

Ezekiel
Part 3
Ch. 20-24

Syllabus

1. Course Requirements: The student will be required to read the Commentary which serves as the Course Textbook. At the conclusion of the course, the student will write a 5-10 page exegesis of a passage from the book of Ezekiel of his or her choosing.
2. Course Textbook: **The Book of Ezekiel**, 2 Volumes, Daniel Block.
3. Course Methodology: The student should read the lectures of the Professor which follow in conjunction with the course textbook. That is, as the student reads Ezekiel 1:1-10 in the lectures to follow then or she should read the textbook treatment of that passage and then move on to the next segment.
4. At the conclusion of the lectures for the whole of the course, there is a select bibliography which the student should consult for further study.

Introductory Remarks: Our purpose in this study of the great prophet Ezekiel is to understand what he says. Understanding requires work sometimes; and since Paul admonishes us to “study to show ourselves approved” that is exactly what I plan to do. We are going to study Ezekiel. In depth, thoroughly and at times precisely. Yet the understanding of Scripture is always worth the effort. My procedure will be simple: we will look at a verse or verses and I will, to the best of my ability, strive to tell you what Ezekiel is talking about.

In depth study is not everyone’s cup of tea, I grant you. Some wish merely to glance while others are of such a nature that they want to squeeze every drop of meaning that they can from every fruitful verse. I fall into this second camp, unapologetically. So, I warn you in advance, we will not be glancing here. If you wish to glance there are some fine, 5 page study booklets that summarize Ezekiel at your local Christian bookstore.

And now to a bit of **background**: Ezekiel worked as a prophet after the disastrous year 597 BC. In that year the Babylonians hauled off the leading people of Jerusalem and Judah and dispersed them to various encampments in the Babylonian empire. His sermons are, therefore, “crisis sermons” in the sense that they are addressed to people in the most extreme crises of uncertainty, fear, sorrow, and regret. We will not hear him rightly if we do not understand or appreciate this simple fact. Every good speaker knows the first rule of communicating: know your audience. Ezekiel did.

20:1 And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth [month], the tenth [day] of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of Jehovah, and sat before me.

August 14, 591 BC. The last date in the book, found in 8:1, was 592 BC. Interestingly, in 593 Jeremiah preached against Hananiah, who had said that the exile would end by 591! Cf. Jer 28:1-4.

**2 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,
3 Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Is it to inquire of me that ye are come? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you.
4 Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? Cause them to know the abominations of their fathers;**

It isn't until vv 30-31 that the actual judgment is issued- up till then it's all evidence given which justifies judgement.

**5 and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: In the day when I chose Israel, and swore unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I swore unto them, saying, I am Jehovah your God;
6 in that day I swore unto them, to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.
7 And I said unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am Jehovah your God.**

Yahweh does not tolerate competition for allegiance.

8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

9 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, among which they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

10 So I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness.

11 And I gave them my statutes, and showed them mine ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live in them.

12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am Jehovah that sanctifieth them.

13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they rejected mine ordinances, which if a man keep, he shall live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

14 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I brought them out.

Cf. Deut. 30:15.

The purpose of the Sabbath was, in the words of Tsevat, “on every Sabbath day the Israelite renounces his autonomy as master of time and affirms God’s dominion over his life by abstaining from work and his own concerns.”

15 Moreover also I swear unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands;

16 because they rejected mine ordinances, and walked not in my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

17 Nevertheless mine eye spared them, and I destroyed them not, neither did I make a full end of them in the wilderness.

18 And I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols.

19 I am Jehovah your God: walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them;

20 and hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am Jehovah your God.

21 But the children rebelled against me; they walked not in my statutes, neither kept mine ordinances to do them, which if a man do, he shall live in them; they profaned my sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.

22 Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I brought them forth.

23 Moreover I swear unto them in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the nations, and disperse them through the countries;

24 because they had not executed mine ordinances, but had rejected my statutes, and had profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

25 Moreover also I gave them statutes that were not good, and ordinances wherein they should not live;

26 and I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through [the fire] all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am Jehovah.

