

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 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

46 "Son of man, set your face *toward* the way of *the* south, and preach to *the* south, and prophesy against the forest of the territory of the Negev.

47 And you must say to the forest of the Negev, 'Hear the word of Yahweh, thus says the Lord Yahweh: "Look! I am kindling against you a fire, and it will devour in you every fresh tree and every dry tree; *the* blaze of *the* flame will not be quenched, and all the surfaces from *the* south to *the* north will be scorched by it.

48 And all creatures will see that I, Yahweh, I kindled it—it will not be quenched!" "

49 Then I said, "Ah, Lord Yahweh, they are saying about me, 'Is he not posing a parable?'"

The Meaning of the Riddle

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

2 "Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and preach to *the* sanctuaries, and prophesy to the land of Israel.

3 And you must say to the land of Israel, 'Thus says Yahweh: "Look! I *am* against you, and I will draw out my sword from its sheath, and I will cut *off* from you *the* righteous and *the* wicked.

4 Because I will cut *off* from you *both* righteous and wicked, therefore my sword will go out from its sheath to all creatures from south to north.

5 And they will know, all creatures, that I, Yahweh, I will bring out my sword from its sheath; it will not return again!"

6 And you, son of man, groan with shaking hips, and you must groan with bitterness before their eyes.

7 And then when they say to you, 'On account of what *are* you groaning?' then you must say, 'On account of *the* report, for it is coming, and every heart will be weak and all hands will hang limp and every spirit will be disheartened, and all knees will go *like* water.' Look! It is coming, and it will happen!" declares the Lord Yahweh.

The Song of the Sword

8 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

9 "Son of man, prophesy, and you must say, 'Thus says the Lord,' say, 'A sword, a sword *is* sharpened and *is* also polished.

10 It is sharpened to slaughter a slaughter, polished to flash like lightning! Or will we rejoice? A rod, my son, *is* despising every tree.

11 And he gives it to be polished, to be seized by the hand. It is sharpened—a sword—and it *is* polished to give it into *the* hand of *the* killer.

12 Cry and wail, son of man, for it is against my people; it is against all of the princes of Israel. They are thrown to *the* sword with my people; therefore strike your thigh.

13 For examine! And what if also *the* rod will not be despising?' declares the Lord Yahweh.

14 And you, son of man, prophesy and clap your hands. And the sword will strike twice; let it happen a third time. It *is* a sword of the dead, *the* sword of the great dead that *is* surrounding them,

15 so that a heart melts, and the fallen multiply at all of their gates. I gave a sword for slaughter, *and* alas! It is made for flashing, it is grasped for slaughtering.

16 Gather together, strike to the right; cause to go to the left, where your edge *is* directed.

17 And also I myself will clap my hands, and I will satisfy my rage! I, Yahweh, I have spoken."

The Agent of the Sword

18 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

19 "And you, son of man, mark *out* for yourself two roads for the coming of the sword of the king of Babylon; they must both go out from the same land. And hew *out* a signpost; hew *it* at *the* head of *the* road of *the* city.

20 You must mark a road for *the* coming of *the* sword to Rabbah of the Ammonites and to Judah, in Jerusalem *the* fortified.

21 For the king of Babylon stands at the fork of the road at the head of the two roads to practice divination. He shakes the arrows, he inquires with the teraphim, he examines the liver.

22 In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem, to put *up* battering rams, to open *a* mouth for slaughter, to raise the battle cry, to put *up* battering rams against gates, to build a siege ramp, to build siege works.

23 And it will be to them like practicing divination falsely in their eyes; they have sworn oaths for themselves. But he *will* bring *their* guilt to remembrance *so as* to seize them.

24 "Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'Because you have brought to remembrance your guilt by the uncovering of your transgressions, so that your sins in all of your deeds appear—because of your being remembered, you will be captured in the hand.'

25 And *as for* you, profane one, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come with *the* time of *the* punishment of *the* end,

26 thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'Remove the turban and lift off the crown; things *are* no longer the same. Exalt the low and bring low the high.

27 A ruin, a ruin, a ruin I will make it! Also this has not *ever* happened; *it will remain* until the coming of *the one* to whom the

judgment belongs and I have given it *to him*.’

The Taunt of the Sword

28 And you, son of man, prophesy, and you must say, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh to the Ammonites and concerning their disgrace,’ and you must say, ‘A sword, a sword *is* drawn for slaughtering; *it is* polished for holding, for flashing like lightning,

29 when seeing a false vision for you in vain, when practicing divination for you falsely, to give you on *the* neck of *the* profane ones of *the* wicked, whose day has come, the time of final punishment.

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

31 And I will pour out my anger 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 craftsmen of destruction.

32 You will be as fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the earth. You will not be remembered, for I, Yahweh, I 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 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,

2 “And you, son of man, will you judge? Will you judge the bloody city? Then you must make known *to* her all of her detestable things!

3 And you must say, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh: “A city pouring out blood in the midst of her; its time has come, and it made idols for itself, becoming unclean.

