

Chapter Eleven

1) The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the Lord which faces east. And behold, at the door of the gateway there were twenty-five men; and I saw among them Ja-azaniah the son of Azzur and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2) And he said to me, "**Son of man**, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; 3) who say, 'The time is not near to build houses; this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh.' 4) Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O **son of man**." 5) And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, **Thus says the Lord**: So you think, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind. 6) You have multiplied your slain in this city and have filled its streets with the slain. 7) Therefore **thus says the Lord God**: Your slain whom you have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron; but you shall be brought forth out of the midst of it. 8) You have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, says the Lord God. 9) And I will bring you forth out of the midst of it and give you into the hands of foreigners and execute judgments upon you. 10) You shall fall by the sword; I will judge you at the border of Israel; and you shall **know that I am the Lord**. 11) This city shall not be your caldron, nor shall you be the flesh in the midst of it; I will judge you at the border of Israel; 12) and you shall **know that I am the Lord**; for you have not walked in my statutes nor executed my ordinances but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are round about you." 13) And it came to pass while I was prophesying that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down upon my face and cried with a loud voice and said, "Ah Lord God! will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" 14) And the **word of the Lord** came to me: 15) "**Son of man**, your brethren, even your brethren, your fellow exiles, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, 'They have gone far from the Lord; to us this land is given for a possession.' 16) Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord God: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.' 17) Therefore say, '**Thus says the Lord God**: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.' 18) And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. 19) And I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh 20) that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21) But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will requite their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord God." 22) Then the cherubim lifted up their wings with the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. 23) And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. 24) And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25) And I told the exiles all the things that the Lord had showed me.

As noted a number of times earlier, the conjunctive *v-* plays an important role to connect what had just happened with what is about to happen, and here has no English translation. As a footnote in the **RSV** says, "these verses should follow 8.18" because they come before the destruction of Jerusalem. In light of this, we could intimate that when the Spirit (*ruach*, cf. 10.17) lifts up Ezekiel (compare with being lifted by the lock

of his hair in 8.3), it's done by going back in time. The Spirit isn't bound by such restrictions, so he's free to take Ezekiel anywhere he wishes.

The destination for Ezekiel? The east gate of the Lord's temple which, as often is the case, is called "house" as a way to designate a certain familiarity with Israel and now is in the unfortunate process of being forsaken. So when the Spirit brings the prophet to the gateway facing east—he doesn't necessarily let him down but keeps him suspended—he beholds (*hineh*, cf. 10.9) a considerably large group of twenty-five men. He singles out two among them as princes or *sar* of the people although they aren't mentioned elsewhere. "Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon" [17.12].

Although Ezekiel singles out Ja-azaniah and Pelatiah by reason of their leadership roles, he must have known the others and intimates instinctively that they were conspiring something which wasn't good. The entire group must have sought control over Jerusalem at one time or another yet fortunately had been caught before they could achieve their goal. Now these conspirators decided to do their thing in a place least expected, within the temple...the home...of the Lord.

The Spirit confirms what Ezekiel had known from the moment he laid eyes upon these men, namely, that they are devising iniquity and wicked counsel in Jerusalem. *Chashav* is the verb for devising which also means to think out something or to impute. It's used with the noun '*aven*, also as emptiness or vanity. Their references are respectively: "And you will devise an evil scheme" [38.10]. "The young men of On (i.e., '*Aven*) and of Pibeseth shall fall by the sword" [30.17]. As for the counsel which is wicked or *rah* (cf. 8.9), the noun is *hetsah* (cf. 7.25) with the verb (participle) from which it's derived, *yahats*, as in Mic 4.9: "Has your counselor perished?"

