

## 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.

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

### Ezekiel 23

#### Introduction of the Accused

1 The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,

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

3 and they played the harlot in Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and there their virgin bosom was handled.

4 Their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister. And they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. And *as for* their names, Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

#### The Indictment of Oholah (Samaria)

5 “Oholah played the harlot while she was Mine; and she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, *her* neighbors,

6 who were clothed in purple, governors and officials, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding on horses.

7 She bestowed her harlotries on them, all of whom *were* the choicest men of Assyria; and with all whom she lusted after, with all their idols she defiled herself.

8 She did not forsake her harlotries from *the time in* Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her, and they handled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust 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, but they slew her with the sword. Thus she became a byword among women, and they executed judgments on her.

#### The Indictment of Oholibah (Jerusalem)

11 “Now her sister Oholibah saw *this*, yet she was more corrupt in her lust than she, and her harlotries were more than the harlotries of her sister.

12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and officials, the ones near, magnificently dressed, horsemen riding on horses, all of them desirable young men.

13 I saw that she had defiled herself; they both took the same way.

14 So she increased her harlotries. And she saw men portrayed on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion,

15 girded with belts on their loins, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers, like the Babylonians *in* Chaldea, the land of their birth.

16 When she saw them she lusted after them and sent messengers to them in Chaldea.

17 The Babylonians came to her to the bed of love and defiled her with their harlotry. And when she had been defiled by them, she became disgusted with them.

18 She uncovered her harlotries and uncovered her nakedness; then I became disgusted with her, as I had become disgusted with her sister.

19 Yet she multiplied her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

20 She lusted after their paramours, whose flesh is *like* the flesh of donkeys and whose issue is *like* the issue of horses.

21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians handled your bosom because of the breasts of your youth.

#### The Sentencing of Oholibah (Jerusalem)

22 “Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold I will arouse your lovers against you, from whom you were alienated, and I will bring them against you from every side:

23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and officials all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses.

24 They will come against you with weapons, chariots and wagons, and with a company of peoples. They will set themselves against you on every side with buckler and shield and helmet; and I will commit the judgment to them, and they will judge you according to their customs.

25 I will set My jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in wrath. They will remove your nose and your ears; and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and your survivors will be consumed by the fire.

26 They will also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels.

27 Thus I will make your lewdness and your harlotry *brought* from the land of Egypt to cease from you, so that you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.’

28 For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will give you into the hand of those whom you hate, into the hand of those from whom you were alienated.

29 They will deal with you in hatred, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your harlotries will be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotries.

30 These things will be done to you because you have played the harlot with the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols.

31 You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand.’

32 Thus says the Lord GOD,

‘You will drink your sister’s cup,  
Which is deep and wide.  
You will be laughed at and held in derision;  
It contains much.

33 ‘You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,  
The cup of horror and desolation,  
The cup of your sister Samaria.

34 ‘You will drink it and drain it.  
Then you will gnaw its fragments  
And tear your breasts;

for I have spoken,’ declares the Lord GOD.

35 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, bear now the *punishment* of your lewdness and your harlotries.’”

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

36 Moreover, the LORD said to me, “Son of man, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominations.

37 For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through *the fire* to them as food.

38 Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My sabbaths.

39 For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo, thus they did within My house.

40 “Furthermore, they have even sent for men who come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and lo, they came—for whom you bathed, painted your eyes and decorated yourselves with ornaments;

41 and you sat on a splendid couch with a table arranged before it on which you had set My incense and My oil.

42 The sound of a carefree multitude was with her; and drunkards were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort. And they put bracelets on the hands of the women and beautiful crowns on their heads.

43 “Then I said concerning her who was worn out by adulteries, ‘Will they now commit adultery with her when she is *thus*?’

44 But they went in to her as they would go in to a harlot. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, the lewd women.

45 But they, righteous men, will judge them with the judgment of adulteresses and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

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

46 “For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Bring up a company against them and give them over to terror and plunder.

47 The company will stone them with stones and cut them down with their swords; they will slay their sons and their daughters and burn their houses with fire.

48 Thus I will make lewdness cease from the land, that all women may be admonished and not commit lewdness as you have done.

49 Your lewdness will be requited upon you, and you will bear the penalty of *worshipping* your idols; thus you will know that I am the Lord GOD.’”

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