4 By your blood that you poured out you have become guilty, and by your idols that you made you have become unclean, and you have brought your days near, and your appointed years have come. Therefore I have made you a disgrace for the nations and a laughingstock to all of the countries.

5 The *people* near and the *people* far from you will make fun of you, the unclean and the terrified.

6 Look! The princes of Israel, each *one* according to his strength, they are in you for the shedding of blood.

7 They have treated father and mother with contempt in you; they violated the alien with extortion; in the midst of you they mistreated *the* orphan and widow.

8 You despised my holy objects; my Sabbaths you profaned.

9 Slandorous men are among you to shed blood, and they, among you, eat upon the mountains; they do wickedness in the midst of you.

10 They uncover *the* nakedness of *a* father among you; they violate *a woman* unclean of menstruation among you.

11 And a man does a detestable thing *with* the wife of his neighbor, and a man defiles his daughter-in-law in wickedness, and a man sexually violates among you his sister, the daughter of his father.

12 They take a bribe among you in order to shed blood; and you take usury, and you make gain *from* your neighbors by extortion, and so you have forgotten me, declares the Lord Yahweh.

13 And look! I strike my hand for your ill-gotten gain that you *have* made and at your blood that was in the midst of you.

14 Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong at the days *in* which I *am* dealing with you? I, Yahweh, I have spoken, and I will act!

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

16 And I will be profaned by you before *the* eyes of *the* nations, and you will know that I *am* Yahweh.” ”

In the Smelter of God’s Wrath

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

18 “Son of man, the house of Israel has become as silver dross to me; all of them *are as* bronze and tin and iron and lead in the midst of a furnace, *even as* silver dross, silver *dross* they became!

19 Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘Because all of you have become *as* silver dross, therefore look! I *am* gathering you to the midst of Jerusalem,

20 like the gathering of silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin to the middle of a furnace to blow fire on it for melting. Thus I will gather in my anger and in my rage, and I will deposit you, and I will melt you.

21 And I will gather you, and I will blow on you with the fire of my wrath, and so I will melt *you* in the midst of her.

22 Thus you will be melted like *the* melting of silver in the midst of a furnace, and you will know that I, Yahweh, I have poured out my rage on you.”

The Unmanned Breach

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

24 “Son of man, say to her, ‘You *are* a land not cleansed; it is not rained upon *in the* day of indignation.’

25 The conspiracy of its prophets in the midst of her *is* like a roaring lion *that* is tearing prey. They devour people, and they take wealth and treasure; they make its widows numerous in the midst of her.

26 Its priests treat my law violently, and they profane my holy objects; they do not distinguish between *a* holy object and what is unholy, or between the clean and the unclean. They do not teach the difference, and they hide their eyes from my Sabbaths, and so I am profaned in the midst of them.

27 Its officials *are* like wolves tearing prey in its midst, to pour out blood, to destroy people, to make dishonest gain.

28 And for them its prophets plaster whitewash; *they are* seeing falseness and *are* practicing divination for them *by* lying, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh,’ and Yahweh has not spoken.

29 They severely oppress the people of the land, and they committed robbery, and they mistreated *the* needy and *the* poor, and they oppressed the alien without justice.

30 And so I sought for them somebody, one repairing *the* wall and standing in the breach before me on behalf of the land not to destroy it, but I did not find *anyone*,

31 and so I poured out my indignation on them. With the fire of my wrath I destroyed them; I returned their way upon their head,” declares the Lord Yahweh.

Ezekiel’s Prophecy to the Exiles—A Tale of Two Sisters (August 14, 591 BC)

Ezekiel 23

Introduction of the Accused

1 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,
 2 “Son of man, there were two women, *the* daughters of one mother,
 3 and they prostituted *themselves* in Egypt in their childhood; they were prostituting *themselves* there, *and* their breasts were fondled, and there they caressed the bosoms of their virginity.
 4 Now *as for* their names, the older *was* Oholah, and Oholibah *was* her sister. And they became mine, and they bore sons and daughters, and their names *are* Samaria *for* Oholah, and Jerusalem *for* Oholibah.

The Indictment of Oholah (Samaria)

5 And Oholah prostituted *herself* while she was still mine, and she lusted for her lovers, for Assyria *who was* nearby,
 6 clothed in blue cloth, governors and prefects, handsome young men *and* all of them horsemen, experts on horseback.
 7 And she bestowed her fornication on them, *on* the choice *ones* of the Assyrians, all of them, and with every one *after* which she lusted; with all of their idols she defiled herself.
 8 And her whorings from *the time of* Egypt she *did* not abandon, for they slept with her in her childhood, and they caressed the bosoms of her virginity, and they poured out their fornication on her.
 9 Therefore I gave her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians after whom she lusted.
 10 They uncovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, and they killed her with the sword. And she became a name for the women, and they executed judgments against her.