Cf. Ps 106:27.

27 Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: In this moreover have your fathers blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.

28 For when I had brought them into the land, which I swear to give unto them, then they saw every high hill, and every thick tree, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there also they made their sweet savor, and they poured out there their drink-offerings.

29 Then I said unto them, What meaneth the high place whereunto ye go? So the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.

Again their unorthodox behavior is attacked.

30 Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Do ye pollute yourselves after the manner of your fathers? and play ye the harlot after their abominations?

31 and when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, do ye pollute yourselves with all your idols unto this day? and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you;

They had neither repented nor had they attempted to mend their ways.

32 and that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, in that ye say, We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

33 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, will I be king over you:

When the city was finally destroyed in 587, the natural result is despair of a complete sort. Sadly it could have been avoided if they had only repented.

34 and I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out;

35 and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face.

36 Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, saith the Lord Jehovah.

37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

38 and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

The process described here is “sifting”; and only such a process could correct what they had corrupted in their evil rebellion.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Go ye, serve every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me; but my holy name shall ye no more profane with your gifts, and with your idols.

40 For in my holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them, serve me in the land: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

41 As a sweet savor will I accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you in the sight of the nations.

42 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country which I swear to give unto your fathers.

43 And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have polluted yourselves; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.

44 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have dealt with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

A new heart- cf. Jeremiah 31.

45 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop [thy word] toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the field in the South;

47 and say to the forest of the South, Hear the word of Jehovah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burnt thereby.

48 And all flesh shall see that I, Jehovah, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.

49 Then said I, Ah Lord Jehovah! they say of me, Is he not a speaker of parables?

21:1 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop [thy word] toward the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel;

3 and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah: Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.

4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north:

The 'south' for which the Hebrew language can lavishly use three different words stands for Judah. The horror of the fire would make clear is is Yahweh's hand.

5 and all flesh shall know that I, Jehovah, have drawn forth my sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more.

His protest is born of the constant dismissal of his sermons by his people.

6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man; with the breaking of thy loins and with bitterness shalt thou sigh before their eyes.

7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt say, Because of the tidings, for it cometh; and every heart shall melt, and all hands

shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and it shall be done, saith the Lord Jehovah.

8 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith Jehovah: Say, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished;

10 it is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning: shall we then make mirth? the rod of my son, it contemneth every tree.

So radical the destruction that no natural explanation will suffice. It is God's work.

11 And it is given to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword, it is sharpened, yea, it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

12 Cry and wail, son of man; for it is upon my people, it is upon all the princes of Israel: they are delivered over to the sword with my people; smite therefore upon thy thigh.

This reinforces the preceding message.

13 For there is a trial; and what if even the rod that contemneth shall be no more? saith the Lord Jehovah.

14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the deadly wounded: it is the sword of the great one that is deadly wounded, which entereth into their chambers.

15 I have set the threatening sword against all their gates, that their heart may melt, and their stumblings be multiplied: ah! it is made as lightning, it is pointed for slaughter.

16 Gather thee together, go to the right, set thyself in array, go to the left, whithersoever thy face is set.

17 I will also smite my hands together, and I will cause my wrath to rest: I, Jehovah, have spoken it.

These verses can be called the "song of the sword".

18 The word of Jehovah came unto me again, saying,

19 Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come; they twain shall come forth out of one land: and mark out a place, mark it out at the head of the way to the city.

20 Thou shalt appoint a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and to Judah in Jerusalem the fortified.

21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he shook the arrows to and fro, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver.

22 In his right hand was the divination [for] Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build forts.

The sword at work.

23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, who have sworn oaths unto them; but he bringeth iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken.
24 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand.
25 And thou, O deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end,

‡ seems to refer to some inscribed stone monument.

26 thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown; this [shall be] no more the same; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high.
27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it [him].

Examining livers was the Babylonian method of choice for predicting the future. Selecting arrows was an Arabian practice. The point of these two verses is that the kingdom has been removed from Zedekiah.

