

Ezekiel

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.

Let’s start listening and thinking and investigating.

Ezek 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth [month], in the fifth [day] of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

A visual encounter is described in vv 3-28. The 30th year implies the year he became a full fledged priest (cf. Num 4). The Kebar canal was part of a complex network of canals that came into being in the Mesopotamian heartland to provide artificial irrigation from the Euphrates and, to a lesser extent, the Tigris for the grain crops and date orchards, and also, in the case of larger watercourses, transportation of these and other goods. The opening of the heavens is indicative of a theophany.

**2 In the fifth [day] of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,
3 the word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar;**

31 July 593 BC. Ezekiel means “may God strengthen”.

and the hand of Jehovah was there upon him.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire infolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst thereof as it were glowing metal, out of the midst of the fire.

Yahweh’s hand- cf. 2 Ki 3:15, Jer 15:17. Storm, cloud and fire are in the OT regular elements of a storm theophany. Cf. Nah 1:3, 2 Sam 22:13, Ps 50:3-4. The north is the “sinister quarter” of the sky- the place from which bad news comes. “Like” and “appearance” are approximations because human experience cannot find plain words to match the phenomenon of encountering God.

5 And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man.

6 And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings.

7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished brass.

Ancient Near eastern thronebearers, (recall the slide showing them).

8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings [thus]:

9 their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four had also the face of an eagle.

11 And their faces and their wings were separate above; two [wings] of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

The most exalted of all living creatures is the human being; of birds, the eagle; of cattle, the ox; and of wild beasts, the lion.

12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; they turned not when they went.

The spirit of god is sometimes referred to as the manifestation of God in his omnipresence.

13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches: [the fire] went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The closer proximity of the apparition enables the fiery mass glimpsed in v. 4 to be particularized.

15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth beside the living creatures, for each of the four faces thereof.

16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto a beryl: and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel within a wheel.

17 When they went, they went in their four directions: they turned not when they went.

18 As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and they four had their rims full of eyes round about.

A four directional facility- a globe like structure in which two wheels stand at right angles. The “eyes” that cover the rims correspond to nail studs fixed all round the rims of wooden wheels.

19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went beside them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went; thither was the spirit to go: and the wheels were lifted up beside them; for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up beside them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

The divine spirit that controlled the beings wings in flight also controlled the wheels on the ground.

Vv. 15-21 describe the throne in terms of a wheeled chariot. The throne on its platform functions as an amphibious vehicle; it not only flies through the sky by means of the wings of its bearers but drives along the ground by means of its wheels. There is NO

WHERE you can GO where God cannot get to you! That is the promise and the threat extended to those who would obey or disobey.

22 And over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of a firmament, like the terrible crystal to look upon, stretched forth over their heads above.

23 And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two which covered on this side, and every one had two which covered on that side, their bodies.

24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a noise of tumult like the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

25 And there was a voice above the firmament that was over their heads: when they stood, they let down their wings.

The motif of mobility.

26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above.

27 And I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him.

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

The living beings' joint role as skybearers and thronebearers is now revealed. This revelation is the heart of the vision: Yahweh's appearance in glory in order to pronounce judgement.

2:1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee.

2 And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet; and I heard him that spake unto me.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to nations that are rebellious, which have rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me even unto this very day.

4 And the children are impudent and stiffhearted: I do sent thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah.

Jeremiah's letter to the hostages in Babylon denounced prophets whom Yahweh had not sent (Jer 29:9,31).

5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

Yahweh sets no store by their response.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious.

Thorns are a standard metaphor of hostility; while sitting on scorpions vividly conveys a sense of shock.

8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that which I give thee.

9 And when I looked, behold, a hand was put forth unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

10 And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

His message- lamentation, mourning and woe. Unlike Israel he is to heed it. Books were not in the form we know them, but scrolls that were rolled from both ends and rolled while being unrolled as read.

3:1 And he said unto me, Son of man, eat that which thou findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat the roll.

Punishment is deserved by these chronically rebellious people. Now they will receive notice that it is on the way.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

He is to mark, learn, and inwardly digest the divine oracles and make them his own.

