46: 1) and on the first day of each month, the day of the New Moon.

The prince would enter through the vestibule of the gate and stand by the doorpost.

The priests would prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he would worship at the threshold of the gate, but he would not enter the inner court.

The people of the land would also worship there at the entrance of the same gate, not passing through the vestibule, on Saturdays and New Moon Festivals.

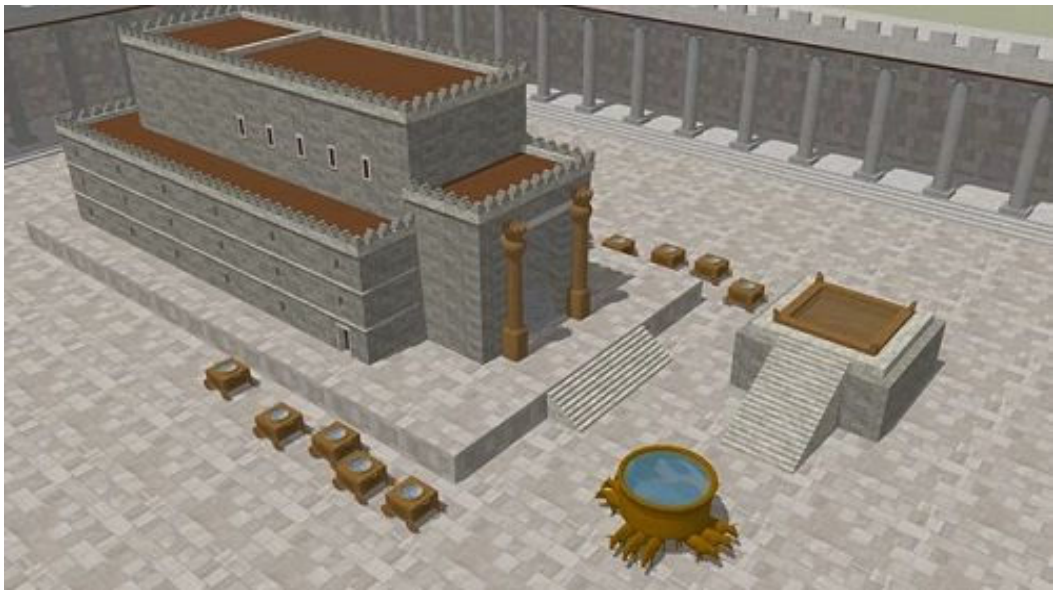
4 The burnt offering the prince brings to the Lord on the Sabbath day is to be six male
lambs and a ram, all without defect.
5 The grain offering given with the ram is to be an ephah [about 16 kilograms or 22 liters],
and the grain offering with the lambs is to be as much as he pleases, along with a hin
[about 4 liters] of olive oil for each ephah.
6 On the day of the New Moon he is to offer a young bull, six lambs and a ram, all without
defect.
7 He is to provide as a grain offering one ephah with the bull, one ephah with the ram, and
with the lambs as much as he wants to give, along with a hin [about 4 liters] of oil for
each ephah.
8 When the prince enters, he is to go in through the portico of the gateway, and he is to
come out the same way.

The burnt offering that the prince would offer to the Lord on the Sabbath would be 6 lambs without blemish and 1 ram without blemish.

The grain offering would be 1 ephah for each ram and whatever he could afford for each lamb; and 1 hin of oil for each ephah.

But at the Feast of the New Moon, he would offer 1 bull without blemish, 1 ram, and 6 lambs. For the grain offering, he would bring 1 ephah for each bull and 1 ephah for each ram, but for the lambs, it would be whatever he could afford. And 1 hin of oil for each ephah. The prince would enter through the portico of the gate and go out by there.

In the Tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple, the bronze altar was located in the outer courtyard, where ordinary people were also allowed to stay.



Instructions regarding offerings

9 "'When the people of the land come before the Lord at the appointed festivals, whoever
enters by the north gate to worship is to go out the south gate; and whoever enters by the
south gate is to go out the north gate. No one is to return through the gate by which they
entered, but each is to go out the opposite gate.
10 The prince is to be among them, going in when they go in and going out when they go
out.
11 At the festivals and the appointed feasts, the grain offering is to be an ephah with a bull,
an ephah with a ram, and with the lambs as much as he pleases, along with a hin of oil
for each ephah [about 16 kilograms or 22 liters].

12 "'When the prince provides a freewill offering to the Lord—whether a burnt offering
or fellowship offerings—the gate facing east is to be opened for him. He shall offer his
burnt offering or his fellowship offerings as he does on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go
out, and after he has gone out, the gate will be shut.
13 "'Every day you are to provide a year-old lamb without defect for a burnt offering to
the Lord; morning by morning you shall provide it.
14 You are also to provide with it morning by morning a grain offering, consisting of a
sixth of an ephah [about 2.7 kilograms] with a third of a hin [about 1.3 liters] of oil to
moisten the flour. The presenting of this grain offering to the Lord is a lasting ordinance.
15 So the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided morning by morning
for a regular burnt offering.

At the appointed festivals, the prince would enter and exit the temple through the north or south gate to offer sacrifices for himself.

When the people of the land (the Jews who were neither Levites nor priests) came before the Lord at the appointed feasts, whoever entered through the north gate would go out through the south gate. And whoever entered through the south gate would go out through the north gate. This was because there would be a large number of people, and order was needed in the movement of the crowd. The prince would obey the same rule, entering and leaving together with the people for worship.

At the appointed feasts and other solemnities, the grain offering would be 1 ephah for each bull and 1 for each ram; but as for the lambs, it would be what they could give, 1 hin of oil for each ephah.