Vs. 3 gives some details as to this plot, namely, that they are attempting to assure Jerusalem's inhabitants of their security and continue with building projects despite (as a footnote in the **RSV** says) the plot between Egypt and king Zedekiah's pro-Egyptian counselors against Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon. They put this false reassurance in terms of a rhetorical sentence (that is, in the Hebrew), "Is not the time near?" In the same breath the conspirators acknowledge that Jerusalem is a caldron (*syr*) or a pot for boiling and found next in vs. 11. Into this boiling pot they are destined to be cast. This moves the Spirit to have Ezekiel prophesy against them (*navy*', cf. 6.1) which he does in the following verses. In order to carry it out, the Spirit must drop Ezekiel in the midst of these twenty-five conspirators. It's a risky maneuver since easily they could do away with him.

Chapter Eleven begins with the Spirit lifting up Ezekiel whereas vs. 5 has the same Spirit doing the opposite, that is, falling upon him, *naphal* (cf. 8.1). Such falling is a prelude to uttering a prophesy or the like. Here the verb '*amar* (not the more fuller *davar*, if you will) for to speak is used three times in rapid succession: said, say and thus says. A fourth instance can be thrown in translated as "so you think" rendered

literally as “so you say.” Despite this, the Lord (through Ezekiel, of course) knows what Israel had been up to, the verb *yadah* being used along with *ruach*, the lower case use compared with the upper case one or the Spirit.

The words of prophesy (this term isn’t used explicitly) continues through vs. 12 with reference to the evil the twenty-five men had committed under the leadership of the two princes mentioned in vs. 1. They are responsible for having multiplied the slain within Jerusalem, *ravah* being the verb in vs. 6. “They have made many widows in her” [22.25]. Corresponding with this *ravah* is *mala’* (cf. 10.4 but not noted there) or filling the streets with dead bodies. These corpses are the flesh within the walls of Jerusalem which form a caldron. However, the conspirators aren’t to be consumed within it but are to be brought outside (*betok* with *min* prefaced to it; cf. 10.10) or from its midst or very center.

In sharp contrast to the just mentioned *betok* is the sword in vs. 8 awaiting these twenty-five men, that is, falling into the hands of foreigners or *zur* (cf. 7.21 but not noted there), a participle which also means enemy. They are to pass judgement, *shaphat* (cf. 7.8) which is in line with the Lord himself doing the same *shaphat* (cf. vs. 10), more specifically at the border of Israel or where this *gevul* (cf. vs. 11) rubs up against territory controlled by Babylon. And so *gevul* forms a larger caldron, if you will, compared with the smaller one of Jerusalem. To be slain there is a worse fate than within Jerusalem, hence the significance of *betok* with *min* (“from the midst of”) prefaced to it as noted concerning vs. 7. If there is any last minute redemption, it consists in the fact that these conspirators will know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 5) the Lord.

Vs. 12 is a continuation of the previous verse which again speaks of the conspirators knowing (*yadah*) that the Lord is in charge. Following this *yadah* is the imputation of not following divine statutes or ordinances, *choq* and *mishpat* (cf. 7.27). For the former, cf. 16.27: “And diminished your allotted portion.” Instead of these, they have followed the *mishpat* of the nations around Israel, hence the reason for the Lord bringing the conspirators to Israel’s boundaries.

Vs. 13 shifts gears from the fate of these twenty-five men to Ezekiel lamenting the death of Pelatiah, that is, while he was finishing up his prophesy against them. As noted in vs. 1, he is one of the two princes among the twenty-five conspirators. Ezekiel gets quite emotional over his death, possibly because he had known him before he fell into apostasy. Then he blurts out to the Lord about making a full end to what is left of Israel, *kalah*. “And great hailstones in wrath to destroy it” [13.13]. As for this remnant or *sh’eryth* (cf. 9.8 but not noted there), most likely it hearkens back to those marked by the man clothed in linen “who sigh and groan over all the abominations” [9.4] committed in Jerusalem. Again, the number of that remnant isn’t given but left to the reader to presume, mostly likely being quite small.