4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

Ezekiel's responsibility in this new triangular relationship between God, prophet, and people is to speak what God demands.

5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel;

6 not to many peoples of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they would hearken unto thee.

7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of hard forehead and of a stiff heart.

The nation of v. 5 is Babylon. V. 6 refers to the groups of exiles in the Nippur region. There is none so deaf as the person who does not want to hear.

8 Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads.

9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

How will Ezekiel cope with these obstinate people? By divine enabling he will live up to the prayer embodied in his name- חזקאל "may God strengthen".

10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears.

11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

12 Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, [saying], Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place.

13 And [I heard] the noise of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another, and the noise of the wheels beside them, even the noise of a great rushing.

The stem רעש here rendered 'sound' is used of the noise of war chariots in Jer 47:3 and of their wheels in Nah 3:2. Ezekiel has the authoritative credentials of a prophet the stature of Elijah.

14 So the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away; and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; and the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me.

15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days.

His vision left him disoriented for a week!

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

See Numbers 35:12-21

20 Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand.

21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning; and thou hast delivered thy soul.

One needs to keep virtue current. Righteousness is not something to be saved up. Righteousness implies a relationship with others, and such a relationship is either present or not.

22 And the hand of Jehovah was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of Jehovah stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face.

24 Then the Spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet; and he spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house.

Ezekiel's reaction is one of submission.

25 But thou, son of man, behold, they shall lay bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

His fellow exiles will constrain him, giving physical expression to their opposition to the prophet and so to the God he represents. See Jer 29:26-28.

26 and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house.

ד אֲדַבֵּר! בֵּיךְ אֶל-חֶכְךָ וְנִאֲלַמֶּתָּ וְלֹא-תְהִיָּה לָהֶם לְאִישׁ מוֹכִיחַ! כִּי בַּיִת
וְלִשׁוֹן
מִרֵי הַמָּה:

His silence would represent the silence of God in response to their pleas for intervention on their behalf against the victorious Babylonians. The difficult מוֹכִיחַ אִישׁ has left commentators stumped. “A reproving man” is rendered by Zwingli in the Zurich Bible as “ein straaffer syest”. Luther has “nicht mehr sie straffen mugest”. The LXX has ἀνδρα ελεγχοντα. All of these get at the same notion- “a proclaimer of punishment”. The word occurs in 6 other verses in the OT- Job 9:33, 32:12, 40:2, Pro 25:12, 28:23, and Am 5:10.

27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel was to be known as the mouthpiece of Yahweh. When he spoke, it was because God had something to say; when he was silent, it was because God was silent.

4:1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem:

2 and lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it round about.

3 And take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face toward it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

ANE bricks were, on average, 10 to 24 inches long and 6 to 13.5 inches wide. Yigal Yadin has written the definitive study of Israelite warfare. In it he describes the siege machinery here mentioned. The city's fate is sealed- access to God is blocked as though by iron. Cf. Lam 3:44. This is what is normally called a sign-act- and it is not the last Ezekiel is to perform.

4 Moreover lie thou upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it; [according to] the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear their iniquity.

5 For I have appointed the years of their iniquity to be unto thee a number of days, even three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

Cf. Is 59:2

390 is the number from the time the Ark of the Covenant was transferred from its tent to the Temple till the fall of Jerusalem (976 to 586 BC). Cf 2 Sam 7:1-7. Cf. also Jeremiah 35:1-7. Cf also the building of the perfect Temple in Ezek 40-48.

6 And again, when thou hast accomplished these, thou shalt lie on thy right side, and shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah: forty days, each day for a year, have I appointed it unto thee.

7 And thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, with thine arm uncovered; and thou shalt prophesy against it.

A rolled up sleeve indicates God's readiness to act.

8 And, behold, I lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to the other, till thou hast accomplished the days of thy siege.

Either he is to do this act daily for 390 days (which seems likely given the fact that he had to eat, sleep, and other essentials); or he is literally to lay there in one spot.

9 Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof; [according to] the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, even three hundred and ninety days, shalt thou eat thereof.

The blending of various grains points to the scarcity of supplies; i.e., there isn't enough of one grain to satisfy. It bespeaks famine.