When the prince prepared the burnt offering and the peace offerings as a freewill offering to the Lord, then the gate to the east would be opened and he would do what he usually did on the Sabbath day, and the gate would be closed after he left; not immediately after the prince's departure, but it would remain open until nightfall.

Next, there are instructions for the people's regular offerings.

They would prepare a year-old lamb without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord every morning. And along with it they would bring the grain offering, consisting of 1/6 of an ephah and 1/3 of a hin, to be mixed with fine flour (flour of the best quality, that's what it means). This would be the continual burnt offering to the Lord.

16 "'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: If the prince makes a gift from his inheritance
to one of his sons, it will also belong to his descendants; it is to be their property by
inheritance.
17 If, however, he makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, the servant may
keep it until the year of freedom; then it will revert to the prince. His inheritance belongs
to his sons only; it is theirs.
18 The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people, driving them off their
property. He is to give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of
my people be separated from his property.'"

Ezek. 46: 16-18 – this passage speaks about descendants and property.

The prince had children and servants. The laws concerning inheritance and family rights related to property remained an important aspect of life for the people of Israel (Lev. 25: 8-15, 23-34; Lev. 27: 24; Num. 27: 1-11; Num. 33: 54; Num. 34: 18; Josh. 14-21; Mic. 2: 1, 2).

Again, the prince's character is presented in stark contrast to that of many of Israel's ancient leaders (Ezek. 34: 1-10). This civil leader would be just to both his children and

his subjects; none would be deprived of their inheritance. Justice, not power, would be the goal of all who exercised authority in the land.

If he gave a gift from his inheritance to one of his sons, it would belong to him and his descendants by inheritance; that would be their possession.

But if he gave it to one of his servants, it would be his until the year of liberty (the year of jubilee – Lev. 27: 24; Lev. 25: 10-13),but then it would return to the prince, for the land was the inheritance of his sons.

This referred to what had been entrusted to a servant to care for, but the inheritance actually belonged to the son. The servant cared for it, but was not the legal owner. It is like returning to God, multiplied, the gifts that He entrusted to us on earth to care for Him, for they do not belong to us but to Him.

The prince could not keep the land of the people; what he left to his sons should be his own, not taken from them.

The prince should not expand his property by expelling the people from their possessions (Ezek. 46: 18; Ezek. 45: 8), as other kings had done before. Ahab, for example, seized Naboth's inheritance (1 Kin 21: 1-3; 1 Kin 21: 11-16).

The Year of Jubilee: Lev. 27: 24; Lev. 25: 10-13 – here, in this case, it would be a land that was legally someone's, but out of necessity, he had sold or mortgaged it to pay a debt or so that someone else could take care of it in his place because the person could not do it himself. Then, in the Year of Jubilee, when the debts were forgiven, the land would return to its rightful owner. In the Year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year, all debts were forgiven, lands returned to their original owners, and slaves were set free. Levite houses were also protected by the laws of redemption and Jubilee, as such dwellings represented their only possession.

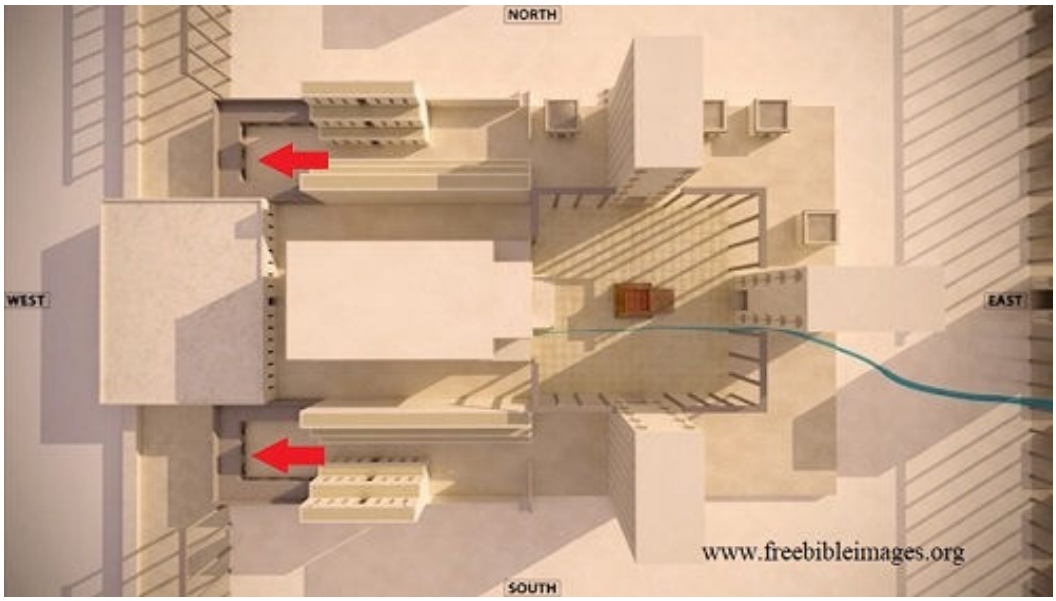
Jer. 32: 6-15 – the field of Anathoth: "'Buy my field at Anathoth, because as nearest relative it is your right and duty to buy it.'" (Jr 32: 7b). This could refer to the Year of Jubilee:

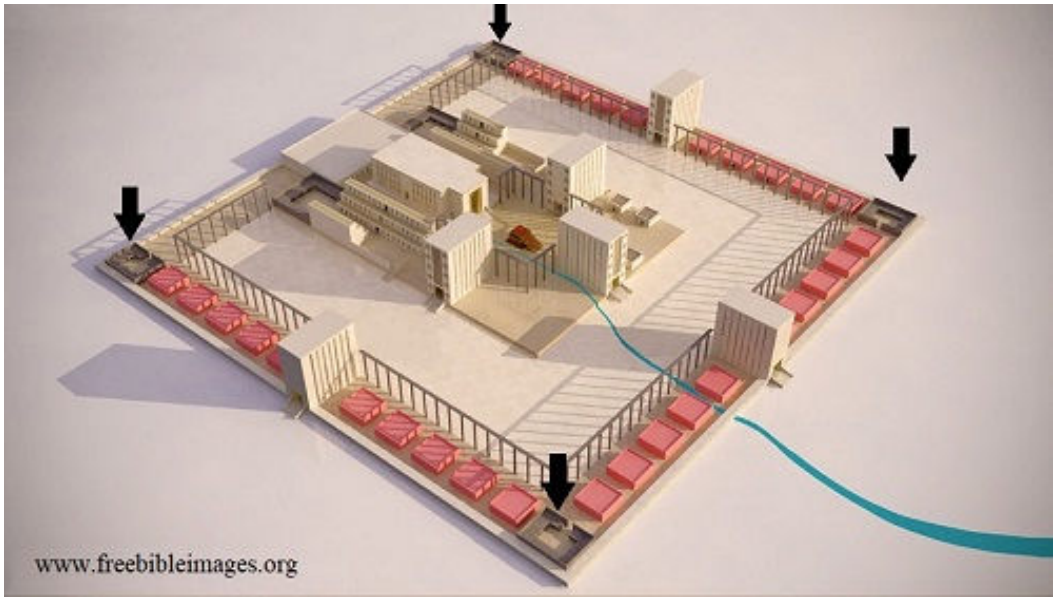
Lev. 25, especially in this case, verses 32 to 34, says: "'The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. But the pasture-land belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession."

There was also the year of remission every 7 years (Deut. 15: 1-11), for those who lent something. This was also a year of debt cancellation. Every seven years, the land of Israel was to rest, that is, it was not to be cultivated. This was the sabbatical year, a period of rest for the land when nothing was planted or harvested, though people could eat whatever the land produced spontaneously.

19 Then the man brought me through the entrance at the side of the gate to the sacred rooms facing north, which belonged to the priests, and showed me a place at the western end.
20 He said to me, "This is the place where the priests are to cook the guilt offering and the sin offering and bake the grain offering, to avoid bringing them into the outer court and consecrating the people."
21 He then brought me to the outer court and led me around to its four corners, and I saw in each corner another court.
22 In the four corners of the outer court were enclosed [The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain] courts, forty cubits long and thirty cubits wide [or 21 meters long and 16 meters wide]; each of the courts in the four corners was the same size.

[23] Around the inside of each of the four courts was a ledge of stone, with places for fire built all around under the ledge.
[24] He said to me, “These are the kitchens where those who minister at the temple are to cook the sacrifices of the people.”





Then the man brought Ezekiel to the entrance that was beside the inner east gate, to the holy chambers of the priests, which faced north; and he showed him a place on the west side. He is talking about the chambers on the inner court. This was the place where the priests would cook the guilt offering, the sin offering, and the grain offering so that they would not be brought to the outer court, to the people, for they were holy.

This place was one of two buildings for the priests at the far west end of the temple complex (Ezek 42:1-14). The place resembled a kitchen.

Again, the man took Ezekiel to the outer court and showed him that in each corner there was a small courtyard.

These were smaller courtyards, 40 cubits long and 30 cubits wide [20.72 x 15.54 m]. They were all the same size. They were also kitchens. These kitchens belonged to the Levites, ministers of the house (Ezek. 44: 11-14).

'The sacrifices of the people' (Ez 46: 24): These sacrifices were the peace offerings, whose meat was eaten by the worshiper and the priest who offered it to the Lord (Lev 3: 1-17; Lev 7: 11-21; Lev 7: 28-34).

Chapter 47

Ezek 47 – NIV

The River From the Temple

[1] The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.
[2] He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.
[3] As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits [518 meters] and then led me through water that was ankle-deep.
[4] He measured off another thousand cubits [518 meters] and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand [518 meters] and led me through water that was up to the waist.
[5] He measured off another thousand [518 meters], but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross.
[6] He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

Ezekiel was standing in the outer courtyard looking at the kitchens, and from outside the vestibule of the east gate of the inner court he saw water flowing from under the threshold of the sanctuary, on the right side of the house, south of the altar of burnt offering.

Then the man took him again through the outer north gate (v.2) and made him walk around outside the temple, and he saw that under the threshold of the east gate water was flowing eastward.

The water came "under the threshold of the house" because the sanctuary and the altar were on a higher level than the outer courtyard.

The river was becoming increasingly torrential, and the man explained its meaning to him.

[7] When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river.
[8] He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah [Or the Jordan Valley], where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea [the Dead Sea], the salty water [NRSV: the sea of stagnant waters] there becomes fresh.
[9] Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.
[10] Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Great Sea [The Mediterranean Sea].
[11] But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.
[12] Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing."

Ezekiel saw a great abundance of trees along the riverbanks. The waters flowing eastward from the temple descended into the Jordan River valley and entered the Dead Sea, making the water suitable for aquatic life. Wherever the river flowed, there would be life—for plants and all kinds of animals—until the waters reached the sea. There, where the water was once highly saline and unsuitable for fish, would now contain many fish, as numerous as those in the Mediterranean Sea. And fishermen could cast their nets there, for they would surely catch many fish. Only the marshes and the swampy grounds of stagnant, murky water would be left for salt. On the high banks of the river, fruit trees of every kind would grow on both sides; their leaves would never wither, and their fruit would not fall. They would bear fruit every month of the year because of the water from the sanctuary. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

Many people read this text of Ezekiel, as well as many OT prophecies, looking for its fulfillment in a physical, material and palpable way; however, they forget that this is one of the prophecies that has already been fulfilled by God in Jesus' presence, especially when He came to Jerusalem to teach or heal. He was the temple of God with men and the waters that flowed from Him were the Holy Spirit. Ezekiel says that the temple was facing east and the waters flowed from the south of the house: "The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar." (v.1)

Jesus was always turned to spiritual things ("for the temple faced east"), because His mission was spiritual. The east symbolizes the spiritual world, the spiritual things. In the OT, the belief was that God always entered the temple from the east side (Ezek. 43: 1-2; 4; Ezek. 44: 2). Ezekiel also says that the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar, and flowed towards the east.

