

Ezekiel's Prophecy to the Exiles—Yahweh's Avenging Sword (August 14, 591 BC)

Ezekiel 20:45–21:32

The Riddle of the Sword

20:45 Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

46 “Son of man, set your face toward Teman, and speak out against the south and prophesy against the forest land of the Negev,

47 and say to the forest of the Negev, ‘Hear the word of the LORD: thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am about to kindle a fire in you, and it will consume every green tree in you, as well as every dry tree; the blazing flame will not be quenched and the whole surface from south to north will be burned by it.

48 All flesh will see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.””

49 Then I said, “Ah Lord GOD! They are saying of me, ‘Is he not *just* speaking parables?’”

21:1 And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

2 “Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and speak against the sanctuaries and prophesy against the land of Israel;

3 and say to the land of Israel, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am against you; and I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked.

4 Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh from south to north.

5 Thus all flesh will know that I, the LORD, have drawn My sword out of its sheath. It will not return to *its sheath* again.”

6 As for you, son of man, groan with breaking heart and bitter grief, groan in their sight.

7 And when they say to you, ‘Why do you groan?’ you shall say, ‘Because of the news that is coming; and every heart will melt, all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water. Behold, it comes and it will happen,’ declares the Lord GOD.”

The Song of the Sword

8 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

9 “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the LORD.’ Say,

‘A sword, a sword sharpened
And also polished!

10 ‘Sharpened to make a slaughter,
Polished to flash like lightning!’

Or shall we rejoice, the rod of My son despising every tree?

11 It is given to be polished, that it may be handled; the sword is sharpened and polished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

12 Cry out and wail, son of man; for it is against My people, it is against all the officials of Israel. They are delivered over to the sword with My people, therefore strike *your* thigh.

13 For *there is* a testing; and what if even the rod which despises will be no more?” declares the Lord GOD.

14 “You therefore, son of man, prophesy and clap *your* hands together; and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword for the slain. It is the sword for the great one slain, which surrounds them,

15 that *their* hearts may melt, and many fall at all their gates. I have given the glittering sword. Ah! It is made for *striking* like lightning, it is wrapped up in *readiness* for slaughter.

16 Show yourself sharp, go to the right; set yourself; go to the left, wherever your edge is appointed.

17 I will also clap My hands together, and I will appease My wrath; I, the LORD, have spoken.”

The Agent of the Sword

18 The word of the LORD came to me saying,

19 “As for you, son of man, make two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come; both of them will go out of one land. And make a signpost; make it at the head of the way to the city.

20 You shall mark a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah into fortified Jerusalem.

21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the household idols, he looks at the liver.

22 Into his right hand came the divination, ‘Jerusalem,’ to set battering rams, to open the mouth for slaughter, to lift up the voice with a battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build a siege wall.

23 And it will be to them like a false divination in their eyes; they have *sworn* solemn oaths. But he brings iniquity to remembrance, that they may be seized.

24 “Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you will be seized with the hand.

25 And you, O slain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,’

26 thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Remove the turban and take off the crown; this *will* no longer *be* the same. Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high.

27 A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it. This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to *Him*.’

The Taunt of the Sword

28 “And you, son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the sons of Ammon and concerning their reproach,’ and say: ‘A sword, a sword is drawn, polished for the slaughter, to cause it to consume, that it may be like lightning—

29 while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the wicked who are slain, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end.

30 Return *it* to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you.

31 I will pour out My indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and I will give you into the hand of brutal men, skilled in destruction.

32 You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.’”

Ezekiel’s Prophecy to the Exiles—Woe to the Bloody City! (August 14, 591 BC)

Ezekiel 22

Indictment of the Bloody City

1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

2 “And you, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then cause her to know all her abominations.

3 You shall say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “A city shedding blood in her midst, so that her time will come, and that makes idols, contrary to her *interest*, for defilement!

4 You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and defiled by your idols which you have made. Thus you have brought your day near and have come to your years; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations and a mocking to all the lands.

5 Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you of ill repute, full of turmoil.

6 “Behold, the rulers of Israel, each according to his power, have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood.

7 They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you.

8 You have despised My holy things and profaned My sabbaths.

9 Slanderous men have been in you for the purpose of shedding blood, and in you they have eaten at the mountain *shrines*. In your midst they have committed acts of lewdness.

10 In you they have uncovered *their* fathers' nakedness; in you they have humbled her who was unclean in her menstrual impurity.

11 One has committed abomination with his neighbor's wife and another has lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law. And another in you has humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

12 In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord GOD.

13 "Behold, then, I smite My hand at your dishonest gain which you have acquired and at the bloodshed which is among you.

14 Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? I, the LORD, have spoken and will act.

15 I will scatter you among the nations and I will disperse you through the lands, and I will consume your uncleanness from you.

16 You will profane yourself in the sight of the nations, and you will know that I am the LORD."'''

In the Smelter of God's Wrath

17 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the furnace; they are the dross of silver.

19 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because all of you have become dross, therefore, behold, I am going to gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

20 As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the furnace to blow fire on it in order to melt *it*, so I will gather *you* in My anger and in My wrath and I will lay you *there* and melt you.

21 I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you will be melted in the midst of it.

22 As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you.''''

The Unmanned Breach

23 And the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

24 "Son of man, say to her, 'You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.'

25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her.

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 profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

27 Her princes within her are like wolves tearing the prey, by shedding blood *and* destroying lives in order to get dishonest gain.

28 Her prophets have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,' when the LORD has not spoken.

29 The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and have oppressed the sojourner without justice.

30 I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.

31 Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads,” declares the Lord GOD.

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