Vs. 14 is succinct, opening with the conjunctive *v-*, “and the word (*davar*) of the Lord came to me,” this phrase being found last in 7.1. In the verse at hand the *davar* comes to

Ezekiel after he mourns the death of Pelatiah or more specifically, the complete destruction of Israel for all its abominable practices. The *davar* to be proclaimed is detailed through vs. 21, a good chunk of Chapter Eleven. It begins with the biting tone of “your brethren, even your brethren” which must have embarrassed Ezekiel at being associated with such people although by now he is very familiar with the Israel’s apostasy.

Ezekiel is referring to Israel not as the northern kingdom that split off from the Judah or southern kingdom after Solomon's death but as the entire people of God. From that point of view the Jews are the remnant of Israel. Ezekiel wants to know if God is going to destroy his entire ancient people and replies that he and his fellow Jews in exile are being maligned by those who still live in Jerusalem. They claim that they are far away from the Lord by reason of living in Babylon, so now God is going to give all the Promised land to them. In fact as God will show Ezekiel, it will be the exact opposite. The exiles will return and inherit the land and those in Jerusalem will be killed or scattered.

Note that one of the ways Ezekiel is identified with his fellows is by the phrase “your fellow exiles” which reads literally and more pertinently as “men of redemption,” *ge’ulah*, this term having a number of references in Chapter Twenty-Five of Leviticus beginning with 25.24: “And in all the country you possess, you shall grant a redemption of the land.” In sum, we have expression of a strain between two groups, those left in Jerusalem and those in exile. As for those in Jerusalem, they say that the land has been given them as a possession, *morashah* implying inheritance. “I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession” [25.4]. They come up with an excuse by claiming that those in Jerusalem have strayed far from the Lord, *rachaq* (cf. 8.6 but not noted there). To this the Lord bids Ezekiel to respond in vs. 16 where the Lord claims that he was a sanctuary in lands to which they had been scattered, *miqdash* (cf. 9.5). The English text reads “sanctuary to them for a while” whereas the Hebrew runs “in small measure.” Perhaps this is because the *miqdash* of exile is less than the *miqdash* or temple in Jerusalem, center of Jewish worship.

Vs. 17 begins with “thus says the Lord God” right after the same phrase in vs. 16 possibly due to the importance of what he has to communicate. The Lord will first gather then assemble the Israelites, *qavats* and *‘asaph* being two similar verbs. The first literally means to grasp by the hand or to gather and the second, to collect or to gather up. For references: the first is noted last in 10.1 but not noted there while the second may be found in 24.4: “Put in it the pieces of flesh.” The first is associated with the peoples or those who are not Israelites while the second, countries in which Israel had been scattered, *puts* also found in vs. 16 with reference to countries. Note that Israel is called land or *‘adamah* (cf. 7.2) which pertains more to the physical place while countries are *ham*, a word associated with people or nation. Given the situation of exile, *‘adamah* is far more important because it signifies the place of return.

Vs. 18 has the exiles arriving back home where they will remove all detestable things and abominations, *shiquts* and *tohevah*, both found together in 8.20. This they must do on their own which is followed by a specific divine intervention. That is to say, vs. 19 has the Lord step in order to give the people literally “one heart” (*lev*, cf. 6.9), emphasis upon one in that it will be essential to eradicate the presence of multiple deities in their native land of Israel. In addition to this, the Lord will give a new spirit or new *ruach* (cf. vs. 5) within the people, *qerev* meaning the interior or midst of anything. Compare with *betok* which is more around the middle of something or among. Both this one heart and new spirit (*lev* and *ruach*) will replace their stony heart for one of flesh. Note that nothing is said of replacing the *ruach*.

Vs. 20 says that the purpose of this twofold surgery, if you will, is for Israel to walk in the Lord’s statutes and ordinances, *choq* and *mishpat*, as found in vs. 12 where they had not done so. The first are to be kept (*shamar*) and the second to be obeyed (*hasah*, the common verb to do). A reference to the former which implies keeping watch is 20.18: “Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers nor observe their ordinance.” This *shamar* and *hasah*...keeping watch and doing...automatically results in Israel belonging to the Lord and he being their God which is rendered literally as “to (*l-*) God.”