The south represents our own lives, our humanity and imperfection in comparison with the majesty and fullness of God, that is, the north (the north, in the bible, means the throne of God, what guides our lives, His Word and His abundant life for us). So, Jesus incarnate received the anointing of the Spirit and let it flow freely, without fear of exhaustion, because He knew that, as a human being like us, it did not come from Him, but from Him who was greater and was on high, the Father. And He let this life and this healing flow for those who suffered the tribulations on earth, in the natural life; however, they could not obtain the favor of God by their own will power or piety, or by any sacrifice

('altar'). Only His ultimate sacrifice made for us would open the door to the throne of God (north). The altar the prophet speaks of is the bronze altar or the altar of burnt offering, where animals were sacrificed as atonement for sins.

Then he goes on saying: "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah [Or the Jordan Valley], where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the Dead Sea, the salty water there becomes fresh." (v.8). They flowed south through the barren, rocky region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, along the Jordan Valley, to the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is the body of water with the highest saline concentration in the world (approximately 25% salt) and currently cannot support the life of any species of aquatic animal. It is the lowest altitude point on the planet (450 meters below sea level), and is

450 meters deep. Its evaporation even kills the birds that fly over it. The Dead Sea receives the waters of the Jordan, but has no exit for them.

The prophet was saying that this sea that was dead would show life of all kinds in its waters and on its banks (fish and vegetation), from En-Gedi to En-Eglaim. The amount of fish would be large, and the vegetation would always be productive (v.12) because of this river whose waters flow out of the sanctuary (v.1). Therefore, the waters of the Dead Sea would be healthy ("the water will become fresh" – v.8-9) and suitable for all forms of life. But the swamps would be left to salt; they would not become fresh (v.11). The increasingly abundant waters (v.3-5) symbolize the Holy Spirit and its increasing anointing, and they came out of the temple to renew many lives (v.7-10; 12). The living water of God (cf. Jn. 7: 37-39, where the evangelist writes: "as the Scripture has said") has power to restore and resurrect life.

In other words, the Holy Spirit is like a river of water that flows from the throne of God to everyone who believes in Jesus, and this river has the power to renew, restore and resurrect life, even in dry and desert places or in a sea that is dead, as the Dead Sea in Israel. Here, fish can symbolize souls enlivened by the word of God; 'all kinds of trees for food' can symbolize the children of God, who bear fruit through the presence of the waters of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit they bear for the kingdom of God are continuous (all year long) and serve as food for the hungry souls; and its leaves provide healing for the needy and sick for their sins.

We can see that the river (v. 9) is sufficient for all creatures at the same time, which means that the Lord does not limit His blessing or His anointing on anyone who seeks Him and drinks His word of life. It is interesting to observe the use the expression 'will become fresh' (this can mean: fresh, invigorated, youthful, lush) in reference to everything that is reached and watered by the waters that flow from the sanctuary, because when there is no water there is no life or health, everything dies and everything dries up; all creatures and plants perish. Such is a heart that rejects the word of God, His spirit and His teaching, and clings only to earthly and insignificant things: it is a sick, dry, hardened and cold heart that has nothing good to offer anyone. In short, it is dead. It doesn't smile, it sees no beauty in anything; it no longer has motivation to live.

The Holy Spirit is a gift given by God to all who accept the lordship of Jesus and want a reason to be on earth, all who want to serve Him and multiply what they receive from Him. Thus, both for people who believe in God but have not yet confessed Jesus as Lord of their lives, and for those who already have a deeper communion with Him but need more of His strength, the Holy Spirit becomes an available blessing from God.

However, for those who reject Him and for those who rebel against Him, the only thing that is left for them is barrenness, 'the salt,' which, when in excess, dehydrates and removes life ("But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt." – v.11). Marshes and swamps are muddy terrains with stagnant water, which symbolically represent attachment to earthly values and immersion in worldly things; a sinful nature unwilling to recycle itself, like a stagnant puddle of water. One proof of this is what Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot." (Matt. 5: 13)

Salt seasons, gives flavor, preserves food and makes us thirsty. In ancient times, people used salt to preserve food, slowing down its decomposition process.

Chemically speaking, salt cannot lose its salinity since sodium chloride is a stable compound. But much of the salt in the eastern countries of Antiquity was derived from salt marshes and not from the evaporation of salt water, and therefore contained many

impurities, for it was mixed with earth and vegetable substances, and thus became unhealthy. That kind of salt was good for nothing except to cover the roads, the same way we use gravel today, and passers-by would trample on it [according to Albert Barnes, an American Presbyterian theologian (1798–1870)]. However, Jesus may have used this illustration to show what a useless believer is. For a Christian, to lose flavor would be to lose his uniqueness, for he would mix with the values of the world and no longer make a difference, neither in this fallen world nor in the kingdom of God.

The prophet mentions two places, En Gedi and En-Eglaim.