10 And thy food which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it.

11 And thou shalt drink water by measure, the sixth part of a hin: from time to time shalt thou drink.

One meal a day of 8 ounces of bread. Water, 2/3rds of a quart a day.

12 And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it in their sight with dung that cometh out of man.

Defiling and disgusting, quite frankly. But again, it bespeaks the most dreadful conditions for those in Jerusalem. This is what they will endure. Such cooking material is thoroughly unclean! Cf. Dt 23:13-15. Also see 2 Kings 18:27!

13 And Jehovah said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their bread unclean, among the nations whither I will drive them.

14 Then said I, Ah Lord Jehovah! behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn of beasts; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.

15 Then he said unto me, See, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread thereon.

As a priest Ezekiel cannot! So, God allows him cattle dung to bake his bread. Such practice was known in the ANE when and where wood was scarce.

16 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure, and in dismay:

17 that they may want bread and water, and be dismayed one with another, and pine away in their iniquity.

5:1 And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp sword; [as] a barber's razor shalt thou take it unto thee, and shalt cause it to pass upon thy head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair.

2 A third part shalt thou burn in the fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and thou shalt take a third part, and smite with the sword round about it; and a third part thou shalt scatter to the wind, and I will draw out a sword after them.

The fire of divine judgment and the slashing of the sword and the scattering to the wind are more sign acts the prophet is to perform.

3 And thou shalt take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

4 And of these again shalt thou take, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; therefrom shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

There may be a remnant spared from judgment, but it will be a small one!

5 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations, and countries are round about her.

This concentrates on the sinful role of the capital against its background of privilege.

6 And she hath rebelled against mine ordinances in doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries that are round about her; for they have rejected mine ordinances, and as for my statutes, they have not walked in them.

The priests have custodianship of the Torah.

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye are turbulent more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept mine ordinances, neither have done after the ordinances of the nations that are round about you;

8 therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I, even I, am against thee; and I will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments on thee; and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter unto all the winds.

The reiteration of the verb “to do” is important. It contrasts what they have not done with what God will do.

11 Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish [thee]; neither shall mine eye spare, and I also will have no pity.

The sins of the people had the effect of polluting the sanctuary with a miasma of uncleanness.

12 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and a third part I will scatter unto all the winds, and will draw out a sword after them.

The fatal outbreak of plague and famine!

13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my wrath toward them to rest, and I shall be comforted; and they shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken in my zeal, when I have accomplished my wrath upon them.

The fires of judgment would take the form of divine anger, for which fire is a standard metaphor in this book and elsewhere. God will deal radically with the moral chaos that has disturbed Jerusalem's special relationship with him.

14 Moreover I will make thee a desolation and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.

15 So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment, unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments on thee in anger and in wrath, and in wrathful rebukes; (I, Jehovah, have spoken it;)

Yahweh has given his verdict and pledges that it will be carried out.

16 when I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, that are for destruction, which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread;

17 and I will send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee: I, Jehovah, have spoken it.

These nightmarish woes mingle divine punishment and their human consequences.

6:1 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy unto them,

One stares at the object of one's addressee to focus attention. This is almost a glare.

3 and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Jehovah: Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

The **במזרחה** were cultic platforms built of stone on which altars were built, and then by extension the sanctuaries within which the platforms stood.

4 And your altars shall become desolate, and your sun-images shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

5 And I will lay the dead bodies of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

The destruction of their standard contents, altars and incense burners. **חמון** are some manner of incense burners.

6 In all your dwelling-places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your sun-images may be hewn down, and your works may be abolished.

7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

Cf. Is 41:29

8 Yet will I leave a remnant, in that ye shall have some that escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

Ezekiel strives to reestablish a true awareness of the nature of Yahweh.

9 And those of you that escape shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captive, how that I have been broken with their lewd heart, which hath departed from me, and with they eyes, which play the harlot after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

10 And they shall know that I am Jehovah: I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

The Judeans will torture themselves with memories of their unchangeable past.

11 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas! because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel; for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my wrath upon them.

13 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the places where they offered sweet savor to all their idols.

The series of fatalities is elaborated here. All these destructive events in human experience would be Yahweh's way of giving full vent to his anger.

