

Ezekiel's Prophecy to the Exiles—Individual Responsibility and Retribution (c. late 592 BC)

Ezekiel 18

Israel's Proverb

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

2 "What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying,

'The fathers eat the sour grapes,
But the children's teeth are set on edge'?

3 As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore.

4 Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

A Righteous Man's Wicked Son

5 "But if a man is righteous and practices justice and righteousness,

6 and does not eat at the mountain *shrines* or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period—

7 if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, *but* gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing,

8 if he does not lend *money* on interest or take increase, *if* he keeps his hand from iniquity *and* executes true justice between man and man,

9 *if* he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully—he is righteous *and* will surely live," declares the Lord GOD.

10 "Then he may have a violent son who sheds blood and who does any of these things to a brother

11 (though he himself did not do any of these things), that is, he even eats at the mountain *shrines*, and defiles his neighbor's wife, 12 oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore a pledge, but lifts up his eyes to the idols *and* commits abomination,

13 he lends *money* on interest and takes increase; will he live? He will not live! He has committed all these abominations, he will surely be put to death; his blood will be on his own head.

A Wicked Man's Righteous Son

14 "Now behold, he has a son who has observed all his father's sins which he committed, and observing does not do likewise.

15 He does not eat at the mountain *shrines* or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, or defile his neighbor's wife, 16 or oppress anyone, or retain a pledge, or commit robbery, *but* he gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with clothing,

17 he keeps his hand from the poor, does not take interest or increase, *but* executes My ordinances, and walks in My statutes; he will not die for his father's iniquity, he will surely live.

Each Individual Stands On Their Own

18 As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed *his* brother and did what was not good among his people, behold, he will die for his iniquity.

19 "Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity?' When the son has practiced justice and righteousness and has observed all My statutes and done them, he shall surely live.

20 The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

The Salvation of the Wicked Who Repent

21 "But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

22 All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live.

23 Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?

The Destruction of the Righteous Who Rebel

24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die.

25 Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right?

26 When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has

committed he will die.

27 Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life.

28 Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

29 But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right?

Repent!

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you.

31 Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."

Ezekiel's Prophecy to the Exiles—Lament for the Princes of Israel (c. late 592 BC)

Ezekiel 19

Dirge for the Lions of Judah

1 "As for you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel

2 and say,

'What was your mother?

A lioness among lions!

She lay down among young lions,

She reared her cubs.

3 'When she brought up one of her cubs,

He became a lion,

And he learned to tear *his* prey;

He devoured men.

4 'Then nations heard about him;

He was captured in their pit,

And they brought him with hooks

To the land of Egypt. [cf. Jehohaz in [2 Kgs 23:31–33](#)]

5 'When she saw, as she waited,

That her hope was lost,

She took another of her cubs

And made him a young lion.

6 'And he walked about among the lions;

He became a young lion,

He learned to tear *his* prey;

He devoured men.

7 'He destroyed their fortified towers

And laid waste their cities;

And the land and its fullness were appalled

Because of the sound of his roaring.

8 'Then nations set against him

On every side from *their* provinces,

And they spread their net over him;

He was captured in their pit.

9 'They put him in a cage with hooks

And brought him to the king of Babylon; [cf. Jehoiachin in [2 Kgs 24:8–16](#)]

They brought him in hunting nets

So that his voice would be heard no more

On the mountains of Israel.

Dirge for the Vine of Judah

10 'Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard,

Planted by the waters;

It was fruitful and full of branches

Because of abundant waters.

- 11 'And it had strong branches *fit* for scepters of rulers,
And its height was raised above the clouds
So that it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches.
- 12 'But it was plucked up in fury;
It was cast down to the ground;
And the east wind dried up its fruit.
Its strong branch was torn off
So that it withered;
The fire consumed it.
- 13 'And now it is planted in the wilderness,
In a dry and thirsty land.
- 14 'And fire has gone out from *its* branch;
It has consumed its shoots *and* fruit,
So that there is not in it a strong branch,
A scepter to rule.'"

This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.

Ezekiel's Prophecy to the Exiles—The History of Israel's Rebellion (August 14, 591 BC)

Ezekiel 20:1–44

Call for Israel's Arraignment

- 1 Now in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me.
- 2 And the word of the LORD came to me saying,
- 3 "Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Do you come to inquire of Me? As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will not be inquired of by you.'"
- 4 Will you judge them, will you judge them, son of man? Make them know the abominations of their fathers;

Israel's Rebellion in Egypt

- 5 and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God,
- 6 on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.
- 7 I said to them, 'Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.'
- 8 But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.
- 9 But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they *lived*, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

Israel's Rebellion in the Wilderness (Exodus generation)

- 10 So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.
- 11 I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live. [[Lev 18:5](#)]
- 12 Also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.
- 13 But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; and My sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them.
- 14 But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out.
- 15 Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands,
- 16 because they rejected My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned My sabbaths, for their heart continually went after their idols.
- 17 Yet My eye spared them rather than destroying them, and I did not cause their annihilation in the wilderness.

Israel's Rebellion in the Wilderness (Wandering generation)

- 18 "I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers or keep their ordinances or defile yourselves with their idols.

19 I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and observe them.

20 Sanctify My sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.'

21 But the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; they profaned My sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness.

22 But I withdrew My hand and acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.

23 Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them among the lands,

24 because they had not observed My ordinances, but had rejected My statutes and had profaned My sabbaths, and their eyes were on the idols of their fathers.

25 I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live;

26 and I pronounced them unclean because of their gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through *the fire* so that I might make them desolate, in order that they might know that I am the LORD.'"

Israel's Rebellion in the Recent Past

27 "Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed Me by acting treacherously against Me.

28 When I had brought them into the land which I swore to give to them, then they saw every high hill and every leafy tree, and they offered there their sacrifices and there they presented the provocation of their offering. There also they made their soothing aroma and there they poured out their drink offerings.

29 Then I said to them, 'What is the high place to which you go?' So its name is called Bamah to this day.'"

30 Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and play the harlot after their detestable things?

31 When you offer your gifts, when you cause your sons to pass through the fire, you are defiling yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will not be inquired of by you.

The Future Transformation of Israel—Israel in the Desert

32 What comes into your mind will not come about, when you say: 'We will be like the nations, like the tribes of the lands, serving wood and stone.'

33 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

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

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

36 As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you," declares the Lord GOD.

37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

38 and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

The Future Transformation of Israel—Israel on Yahweh's Holy Mountain

39 "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord GOD, "Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.

40 For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.

41 As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.

42 And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers.

43 There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done.

44 Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD.'"