En-Gedi ('en-gedhï, 'fountain of the goat' or 'spring of the kid', Josh. 15: 62; Song 1: 14; Ezek. 47:10) is an oasis of fresh water to the west of the Dead Sea, in the desert of Judea. En-Gedi is the current Ain Jidi, to the west of the Dead Sea, and halfway between the north and south ends.

David Waterfall in En-Gedi, Israel

The fertility of this area, in the midst of a so barren region, made it appropriate for the outlaws, to find food (Song 1: 14) and as a hiding place (David, for example: 1 Sam. 23: 29; 1 Sam. 24: 1-3). His former name was Hazazon Tamar, meaning 'clefts of the palm trees' (Gen. 14: 7; 2 Chr. 20: 2), because it was bathed by a constant hot stream, and was once famous for its palm trees and vineyards (Song 1: 14).

In the desert, behind the gorge, there are innumerable caves, in which David and his companions took refuge. Through En-Gedi passed the road that the Moabites and Ammonites followed when they attacked Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. 20: 1-2). The fountain still exists, a fine spring rising on a kind of terrace and goes on forming a stream that comes from the hill, from a height of a hundred and thirty-two yards above the level of the Dead Sea, where it empties. There, a steep slope began, 'the ascent of Ziz' (2 Chr. 20: 16), which seems to have been the present gorge that is still crossed.

Ein Gedi National Park was founded in 1972 and is one of Israel's most important nature reserves. It has two main streams fed by springs that run throughout the year: Nachal David (the brook of David) and Nachal Arugot (the brook of Arugot). There are

also two other springs that flow into the reserve: the Shulamit and Ein Gedi waterfalls. Arugot brook runs west to east in the West Bank, 31 km long. It empties into the Dead Sea south of Ein Gedi. Arugot, in Hebrew, is the plural of Arugah, which means ‘terrace or bed in the garden’, and derives from the Arabic, Areijeh.

En-Eglaim:

Possible location of En-Eglaim

According to some theologians, En-Eglaim (‘ên-‘eghlayim, ‘fountain of the two heifers’ or ‘fountain of the two calves’) is Ain Hajleh (Ain Hajlah) as a possible location – thinking that the Hebrew Eglaim might be a later version in a text that originally reads ‘Hoglah’ – as in the place name ‘Beth-Hoglah.’ The exact location has yet to be identified, although the proposals include Ain Hajlah, Ain Al-Fashka (Ein Feshkha) and Eglaim (’eghlayim, Isa. 15: 8, a village in Moab). Beth-Hoglah (or Ain Hajlah) was in the territory of Benjamin, on the border with Judah. Ain Hajlah or Ein Hajla means ‘Fountain of the Partridge.’

Ein Feshkha (Hebrew: עינות צוקים, Einot Tzukim; lit. ‘Cliff springs’) or Ain Al-Fashka is a 2,500-hectare nature reserve and archaeological site on the northwest shore

of the Dead Sea, about 3 km south of Qumran in the West Bank and 30 km north of En-Gedi. Ain Al-Fashka is located north of the headland of Feshkhah (Râs Feshkhah). Within the reserve is a group of springs of brackish water. The nature reserve comprises an open section with mineral water pools for bathing, surrounded by tall foliage and a closed section to visitation to protect native flora and fauna (source: wikipedia.org).

The Boundaries of the Land

13 This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "These are the boundaries of the land that you
will divide among the twelve tribes of Israel as their inheritance, with two portions for
Joseph.
14 You are to divide it *[the land]* equally among them *[The tribes]*. Because I swore with
uplifted hand to give it to your forefathers, this land will become your inheritance.
15 "This is to be the boundary of the land: "On the north side it will run from the Great
Sea by the Hethlon road past Lebo Hamath to Zedad,
16 Berothah [See Septuagint and 48: 1; Hebrew road to go into Zedad, Hamath, Berothah]
and Sibraim (which lies on the border between Damascus and Hamath), as far as Hazer
Hattikon, which is on the border of Hauran.
17 The boundary will extend from the sea to Hazar Enan [Hebrew Enon, a variant of Enan],
along the northern border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north. This will
be the north boundary.
18 "On the east side the boundary will run between Hauran and Damascus, along the
Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel, to the Dead Sea and as far as Tamar [See
Syriac; Hebrew Israel. You will measure to the eastern sea]. This will be the east
boundary.
19 "On the south side it will run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then
along the Wadi of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea [or Great Sea]. This will be the south
boundary.
20 "On the west side, the Mediterranean Sea [or Great Sea] will be the boundary to a point
opposite Lebo Hamath [Or the opposite to the entrance to]. This will be the west
boundary.
21 "You are to distribute this land among yourselves according to the tribes of Israel.
22 You are to allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners residing among
you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with
you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.
23 In whatever tribe a foreigner resides, there you are to give him his inheritance," declares
the Sovereign Lord.

When speaking of the division of the land, the Lord tells Ezekiel that Joseph would have two portions, and the portions would be equal for each tribe.

The tribe of Joseph was divided into two (Ephraim and Manasseh) to replace Levi and maintain the total of 12 tribes, since the Levites had already received their portion. The Lord was their portion. He did not give them a portion among the children of Israel.

The land of Israel would be redistributed into parallel horizontal strips from North to South, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

God delineated the land of Israel in its four corners: north, south, east, and west, and this space would be divided among the tribes.

The northern boundary of the land extended from the Mediterranean Sea, the Great Sea, to the northern border of Damascus.

Most of the locations mentioned in the text are unknown.

The eastern border would be the Jordan River.

The southern border ran from the Dead Sea, following along the Negev, to the Wadi of Egypt ('Wadi' = a dry riverbed), west of the Sinai Peninsula.

The western border ran along the coast of the Great Sea (Mediterranean) northward to a point directly west of Hamath (or Lebo Hamath), which may correspond to Hethlon, near the Lebanon mountain range.