14 And I will stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate and waste, from the wilderness toward Diblah, throughout all their habitations: and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

Riblah was the place of Jehoahaz's imprisonment in 609 BC which marked the end of Judah's earlier bid for independence.

7:1 Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

2 And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto the land of Israel, An end: the end is come upon the four corners of the land.

The land of promise tragically becomes the object of threat and punishment.

3 Now is the end upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations.

Yahweh's vehement reaction to an immoral lifestyle.

4 And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity; but I will bring thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

When disaster struck, this oracle would enable them to recognize it for what it was, the intervention of the true God and the revelation of his moral authority.

5 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An evil, an only evil; behold, it cometh.

6 An end is come, the end is come; it awaketh against thee; behold, it cometh.

7 Thy doom is come unto thee, O inhabitant of the land: the time is come, the day is near, [a day of] tumult, and not [of] joyful shouting, upon the mountains.

The time is evidently a fateful time or a set time the meaning of which is colored by the context as the moment when Yahweh intervenes in climatic judgment.

8 Now will I shortly pour out my wrath upon thee, and accomplish mine anger against thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations.

With their every move, the people of the land were heading for inevitable checkmate in their challenge of God.

9 And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will bring upon thee according to thy ways; and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, do smite.

10 Behold, the day, behold, it cometh: thy doom is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.

11 Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness; none of them [shall remain], nor of their multitude, nor of their wealth: neither shall there be eminency among them.

12 The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

Insolence is self assured arrogance that pits itself against God.

13 For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they be yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, none shall return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.

Normal life would be brought to a halt by the disruptive advent of the Day of Yahweh.

14 They have blown the trumpet, and have made all ready; but none goeth to the battle; for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

15 The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword: and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

16 But those of them that escape shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, every one in his iniquity.

Here a frying pan to the fire experience expresses the theme of wholesale and inescapable death.

17 All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.

18 They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.

Demoralization and loss of physical control would occur, in reaction to the social breakdown caused by invasion.

19 They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be as an unclean thing; their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of Jehovah: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it hath been the stumblingblock of their iniquity.

20 As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty; but they made the images of their abominations [and] their detestable things therein: therefore have I made it unto them as an unclean thing.

Cf Zeph 1:18, Is 2:20. חַמְסִי describes that which is extremely impure. A perversion of that which is precious would eventually make it precious no more.

21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall profane it.

22 My face will I turn also from them, and they shall profane my secret [place]; and robbers shall enter into it, and profane it.

23 Make the chain; for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the nations, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pride of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be profaned.

Misuse of Yahweh's gifts would result in forfeiture of them.

25 Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.

26 Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumor shall be upon rumor; and they shall seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the elders.

27 The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

The community's reaction to bad news.

8:1 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth [month], in the fifth [day] of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord Jehovah fell there upon me.

17 September 592 BC- fourteen months after the initial vision.

2 Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins and downward, fire; and from his loins and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as it were glowing metal.

Parenthetical observations.

3 And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the gate of the inner [court] that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

Ezekiel's hair had grown sufficiently since 5:1.

4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the appearance that I saw in the plain.

5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold, northward of the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel do commit here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but thou shalt again see yet other great abominations.

Yahweh's exclusive claims on his people were being fundamentally denied by this evidence of pagan worship in the city of God. Throughout the tour described in this chapter, Yahweh provides a commentary on what Ezekiel sees.

Cf. Jer 11:13.

7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall.

8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold, a door.

9 And he said unto me, Go in, and see the wicked abominations that they do here.

10 So I went in and saw; and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

The engravings are identified with the prohibited images of Dt 4:17-18.

11 And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel; and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, every man with his censer in his hand; and the odor of the cloud of incense went up.

“Stand in front of” connotes “worshipping”.

12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in his chambers of imagery? for they say, Jehovah seeth us not; Jehovah hath forsaken the land.

13 He said also unto me, Thou shalt again see yet other great abominations which they do.

Aberrant worship. Cf Is 29:15.

14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of Jehovah's house which was toward the north; and behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz.

15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen [this], O son of man? thou shalt again see yet greater abominations than these.