The Indictment of Oholibah (Jerusalem)

11 “And though Oholibah her sister saw, yet in her lust she behaved more corruptly than her, and her whoring *was* more than the prostitution of her sister.
 12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and prefects, warriors clothed in perfection, expert horsemen, all of them handsome young men.
 13 And I saw that she was defiled; they had both taken the same path!
 14 And she increased her whorings, and she saw men carved on the wall, images of Chaldeans carved in red,
 15 belted with a belt at their waist with turbans on their heads, all of them *giving the* appearance of adjutants, the image of the Babylonians; Chaldea *was* the land of their birth.
 16 And she lusted for them when her eyes saw them, and she sent messengers to them *at* Chaldea.
 17 And so the Babylonians came to her *for the* bed of lovemaking; and they defiled her with their fornication, and she was defiled by them, and she turned from them.
 18 And she revealed her whorings, and she revealed her nakedness, and so I turned from her just as I turned from her sister.
 19 Yet she increased her whorings, recalling the days of her childhood when she was prostituted in the land of Egypt.
 20 And she lusted after her male lovers whose genitalia *were the* genitalia of male donkeys and *their* seminal emission *was the* seminal emission of horses.
 21 And you longed *after* the obscene conduct of your youth when your bosom was caressed by Egypt, fondling your young breasts.

The Sentencing of Oholibah (Jerusalem)

22 “Therefore, Oholibah, thus says the Lord Yahweh: ‘Look! I *am* stirring up your lovers against you *concerning* whom you turned away, and I will bring them against you from all around:

23 the Babylonians and all of the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, all of the Assyrians *along* with them, handsome young men, governors and prefects, all of them adjutants and excellent horsemen.

24 And they will come against you *with* an army chariot and wagon and with a crowd of peoples; they will set *themselves* against you *from* all around *with* large shield and small shield and helmet. And I will give before them judgment, and they will judge you with their judgments.

25 And I will direct my zeal against you, and they will deal with you in anger; your nose and your ears they will remove, and those who are left, they will fall by the sword, and they will take your sons and your daughters, and your remnant will be consumed by fire.

26 And they will strip you *of* your clothes, and they will take your splendid jewelry.

27 And I will put an end to your obscene conduct *coming* from you and your fornication from the land of Egypt, and you will not lift your eyes to them; and you will not remember Egypt again.'

28 For thus says the Lord Yahweh: 'Look! I *am* giving you into the hand of those you hated, into the hand of those from whom you turned away.

29 And they will deal with you in hatred, and they will take all of your acquisitions, and they will leave you naked and *in* bareness; and the nakedness of your fornication and your obscene conduct and your whorings will be exposed.

30 These *things are* accomplished against you since you prostituted yourself after the nations, *and* on account of that, you defiled yourself by their idols.

31 You went in the *same* way of your sister, and I will give her cup into your hand.'"

32 Thus says the Lord Yahweh: "You will drink the deep and wide cup of your sister; you will be as laughter and as scorn; the cup holds so much!

33 You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, for a cup of horror and desolation *is* the cup of your sister, Samaria.

34 And you will drink it, and you will drain *it*, and its potsherds you will gnaw, and you will tear out your breasts, for I myself spoke," declares the Lord Yahweh.

35 Therefore thus says the Lord Yahweh: "Because you have forgotten me, and you threw me behind your back, now in turn you bear your obscene conduct and your whorings."

The Charges against Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem)

36 And Yahweh said to me, "Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah and declare their abominable deeds to them?"

37 For they committed adultery, and blood *is* on their hands, and they committed adultery with their idols, and even their children that they had borne for me—they sacrificed them as food!

38 Also they did this to me: they defiled my sanctuary on that day, and they profaned my Sabbaths,

39 and when they slaughtered their children for their idols, they came to my sanctuary on that day to profane it. And look, this is what they did in my house!

40 What is worse, they sent for men who come from a distant place, *to* whom a messenger *was* sent to them, and look! They came! *Men* for whom you bathed and painted your eyes, and you adorned yourself *with* an ornament.

41 And you sat on a magnificent couch and a table prepared before her, and my incense and my olive oil you put on her.

42 And a sound of a carefree crowd *was* with it, and in addition to *these* men, a crowd of drunken men was brought in from *the* desert, and they put bracelets on their arms and a crown of splendor on their heads.

43 And I said to the one worn out *with* adulteries, 'Now they will prostitute *her concerning* her fornication, even her.'

44 And *so* they went to her like going to a female prostitute; and thus they went to Oholah and to Oholibah, the women of obscene conduct.

45 But righteous men, they will judge them *with the* judgment of committing adultery, and *with the* judgment of shedding blood; for they were committing adultery, and blood *was* on their hands."

The Sentencing of Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem)

46 For thus says the Lord Yahweh: "Bring up against them an assembly, and make them as a thing of horror and as plunder.

47 And an assembly must stone them *with* stones, and they must cut them down. With their swords they shall kill their sons and their daughters, and with fire they shall burn their houses.

48 And I will cause obscene conduct to cease from the land, and all of the women will be warned, and they will not do according to your wickedness.

49 And they will repay your obscene conduct upon you, and the guilt of your idols you will bear, and you will know that I *am* the Lord Yahweh.