Foreigners living among them (Gentiles who had married into the Jewish faith) would have a share in it, as if they were His own people (Isa. 56: 3,6-7).

Wherever this foreigner lived, in whatever tribe, he too would have his inheritance.

This signifies a prophecy concerning the Gentiles in God's plan, as Isaiah and the other prophets had already written in other words. Everyone has a place in the kingdom of God.

Chapter 48

Ezek 48 – NIV

Note: NVI uses the measure of 50 cm, instead of 51,8 cm as I am using. So I will use the cubit of 50 cm in this chapter as I used in chapter 45.

The Division of the Land

[1] "These are the tribes, listed by name: At the northern frontier, Dan will have one portion; it will follow the Hethlon road to Lebo Hamath; Hazar Enan and the northern border of Damascus next to Hamath will be part of its border from the east side to the west side.
[2] "Asher will have one portion; it will border the territory of Dan from east to west.
[3] "Naphtali will have one portion; it will border the territory of Asher from east to west.
[4] "Manasseh will have one portion; it will border the territory of Naphtali from east to west.
[5] "Ephraim will have one portion; it will border the territory of Manasseh from east to west.
[6] "Reuben will have one portion; it will border the territory of Ephraim from east to west.
[7] "Judah will have one portion; it will border the territory of Reuben from east to west.

In Ezekiel 48, the division of land is discussed again, complementing what was said in Ezek. 45:1-8.

The land of Israel would be redistributed into parallel horizontal strips from North to South, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Seven tribes are located north of the sacred portion and five to the south, organized in strips of land.

North of the sacred area: Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah.

[8] "Bordering the territory of Judah from east to west will be the portion you are to present as a special gift. It will be 25,000 cubits wide [12.5 km], and its length from east to west will equal one of the tribal portions; the sanctuary will be in the center of it.
[9] "The special portion you are to offer to the Lord will be 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km] and 10,000 cubits [5 km] wide.
[10] This will be the sacred portion for the priests. It will be 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km] on the north side, 10,000 cubits wide [5 km] on the west side, 10,000 cubits wide [5 km] on the east side and 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km] on the south side. In the center of it will be the sanctuary of the Lord.
[11] This will be for the consecrated priests, the Zadokites, who were faithful in serving me and did not go astray as the Levites did when the Israelites went astray.
[12] It will be a special gift to them from the sacred portion of the land, a most holy portion, bordering the territory of the Levites.

The borders of the Priests and Levites

[13] "Alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites will have an allotment 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km] and 10,000 cubits wide [5 km]. Its total length will be 25,000 cubits [12.5 km] and its width 10,000 cubits [5 km].

14 They must not sell or exchange any of it. This is the best of the land and must not pass into other hands, because it is holy to the Lord.

In the middle of the entire territory there is an area of 25,000 x 25,000 cubits containing:

1) The northern section for the priests and the temple (25,000 x 10,000 cubits – 12.5 x 5 km), with the sanctuary in the center.

2) The middle section for the Levites (25,000 x 10,000 cubits – 12.5 x 5 km).

In Ezek. 48: 14, the Lord makes a very important observation to the Levites, in view of their past behavior and the reorganization of their functions by God himself after they returned to minister in the temple. He says, "They must not sell or exchange any of it. This is the best of the land and must not pass into other hands, because it is holy to the Lord."

This means that as servants charged with taking care of property that was not theirs, but the Lord's, they could not do with it as they pleased.

They should not take any action that could cause their inheritance to change hands. It was holy to the Lord and only He was its owner.

The borders of the city

15 "The remaining area, 5,000 cubits [2.5 kilometers] wide and 25,000 cubits long [12.5 km], will be for the common use of the city, for houses and for pastureland. The city will be in the center of it
16 and will have these measurements: the north side 4,500 cubits [2,250 meters], the south side 4,500 cubits [2,250 meters], the east side 4,500 cubits [2,250 meters], and the west side 4,500 cubits [2,250 meters].
17 The pastureland for the city will be 250 cubits [125 meters] on the north, 250 cubits [125 meters] on the south, 250 cubits [125 meters] on the east, and 250 cubits [125 meters] on the west.
18 What remains of the area, bordering on the sacred portion and running the length of it, will be 10,000 cubits [5 km] on the east side and 10,000 cubits [5 km] on the west side. Its produce will supply food for the workers of the city.
19 The workers from the city who farm it will come from all the tribes of Israel.
20 The entire portion will be a square, 25,000 cubits [12.5 km] on each side. As a special gift you will set aside the sacred portion, along with the property of the city.

3) The southern portion, measuring 25,000 x 5,000 cubits (12.5 km x 2.5 km) is for the city, houses, and pastures.

The city measures: 2,250 meters (4,500 cubits) on all 4 sides.

The city will have a clear area of 125 meters (250 cubits) around that will serve as pasture.