The paganism was no longer hidden but overt. A Babylonian god was being worshipped on Judean soil. Dumuzi was the husband of Inanna who banished him to the underworld. His fate was bewailed in lamentation rites in the months of June and July.

16 And he brought me into the inner court of Jehovah's house; and behold, at the door of the temple of Jehovah, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of Jehovah, and their faces toward the east; and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.

Worship of the rising sun entailed turning ones back on the temple structure.

17 Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen [this], O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have turned again to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the “branch” to my nose.

חַמַּס denotes the fact that this terrible sin is worse than any of those mentioned so far. The word זְמוּרָה has had a colorful history of interpretation. The Medieval rabbi's understood it to mean “break wind”. The Masoretes found the phrase difficult enough that they changed “my” to “their”. Nonetheless, it appears to be a gesture associated with a pagan rite- as exemplified in a number of reliefs from Assyria and Mesopotamia of god's holding flowers to their noses. It may also denote “sending perfumed incense to Yahweh's nostrils”. Sticking the branch to my nose may simply imply an insulting physical gesture.

18 Therefore will I also deal in wrath; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

The tone here is one of exasperation.

9:1 Then he cried in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause ye them that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

2 And behold, six men came from the way of the upper gate, which lieth toward the north, every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. And they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar.

A squad of supernatural destroyers is employed to execute the divine judgment. The writing kit consisted of a wooden palette with hollowed places for cakes of black and red ink and a slot in which pens were kept.

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side.

Yahweh's rising from his throne is the act of the judge in passing sentence.

4 And Jehovah said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.

He is to use his pen and ink to mark a cross on those who are to be exempted from the general destruction of the population of Jerusalem. Literally he is told to mark them with a taw, the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet which in paleo-hebrew is this: ✠ (pass out handout).

5 And to the others he said in my hearing, Go ye through the city after him, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity;

6 slay utterly the old man, the young man and the virgin, and little children and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the old men that were before the house.

7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and smote in the city.

Those who had committed the ultimate sin described in 8:16-17 were the first to die.

8 And it came to pass, while they were smiting, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord Jehovah! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy wrath upon Jerusalem?

Ezekiel can remain an onlooker no longer! The pleas of sinners may go unheard, but the prophet hopes his will be heard.

9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of wrestling [of judgment]: for they say, Jehovah hath forsaken the land, and Jehovah seeth not.

Ezekiel prays but the answer is- too late! Sin has reached its full measure.

10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will bring their way upon their head.

11 And behold, the man clothed in linen, who had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

There were those who stood on the side of God and the prophet whose lives were spared from punishment.

10:1 Then I looked, and behold, in the firmament that was over the head of the cherubim there appeared above them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

2 And he spake unto the man clothed in linen, and said, Go in between the whirling [wheels], even under the cherub, and fill both thy hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.

His role changes from scribe to incendiary.

3 Now the cherubim stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

4 And the glory of Jehovah mounted up from the cherub, [and stood] over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of Jehovah's glory.

The phenomenon of the cloud filling the court in v3 is explained and amplified in v. 4.

5 And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of God Almighty when he speaketh.

A comparison is drawn between the cherubim of vv. 2-3 and the living beings of the inaugural vision.

6 And it came to pass, when he commanded the man clothed in linen, saying, Take fire from between the whirling wheels, from between the cherubim, that he went in, and stood beside a wheel.

7 And the cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim unto the fire that was between the cherubim, and took [thereof], and put it into the hands of him that was clothed in linen, who took it and went out.

He reports what he is able to see.

8 And there appeared in the cherubim the form of a man's hand under their wings.

He identifies the cherubim.

9 And I looked, and behold, four wheels beside the cherubim, one wheel beside one cherub, and another wheel beside another cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like unto a beryl stone.

10 And as for their appearance, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel have been within a wheel.

11 When they went, they went in their four directions: they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, [even] the wheels that they four had.

He develops the comparison with chapter 1 in a sustained and more detailed manner.

13 As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing, the whirling [wheels].

14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third face the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

15 And the cherubim mounted up: this is the living creature that I saw by the river Chebar.

16 And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels also turned not from beside them.

17 When they stood, these stood; and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

The same themes as were developed in chapter 1 are here reiterated.