28 And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning the children of Ammon, and concerning their reproach; and say thou, A sword, a sword is drawn, for the slaughter it is furbished, to cause it to devour, that it may be as lightning;
29 while they see for thee false visions, while they divine lies unto thee, to lay thee upon the necks of the wicked that are deadly wounded, whose day is come in the time of the iniquity of the end.

Nebuchadnezzar will be Yahweh's policeman.

30 Cause it to return into its sheath. In the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy birth, will I judge thee.
31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow upon thee with the fire of my wrath; and I will deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, skilful to destroy.
32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered: for I, Jehovah, have spoken it.

The sword's work done, it is returned to its sheath.

22:1 Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,
2 And thou, son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? then cause her to know all her abominations.
3 And thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: A city that sheddeth blood in the midst of her, that her time may come, and that maketh idols against herself to defile her!

4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, and art defiled in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the nations, and a mocking to all the countries.

5 Those that are near, and those that are far from thee, shall mock thee, thou infamous one [and] full of tumult.

Jerusalem's behavior is under scrutiny.

6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one according to his power, have been in thee to shed blood.

7 In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the sojourner; in thee have they wronged the fatherless and the widow.

8 Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.

We could call this a roll call of infamous deeds. Cf. Jer 22:13-19.

9 Slanderous men have been in thee to shed blood; and in thee they have eaten upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they have committed lewdness.

10 In thee have they uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in thee have they humbled her that was unclean in her impurity.

11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbor's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

12 In thee have they taken bribes to shed blood; thou hast taken interest and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by oppression, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord Jehovah.

These verses describe the social disorder that Jerusalem is enduring. They are capitalizing on each other's misfortune and weakness.

13 Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

14 Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and will do it.

15 And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries; and I will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

Again, as we have seen before, only drastic action will change the situation.

16 And thou shalt be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah.

17 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, the house of Israel is become dross unto me: all of them are brass and tin and iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are the dross of silver.

The metaphor of dross is widespread in the prophets. Dross is slag devoid of precious metal.

19 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye are all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

20 As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my wrath, and I will lay you there, and melt you.

21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have poured out my wrath upon you.

So, since the people are dross, the judgment they are to receive is appropriate. In smelting the furnace was heated enough to melt lead and silver, leaving behind the dross.

23 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou art a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they take treasure and precious things; they have made her widows many in the midst thereof.

26 Her priests have done violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27 Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, [and] to destroy souls, that they may get dishonest gain.

28 And her prophets have daubed for them with untempered [mortar], seeing false visions, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, when Jehovah hath not spoken.

29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery; yea, they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the sojourner wrongfully.

30 And I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.

31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I brought upon their heads, saith the Lord Jehovah.

For the social situation of the last years of Jerusalem, see Zephaniah. See especially Zeph 3:3-4.

23:1 The word of Jehovah came again unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:

3 and they played the harlot in Egypt; they played the harlot in their youth; there were their breasts pressed, and there was handled the bosom of their virginity.

4 And the names of them were Oholah the elder, and Oholibah her sister: and they became mine, and they bare sons and daughters. And as for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem Oholibah.

This is a retelling of the same themes from chapter 16. It decries Judah's involvement with Egypt. Cf. Jer 3:6-11. It was common in the ANE to name siblings with similar sounding names. Like today for many.

5 And Oholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians [her] neighbors,

6 who were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.

7 And she bestowed her whoredoms upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and on whomsoever she doted, with all their idols she defiled herself.

8 Neither hath she left her whoredoms since [the days of] Egypt; for in her youth they lay with her, and they handled the bosom of her virginity; and they poured out their whoredom upon her.

9 Wherefore I delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.

10 These uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters; and her they slew with the sword: and she became a byword among women; for they executed judgments upon her.

Israel will be seen by her neighbors for what she really is.

11 And her sister Oholibah saw this, yet was she more corrupt in her doting than she, and in her whoredoms which were more than the whoredoms of her sister.