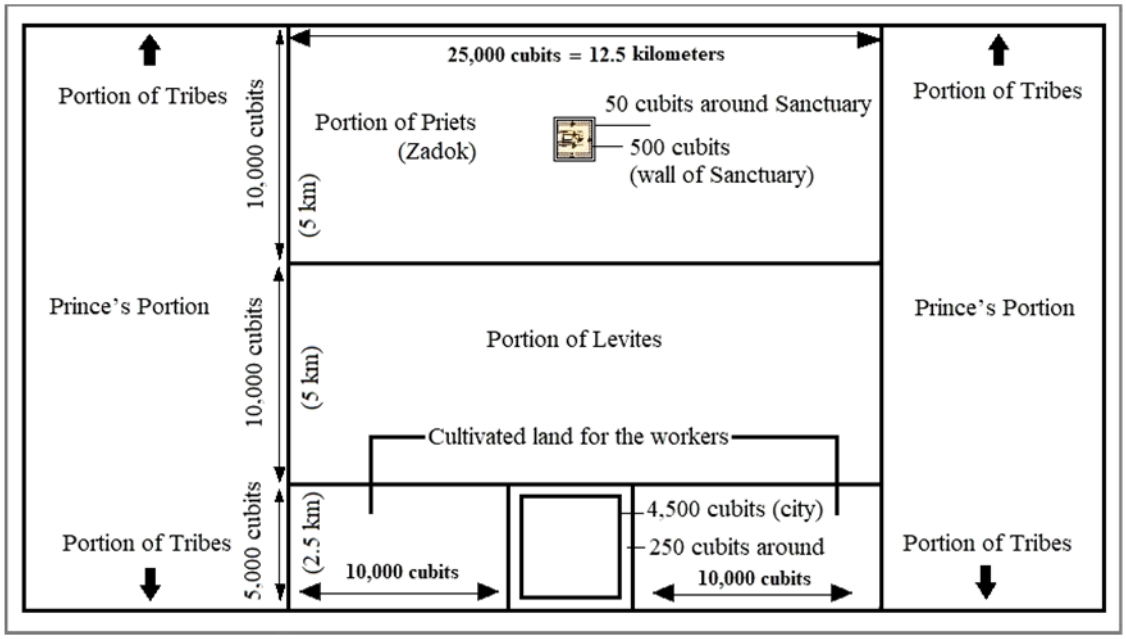
On the east and west sides, the remaining 5 km (10,000 cubits) on each side are cultivated lands for those who work in the city. They may come from all the tribes of Israel.

The limits of the prince

21 "What remains on both sides of the area formed by the sacred portion and the property of the city will belong to the prince. It will extend eastward from the 25,000 cubits of the sacred portion to the eastern border, and westward from the 25,000 cubits to the western

border. Both these areas running the length of the tribal portions will belong to the prince, and the sacred portion with the temple sanctuary will be in the center of them.
22 So the property of the Levites and the property of the city will lie in the center of the area that belongs to the prince. The area belonging to the prince will lie between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin.

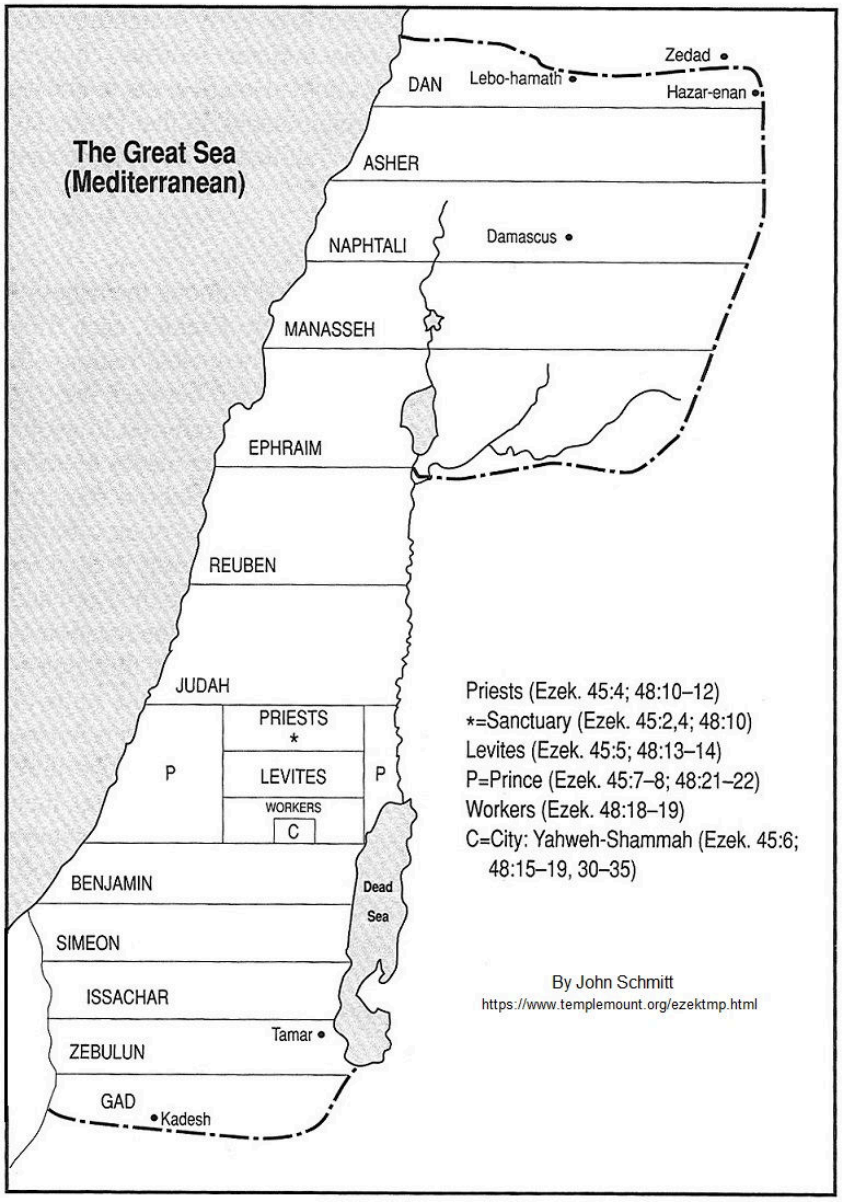
The prince's lands lie on both sides of the sacred portion and the city lands.
All the holy portion will be in the center of the area that belongs to the prince.
This area belonging to the prince lies between the border of Judah (to the north) and Benjamin, to the south.