18 And the glory of Jehovah went forth from over the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim.

19 And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight when they went forth, and the wheels beside them: and they stood at the door of the east gate of Jehovah's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

The basic narrative is now resumed from v. 7. God's "tabernacling presence" is over.

20 This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim.

21 Every one had four faces, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

22 And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the faces which I saw by the river Chebar, their appearances and themselves; they went every one straight forward.

Now not the wheels but the cherubim are in view.

11:1 Moreover the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of Jehovah's house, which looketh eastward: and behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men; and I saw in the midst of them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

Ezekiel witnesses a meeting being held that is far from religious in nature.

2 And he said unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise iniquity, and that give wicked counsel in this city;

3 that say, [The time] is not near to build houses: this [city] is the caldron, and we are the flesh.

These city planners had no scruples in attaining their selfish ends.. The plotters are contrasting themselves with their victims, whose rights to live in the city they have denied.

4 Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.

5 And the Spirit of Jehovah fell upon me, and he said unto me, Speak, Thus saith Jehovah: Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind.

Cf. Pro 15:11

6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.

ללל describes civilians who wrongfully lost their lives by murder or political execution.

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this [city] is the caldron; but ye shall be brought forth out of the midst of it.

8 Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, saith the Lord Jehovah.

9 And I will bring you forth out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you.

10 Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

11 This [city] shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; I will judge you in the border of Israel;

12 and ye shall know that I am Jehovah: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither have ye executed mine ordinances, but have done after the ordinances of the nations that are round about you.

The pronouncement of punishment.

13 And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord Jehovah! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

The prophet is horrified by the instant demise of Pelatiah. Cf Acts 5. The irony is that Pelatiah means “Yahweh provides escape”.

**14 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,
15 Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel, all of them, [are they] unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from Jehovah; unto us is this land given for a possession.**

16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Whereas I have removed them far off among the nations, and whereas I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come.

17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh;

20 that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord Jehovah.

The prayer of v. 13b here receives its reply.

22 Then did the cherubim lift up their wings, and the wheels were beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

23 And the glory of Jehovah went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

V. 22 functions as more than a recap of 10:19.

The Mount of Olives marked the eastern horizon of the city.

24 And the Spirit lifted me up, and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.

25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that Jehovah had showed me.

His visionary experience had occurred in a trancelike state.

**12:1 The word of Jehovah also came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of the rebellious house, that have eyes to see, and see not, that have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house.
3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they are a rebellious house.**

Demonstrates the lack of understanding of Ezekiel's community of hostages and of the aim to attempt to remove it by means of this enactment. Cf. 1 Cor 4:2,4. Cf. ANEP 10, 366, 373. The Midrash Rabbah describes the bundle as containing a skin to hold flour, a mat to sleep on, and a bowl to eat from.

**4 And thou shalt bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing; and thou shalt go forth thyself at even in their sight, as when men go forth into exile.
5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.
6 In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulder, and carry it forth in the dark; thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the land: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.**

קיר describes an adobe wall that could easily be penetrated. The gesture hides the homeland from the view of the exiles.

**7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for removing, and in the even I digged through the wall with my hand; I brought it forth in the dark, and bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.
8 And in the morning came the word of Jehovah unto me, saying,
9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?
10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: This burden [concerneth] the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel among whom they are.
11 Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.
12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes.**

A detailed interpretation of the preceding. Not even the king would escape the fate of the community. There is a subtle wordplay between נשיא and שׂי.

13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that are round about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

15 And they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I shall disperse them among the nations, and scatter them through the countries.

Jerusalem was ironically to be Yahweh's trap.

16 But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the nations whither they come; and they shall know that I am Jehovah.

17 Moreover the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with fearfulness;

The second pair of sign acts is now commanded.

19 and say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with fearfulness, and drink their water in dismay, that her land may be desolate, [and despoiled] of all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be a desolation; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

Ezekiel's role was to attempt to remove present blindness to the purposes of God.

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

22 Son of man, what is this proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

23 Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the fulfilment of every vision.

24 For there shall be no more any false vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

25 For I am Jehovah; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall be performed; it shall be no more deferred: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I speak the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord Jehovah.