Vs. 21 reads in Hebrew as pointed out by the **RSV**, “To the heart of their detestable things and their abominations their heart goes.” The noun *derek* (road, way) is used here most likely as “things.” This condemnation applies to those who are not part of the exile. Dealing with them is an important requisite for the exiles to return and reestablish true worship of the Lord. If they aren’t eliminated, the problem is bound to continue.

So after closing on both a hopeful and threatening note, the cherubim and the *kavod* (cf. 10.18) or glory of the Lord over them depart. More specifically, this *kavod* ascends from the midst of (*mehal tok* or from on midst) Jerusalem and takes position on the mountain east of the city, that is, the Mount of Olives. From there it seems to pause, even linger for some time, as the Lord with his cherubim take in one last sight of Jerusalem. For a human correspondence of this, refer to King David when he had to flee his son Absalom (cf. 2Sam 16.1+). As for what the Lord did afterwards, nothing is said after this, the picture intended to leave us in suspense.

Attention now shifts to Ezekiel in vs. 24 when the Spirit (*Ruach*, cf. vs. 19) lifts him up and brings him in vision or *mar’eh* (cf. 10.10) not simply by the Spirit by the Spirit of God. This harkens back to 8.3 when the same Spirit “brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem.” In other words, the vision of Israel’s eventual restoration is complete and needs to be communicated to the exiles in Babylon which here is designated as Chaldea. Once there, this vision went up from Ezekiel after which he recounted everything that the Lord had shown him. Nothing is said of their response, but any ray of hope would be most welcome despite their relatively benign treatment in Babylon.

Son of man: 3

Davar of the Lord: 1

Thus says the Lord: 5

Know the Lord: 2

1) ruach, hineh, sar, 2) chashav, 'aven, rah, yahats, 3) syr, 4) navy', 5) naphal, yadah, ruach, 6) ravah, mala', 7) betok, 9) zur, shaphat, 10) shaphat, gevul, 11) yadah, 12) choq, mishpat, 13) kalah, sh'eryh, 15) ge'ulah, rashaq, morashah, 16) miqdash, 17) qavats, 'asaph, naphats, puts, 'adamah, 18) shiquts, tohevah, 19) lev, ruach, qerev, 20) choq, mishpat, shamar, hasah, 21) derek, 22) kavod, 24) ruach, mar'eh

Chapter Twelve

1) The **word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "**Son of man**, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house who have eyes to see but see not, who have ears to hear but hear not; 3) for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, **son of man**, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand though they are a rebellious house. 4) You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight as baggage for exile; and you shall go forth yourself at evening in their sight as men do who must go into exile. 5) Dig through the wall in their sight and go out through it. 6) In their sight you shall lift the baggage upon your shoulder and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel." 7) And I did as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I went forth in the dark carrying my outfit upon my shoulder in their sight. 8) In the morning the **word of the Lord** came to me: 9) "**Son of man**, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?' 10) Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are in it.' 11) Say, 'I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity.' 12) And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage upon his shoulder in the dark and shall go forth; he shall dig through the wall and go out through it; he shall cover his face that he may not see the land with his eyes. 13) And I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon in the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it; and he shall die there. 14) And I will scatter toward every wind all who are round about him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will unsheathe the sword after them. 15) And they shall **know that I am the Lord** when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. 16) But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may confess all their abominations among the nations where they go and may **know that I am the Lord**." 17) Moreover the **word of the Lord** came to me: 18) "**Son of man**, eat your bread with quaking and drink water with trembling and with fearfulness; 19) and say of the people of the land, **Thus says the Lord** God concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with fearfulness and drink water in dismay because their land will be stripped of all it contains on account of the violence of all those who dwell in it. 20) And the inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall **know that I am the Lord**." 21) And the **word of the Lord** came to me: 22) "**Son of man**, what is this proverb that you have about the land of Israel, saying, 'The days grow long, and every vision comes to nought'? 23) Tell them therefore, 'Thus says the Lord God: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel.' But say to them, The days are at hand and the fulfilment of every vision. 24) For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25) But I the Lord will speak the word