The limits of the other five tribes

23 "As for the rest of the tribes: Benjamin will have one portion; it will extend from the east side to the west side.
24 "Simeon will have one portion; it will border the territory of Benjamin from east to west.
25 "Issachar will have one portion; it will border the territory of Simeon from east to west.
26 "Zebulun will have one portion; it will border the territory of Issachar from east to west.
27 "Gad will have one portion; it will border the territory of Zebulun from east to west.
28 "The southern boundary of Gad will run south from Tamar to the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Mediterranean Sea.
29 "This is the land you are to allot as an inheritance to the tribes of Israel, and these will be their portions," declares the Sovereign Lord.

South of the sacred area were the tribes of Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad.



The Gates of the New City

30 "These will be the exits of the city: Beginning on the north side, which is 4,500 cubits long [2,250 meters],
31 the gates of the city will be named after the tribes of Israel. The three gates on the north side will be the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah and the gate of Levi.
32 "On the east side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin and the gate of Dan.
33 "On the south side, which measures 4,500 cubits, will be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar and the gate of Zebulun.
34 "On the west side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher and the gate of Naphtali.
35 "The distance all around will be 18,000 cubits [9 km]. "And the name of the city from that time on will be: the Lord is there."

Regarding the city, its dimensions on all four sides are 4,500 cubits (2,250 m), and the gates bear the names of the tribes of Israel.

This indicates that the city is owned by all twelve tribes:

North: Reuben, Judah, and Levi (sons of Leah).

East: Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim united), Benjamin, Dan (two sons of Rachel and one of Bilhah).

South: Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun (sons of Leah).

West: Gad, Asher, and Naphtali (two sons of Zilpah and one of Bilhah).

The name of the city is: "The Lord is there." This means that the Lord returns in all His glory to His people, His temple, and His land. And will be with them forever.

Even with these large dimensions of the sacred area (12.5 km wide and 12.5 km long), we can say that it is only a 'shadow' of the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation 21: 16-17 (NIV):

"The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia *[1,400 miles or 2,200 km; 1 Roman Stadion = 185 meters]* in length, and as wide and high as it is long *[a perfect cube, like the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 6:20), also called Debir, in the tabernacle and the temple, where the ark of the Covenant was kept]*. The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits [200 feet or 65 meters] thick. [Or high]."

The Old City of Jerusalem measures approximately 0.9 km² (or about 1 km²).

The sacred area described by Ezekiel—comprising the portions for the priests, the Levites, and the city—measures 156,25 km².

The current city of Jerusalem has an official metropolitan area of 126 km² (or 125,156 km²).

If we consider 12.5 km long for the area of the sacred portion and the side area belonging to the prince to be 34 km to the east (the straight-line distance from Jerusalem to the Jordan River) and 53 km to the west (the straight-line distance from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean Sea), all with a width of 12.5 km as well (Ezek. 48: 8-9; 13), then we will have 1,243.75 km²

With these dimensions of area (the holy one + the prince's), it would be impossible to build something similar in the mountains of Judea without completely altering the geography of the land to flatten it, in order to prepare it for construction.

The temple itself, with dimensions of 500 cubits on each side (250 meters; with the cubit approximately 50 cm), would not be impossible to build, since Herod made a much larger esplanade for the second temple:

When completed, the Temple Mount was a walled platform shaped like a scalene trapezoid, 1,500 feet (472 m) from north to south and about 1,000 feet (304 m) from east to west. It measured about 57 square miles (144 km²) [Source: BYU Religious Studies Center New Testament History, Culture, and Society; Lincoln H. Blumell, Editor].

The east wall was 466 meters long. The south wall was 278 meters. The west wall was 485 meters long and the north wall extended for 316 meters [source: Bible-Scenes.com / www.freebibleimages.org].

The measurements vary slightly from one source to another depending on the value used for the sacral or mosaic cubit (51.8 cm), which was used in its construction; therefore, the rounding may be upwards or downwards, but there is not a large discrepancy.

This doesn't even come close to the value given in Revelation for the New Jerusalem (2,200 km), measured in stadia (furlongs), not cubits.

But this project of Ezekiel does reflect the grandeur, glory, and holiness that we will see and experience eternally in the New Jerusalem, where there is room for everyone:

"And they *[the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders]* sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.'" (Rev. 5: 9-10 – NIV).

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God." (Rev. 21: 3 – NIV).

Conclusion

Through the study of Ezekiel, many things become clear:

• God is meticulous and precise in all He has done and continues to do; He places things in their proper order and holds everything under His control, so that His people may understand that every act or activity has importance and meaning, both in our own lives and within His overall context plan for humanity.

• The city described and the division of the land among the tribes symbolize the right of every child of God being preserved and rewarded in the heavenly dwelling, where there will be room for everyone, without competition or the theft of property or citizenship rights.

• One day, we will have a perfect place of worship to God and of a full relationship with Him, and the reward after so much suffering.

• The Lord commands the prophet's mouth and actions so that He may speak through him.

• Often the prophet's silence is God's discipline for those who need to turn to Him.

• When we are in the service of God, He Himself sustains us. He is aware of what we need. Earthly vision gives way to spiritual vision.

• The life of a prophet may be lonely, but the Lord provides for his needs.

• He strengthens us against the evil looks and hostility of rebels ("forehead like the hardest stone" – Ezek. 3:9; "a fortified wall of bronze" – Jer. 15:20) so that we may not be deceived, disappointed, or discouraged.

• His patience is infinite, and He gives hope and encouragement to those who are repentant, weakened, and humiliated, bringing them back to a state of perfect communion with Him.

• But His judgment against sin and rebellion is also inexorable when His patience runs out.

• "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb. 10: 31).