12 She doted upon the Assyrians, governors and rulers, [her] neighbors, clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men.

13 And I saw that she was defiled; they both took one way.

What occurred in the north will now recur again in the south. Tragically. And with profound effect.

14 And she increased her whoredoms; for she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion,

15 girded with girdles upon their loins, with flowing turbans upon their heads, all of them princes to look upon, after the likeness of the Babylonians in Chaldea, the land of their nativity.

16 And as soon as she saw them she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her soul was alienated from them.

18 So she uncovered her whoredoms, and uncovered her nakedness: then my soul was alienated from her, like as my soul was alienated from her sister.

The glamorous Babylon may seem attractive, but it will consume and destroy.

19 Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, remembering the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

20 And she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

21 Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in the handling of thy bosom by the Egyptians for the breasts of thy youth.

Judah's wooing of Hophra, whom she saw as the answer to her problems, would end in disaster.

22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy soul is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side:

23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, [and] all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and rulers all of them, princes and men of renown, all of them riding upon horses.

24 And they shall come against thee with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with a company of peoples; they shall set themselves against thee with buckler and shield and helmet round about; and I will commit the judgment unto them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments.

25 And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal with thee in fury; they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy residue shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.

26 They shall also strip thee of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels.

27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom [brought] from the land of Egypt; so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more.

Punishment is pronounced. The wordplay **וע וקוע פקד** which means "punish, cry for help, shriek" is very telling. Judah's hope would become a nightmare.

28 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy soul is alienated;

29 and they shall deal with thee in hatred, and shall take away all thy labor, and shall leave thee naked and bare; and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be uncovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

30 These things shall be done unto thee, for that thou hast played the harlot after the nations, and because thou art polluted with their idols.

31 Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thy hand.

32 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup, which is deep and large; thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.

33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.

34 Thou shalt even drink it and drain it out, and thou shalt gnaw the sherds thereof, and shalt tear thy breasts; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah.

35 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

The fate of the northern kingdom is also the fate of the southern.

36 Jehovah said moreover unto me: Son of man, wilt thou judge Oholah and Oholibah? then declare unto them their abominations.

37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands; and with their idols have they committed adultery; and they have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass through [the fire] unto them to be devoured.

38 Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.

39 For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of my house.

40 And furthermore ye have sent for men that come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent, and, lo, they came; for whom thou didst wash thyself, paint thine eyes, and deck thyself with ornaments,

41 and sit upon a stately bed, with a table prepared before it, whereupon thou didst set mine incense and mine oil.

42 And the voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with men of the common sort were brought drunkards from the wilderness; and they put bracelets upon the hands of them [twain], and beautiful crowns upon their heads.

43 Then said I of her that was old in adulteries, Now will they play the harlot with her, and she [with them].

44 And they went in unto her, as they go in unto a harlot: so went they in unto Oholah and unto Oholibah, the lewd women.

This circles back to the beginning of the oracle. It is a fine recapitulation of the chapter.

45 And righteous men, they shall judge them with the judgment of adulteresses, and with the judgment of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands.

46 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will bring up a company against them, and will give them to be tossed to and fro and robbed.

47 And the company shall stone them with stones, and despatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire.

48 Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.

49 And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols; and ye shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah.

They will be punished for their idolatry and unfaithfulness. If this sounds familiar, it is. It is the theme of Ezekiel's judgement oracles.

**24:1 Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth [day] of the month, the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, write thee the name of the day, [even] of this selfsame day: the king of Babylon drew close unto Jerusalem this selfsame day.**

This happened on January 15, 588 BCE. It was the beginning of the end for Judah.

3 And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Set on the caldron, set it on, and also pour water into it:

4 gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones.

5 Take the choice of the flock, and also a pile [of wood] for the bones under [the caldron]; make it boil well; yea, let the bones thereof be boiled in the midst of it.