which I will speak, and it will be performed. It will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and perform it, says the Lord God." 26) Again the **word of the Lord** came to me: 27) "Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, 'The vision that he sees is for many days hence, and he prophesies of times far off.' 28) Therefore say to them, **Thus says the Lord God:** None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word which I speak will be performed, says the Lord God."

"Word (*davar*) of the Lord" is prefaced with the conjunctive *v-*, this phrase being mentioned last in 11.14 and in the verse at hand, lacks the verb "came." In other words, the Hebrew reads literally "and the *davar* of the Lord was to me." There's a certain tongue-in-cheek humor to vs. 2 when the Lord says that he dwells in the midst or very middle of (*betok*, cf. 11.7) Israel which is described as a rebellious house throughout Chapter Twelve. Humorous in the sense that Ezekiel must have shot back at the Lord with something like "Really?" In other words, he had known this from the very beginning of his ministry. How could anyone with some sense could not? As for the phrase "son of man," it's found six times in this chapter.

The phrase "rebellious house" is found five times in Chapter Two, *mer*y being the adjective as in 2.8, so early on Ezekiel got a cram course on Israel being in this degenerate condition. Also mention of "house" with regard to Israel intimates something domestic, of taking place within a confined building, making it all the more contentious. Then add the just mentioned *betok* or very center along with Ezekiel dwelling there, and you really have an undesirable situation. As for the dwellers there, they have eyes and ears but can neither see nor hear, this being reminiscent of Is 6.10: "Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed."

Vs. 3 is a continuation of the sentence begun in the previous verse, starting off with another mention of Israel as a rebellious house, again, this being for emphasis. This verse contains a second sentence where the Lord tells Ezekiel as "son of man" (second reference) to prepare baggage in the manner of someone going into exile or *galah* also meaning captivity as the following shows: "And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity" [39.23]. You'd think that setting out under the cover of dark is best for this. However, the Lord bids Ezekiel to do it in broad daylight, more specifically as "in their sight" so no one of the entire house of Israel will miss the spectacle.

As for the place of exile, that's not mentioned, again to make put the Israelites on edge. Which enemy will come and destroy our city, leading us into captivity? That's the feeling Ezekiel wishes to impart. However, the Lord holds out some hope, albeit slim, that the people just might understand, *ra'ah* (cf. 10.9) being the verb which means to see. Use of *ra'ah* is somewhat ironic in that just a few verses above it's used with "eyes to see but see not." While everyone marveled at the strange behavior of Ezekiel (some would say it forebodes an invasion but never could say so publically), they did not *ra'ah* it; more importantly, they failed to *ra'ah* that they were a rebellious house.

In order to make this gesture more dramatic, in vs. 4 the Lord bids Ezekiel to bring out his baggage in full daylight which means he had to walk from his house through the streets of Jerusalem to the city wall. While vs. 3 says that the prophet is to go into exile during the day, vs. 6 has him carrying out his baggage in the dark. So it seems the preparation was done during daylight hours, deliberately drawn out to strike fear into the people, while the actual act of leaving through the wall was at night. Then again, in light of what comes later in this chapter concerning the unfulfilled prophecies of Jeremiah, most people simply looked the other way. So while making good his exit, Ezekiel is to cover his face so as not to see the land. He did this because the land is polluted with abominations, this gesture being a sign or *mopheth* (cf. vs. 11) for Israel, the noun also applicable to a miracle or proof. While the crowd grew throughout the day, by night virtually all Jerusalem's inhabitants had gathered around Ezekiel, torches and other means of illumination filling the area.