26 Again the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

27 Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many day to come, and he prophesieth of times that are far off.

28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: There shall none of my words be deferred any more, but the word which I shall speak shall be performed, saith the Lord Jehovah.

This section reflects reluctance among the prophet's fellow exiles to accept his oracles as a valid representation of the future.

13:1 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying,

**2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own heart, Hear ye the word of Jehovah:
3 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!**

Cf. Jer 29:8-9, 15, 21-23.

4 O Israel, thy prophets have been like foxes in the waste places.

The discredited prophets have been reduced to mulling over their disappointment, skulking in their ruined hopes.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither built up the wall for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of Jehovah.

The imagery is of siege warfare.

6 They have seen falsehood and lying divination, that say, Jehovah saith; but Jehovah hath not sent them: and they have made men to hope that the word would be confirmed.

7 Have ye not seen a false vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, in that ye say, Jehovah saith; albeit I have not spoken?

He challenges them to admit their error.

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye have spoken falsehood, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord Jehovah.

9 And my hand shall be against the prophets that see false visions, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the council of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah.

They are to be excommunicated.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there is no peace; and when one buildeth up a wall, behold, they daub it with untempered [mortar]:

11 say unto them that daub it with untempered [mortar], that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?

13 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my wrath; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in wrath to consume it.

14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered [mortar], and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be uncovered;

and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered [mortar]; and I will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;

16 [to wit], the prophets of Israel that prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and that see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord Jehovah.

17 And thou, son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, that prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,

18 and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of [persons of] every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and save souls alive for yourselves?

19 And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies.

Vv 17-19 describe female “sorcerers” who in private resolve the personal problems of their clients. Cf. Mic 3:5. Mesopotamia was rife with magical practices, and its practitioners were driven by material considerations. The verb here, צוֹרֵר, means “to hunt down or captivate”. It occurs 16 times in the OT.

20 Wherefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make [them] fly, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make [them] fly.

21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

Cf. Ps 124:7

22 Because with lies ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive:

23 Therefore ye shall no more see false visions, nor divine divinations: and I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

Divine judgment along with “never again”!

14:1 Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

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

3 Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

They are judged to be halfhearted in their loyalty to God. Cf. Ps 66:18.

4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah:

Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the

stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols;

5 that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Return ye, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.

This is an impassioned plea for a change of heart.

7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that separateth himself from me, and taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet to inquire for himself of me; I Jehovah will answer him by myself:

8 and I will set my face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

These verses encourage folk to think twice about their leaning toward pagan religion. The warning about excommunication is important as it reminds them that the punishment means premature death and the elimination of the victim's family line.

9 And if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, Jehovah, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

10 And they shall bear their iniquity: the iniquity of the prophet shall be even as the iniquity of him that seeketh [unto him];

Yahweh will bring into the open the mistake made by the prophet by holding him responsible for it and imposing on him, too, the sentence of excommunication.

11 that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither defile themselves any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord Jehovah.

The worst sinners will be made a public example.

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

13 Son of man, when a land sinneth against me by committing a trespass, and I stretch out my hand upon it, and break the staff of the bread thereof, and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast;

The intention is to dismiss an expectation that the people of Jerusalem would survive the crisis that threatened them.

14 though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord Jehovah.

Cf. Jer 15:1-3. The insistence that these three would save no one but themselves in such a situation undermines the belief of the exiles who thought that collective virtue outweighed individual responsibility.

**15 If I cause evil beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no man may pass through because of the beasts;
16 though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only should be delivered, but the land should be desolate.**

Ezekiel predicts their death rather than the fond reunion of separated family members.

**17 Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off from it man and beast;
18 though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only should be delivered themselves.
19 Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my wrath upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast;
20 though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they should deliver neither son nor daughter; they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.**

The weapons God has in his arsenal are described here.

**21 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the evil beasts, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!
22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be carried forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings; and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.
23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their way and their doings; and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord Jehovah.**

The picture of Babylonian troops besieging Jerusalem and the horrors of a sick and starving populace are here described. Yet, again, there will be a remnant. The survival of children will minimize the shock of the destruction of the city.