This is a parable about the siege of Jerusalem, which was called a “house of rebels” (בֵּית הַמְּרִי).

6 Wherefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the bloody city, to the caldron whose rust is therein, and whose rust is not gone out of it! take out of it piece after piece; No lot is fallen upon it.

7 For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust.

8 That it may cause wrath to come up to take vengeance, I have set her blood upon the bare rock, that it should not be covered.

The city is so corrupt that only the harshest scalding will remove the vileness. Punishment comes bit by bit until the final consummation.

9 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the bloody city! I also will make the pile great.

10 Heap on the wood, make the fire hot, boil well the flesh, and make thick the broth, and let the bones be burned.

11 Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that it may be hot, and the brass thereof may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the rust of it may be consumed.

12 She hath wearied [herself] with toil; yet her great rust goeth not forth out of her; her rust [goeth not forth] by fire.

Ezekiel draws on the image of boiling meat. Rendering it down to a dissolved state utterly removes any semblance of flesh.

13 In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have cleansed thee and thou wast not cleansed, thou shalt not be cleansed from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my wrath toward thee to rest.

14 I, Jehovah, have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it: I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord Jehovah.

They are, in a word, vile. The Hebrew word is זמה, which occurs 6 times in this book. It's basic meaning is "loose conduct".

**15 Also the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,
16 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.
17 Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.**

As L. Allen puts it, "Ezekiel is called to sacrifice his wife on the altar of his prophetic vocation".

Excursus: Jewish Mourning Rituals

The Jewish religious tradition asserts that for a person to be considered a mourner, they must have one of the following relationships with the deceased: parent, child, sibling or spouse. Throughout the period between the death and the funeral (Anninut), each individual who fits into this group of mourners is called an 'Anen', and they are exempt from the majority of obligations that are normally to be carried out. Any person or persons, who have a relationship with the deceased outside those previously stated, are not considered an Anen. During Anninut, the deceased is looked after by the Chevra Kadisha (holy society) who ensures that the body is not touched before proceeding to the cemetery. Before the funeral, a Jewish member of society volunteers to wash the body (Tahara). This is seen as a very honorable doing, as it is the last possible selfless act that can be done for a person before he/she returns to his/her ultimate creator, God. The deceased is placed in a plain wooden casket, dressed in Takhrikin (simple white burial garments). The same type of casket is used for everyone, as the Jewish religious tradition holds that every man is created equal and henceforth every man should be sent back to God on equal terms. The funeral should take place within twenty-four hours from the time of the deceased's passing. If there is a problem however and a mourner is unable to attend the funeral so soon after the death, the funeral is often held up until he/she is present. At the funeral, a rabbi recites a special prayer called Kaddish. Ironically, there is no reference, no word even, about death

in the prayer. The theme of Kaddish is, rather, the Greatness of G-d. Its purpose is to emphasize that God has a divine plan for everything and everyone and therefore, death is not a punishment, but a holy event. The Anenim (mourners) who are at this time officially known as 'Avelim' perform a ritual called Keriah, in which they make a small rip in the corner of their clothing to symbolize sadness at the loss suffered. This often provides a much needed emotional release for avelim. The avelim's first meal after the funeral is called 'se'udat havra'ah' (meal of condolence). The meal is prepared for them by neighbours and friends, and helps mourners regain their strength. This is done because it is assumed that at this time the avel is unable to take care of him/herself.

18 So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

19 And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?

20 Then I said unto them, The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

21 Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left behind shall fall by the sword.

22 And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.

23 And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away in your iniquities, and moan one toward another.

24 Thus shall Ezekiel be unto you a sign; according to all that he hath done shall ye do: when this cometh, then shall ye know that I am the Lord Jehovah.

Ezekiel's willingness to obey the divine command is narrated simply and directly and even unemotionally, as commanded.

25 And thou, son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart, their sons and their daughters,

26 that in that day he that escapeth shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?

27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him that is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: so shalt thou be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

Ezekiel's focus is about to change- from judgement to hope. Some will think, "it's about time"!