In vs. 7 Ezekiel says that he carried out what the Lord bade him to do and exited through the wall under the cover of darkness. Then he disappeared into the night to a place he had no idea to which he was going. All those in Jerusalem who had huddled around him certainly wondered the same. We can be sure of one thing, namely, no one, absolutely no one, dared to follow. However, people were attentive to any bit of information that might trickle in the next few days.

Vs. 8 backs up a bit the sequence of events by referring to the morning of Ezekiel's very public departure through the wall of Jerusalem. During that time the *davar* of the Lord came to him, possibly within his house before making a public display of his departure. For the third time the Lord addresses him as "son of man," this occasion being the people wondering what his public gesture is all about. People living in walled towns naturally get nervous when it comes to any intimation of their vulnerability as through a siege, so obviously Ezekiel had put them on edge. If his prophesying won't convert them, surely an invasion would do the trick.

In vs. 10 the Lord tells Ezekiel what he is to say to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, again that "rebellious house," many of whom already were gathering outside his door waiting for him to make his way to the wall. If they or at least a few of them realized their rebellious nature, there just might be some hope. However, prospects for that, already dim, now have disappeared. What Ezekiel is about to say pertains more specifically to the prince in Jerusalem commonly accepted as King Zedekiah; included, of course, is the house of Israel, he being its head. The Hebrew text reads for "who are in it" "in the midst (*betok*, cf. vs. 1) of them." As for the king, most likely he didn't go out to watch Ezekiel pass through the wall. That would have meant conceding to the prophet as well as sending shivers throughout the population. Nevertheless, he must have sent out spies in order to report back to him.

Ezekiel is a sign or *mopheth* (cf. vs. 6) for Israel as well as for King Zedekiah which he states clearly as the city's future going into exile which also means captivity, *shevy*. "And the women shall go into captivity" [30.17]. Then he continues with mention of King

Zedekiah though not by name, but everyone knows whom he is talking about. However, the king is destined to be captured and led off to Babylon which he won't see because as punishment he will be blinded. In addition to this the Lord will scatter to the four winds Zedekiah's entourage, *zarah* (cf. 5.12) being the verb.

Despite this terrible fate in store for Jerusalem's elite, the Lord adds it's for them to realize that he is the Lord, that all-important *yadah* which transcends everything else. As for *zarah*, a comparable verb in vs. 15 is *puts* (cf. 11.17) or disperse with respect to these officials among nations and thus effectively lost forever. Nevertheless, the Lord decides to leave a few survivors behind, that is, to escape the sword, famine and pestilence, the last two being a result of Jerusalem's destruction. The identity or number of such persons isn't given which is incidental. What counts is that they will confess or *saphar* their abominations (*tohevah*, cf. 11.18) among the nations and know (*yadah* again) that God is the Lord. The verb *saphar* (cf. 9.3 but not noted there) fundamentally means to inscribe or write down implying that these survivors will not only speak of the evil they had done but will produce an enduring written record of their misdeeds. If this comes off right, the nations to which the survivors had come will be converted and set an example for the native inhabitants of both Jerusalem and Israel.

In vs. 17 the *davar* of the Lord comes again to Ezekiel or later in the day, the last occurrence being quite recently or that morning (cf. vs. 8). Now Ezekiel is to eat and drink with quaking, trembling and fear or *rahash* (cf. 3.12), *ragzah* (only use of this term in the Bible) and *d'agah* (cf. 4.16 but not noted there). With everyone surrounding him and waiting for his next move, Ezekiel is to say of Jerusalem's inhabitants that like him, they are to eat and drink with fearfulness and dismay, *d'agah* and *shimamon*, the latter being the only use of this term in the Bible. The reason? The land is destined to be stripped of virtually everything because of the violence found in it, *chamas* (cf. 8.17). It seems that their evil deeds will sink down and pollute the very soil.

Furthermore, other cities and towns will suffer the same fate as Jerusalem, that is, be laid waste, *charav* (cf. 6.6 but not noted there) meaning to be dried up. As for the land or rest of Israel, it will become a desolation or *shemamah* (cf. 6.14), a noun akin to *shimamon* of vs. 19. Yet again, this is done that the survivors...and they must be very few, given the devastation being described...are to know the Lord, *yadah*. Such is the price to be paid for this knowledge which is beyond anything Ezekiel or his fellow Israelites could conceive.

Vs. 21 has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel the fourth time, here calling him "son of man" for the next-to-last time. He inquires about a proverb or *mashal* (cf. vs. 22) which concerns not just Israel but its land or *'adamah* (cf. 11.17). Reference to the days growing long intimates the extended period of the prophet Jeremiah's foretelling the fall of Jerusalem which had not happened. It was not uncommon for the people not to pay attention, something Ezekiel needed to heed with his own prophecy. As for this prophecy intimated in the proverb at hand, every vision doesn't come to fruition, *chazon* (cf. 7.26) being the noun.

In vs. 23 the Lord claims that he will do away with the proverb mentioned in the previous verse, the verb being *shavath* (cf. 7.24 but not noted there) and *mashal* also used as a verb. He will effect it by bring about the long-neglected prophecy of Ezekiel's predecessor, Jeremiah. Now the days are near (*qarav*, cf. 9.1) of fulfilment are at hand along with the fulfilment of every vision or *chazon* as in the previous verse. The noun *davar*...word-as-expression...is used for fulfilment.

Vs. 24 continues with this long awaited fulfilment of a thirty year old prophecy, namely, that no longer will there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel, that is, *betok* (cf. vs. 10) or within its very center. That is, we have here a *chazon* which is *shav'*, a noun meaning vanity or consisting of lies or deception. "They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie" [13.6]. *Miqsam* means divination and has one other biblical reference, 13.7: "Have you not seen a delusive vision and uttered a lying divination?" In the verse at hand, such a *miqsam* is modified by the adjective *chalaq* meaning to be smooth. "A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works in ruin" [Prov 26.28].

Vs. 25 reveals the Lord's determination to bring about what he wishes against Israel as a rebellious house. That is to say, he will *davar* a *davar* which will come to fruition. Usually something like this isn't said because a *davar* by its very nature is bound up with fulfilling what the Lord wishes. Thus the verb *hasah* (to do, cf. 11.20) is added more for emphasis though from the Lord's point of view, it doesn't have to be such. To delay this *davar* is simply impossible, *mashak* being the verb which implies a drawing out and is found next in vs. 28.

Vs. 26 has the final instance in this chapter of the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel followed by the equally last occasion of "son of man." When the Israelites heard the prophet's message (Jeremiah may be included as well) they claim that his vision or *chazon* (cf. vs. 23) won't come true for many days which goes against what the Lord says in vs. 25, "It (*davar*) will no longer be delayed, but in your days, O rebellious house, I will *davar* the *davar* and perform it." The same applies to his prophecies which by now they have come to scorn. Even when vs. 28 has the Lord saying through Ezekiel that his *davar* won't be delayed (*mashak*), the current *davar* which he will *davar* will come to pass, the verb *hasah* being used as in vs. 25. Thus towards the end of Chapter Twelve the Lord crowds in a whole bunch of *davar* in response to Israel having lost faith in his prophecies through Jeremiah and then Ezekiel.

Son of man: 6

Davar of the Lord: 5

Thus says the Lord: 4

Know the Lord: 3

1) betok, 2) mery, 3) ra'ah, 4) galah, 6) mopheth, 10) betok, 11) mopheth, 14) zarah, 15) puts, yadah, 16) saphar, tohevah, yadah, 18) rahash, ragzah, d'agah, 19) d'agah, shimamon, chamas, 20) charav, shemamah, yadah, 22) mashal, 'adamah, chazon, 23)

shavath, mashal, qarav, chazon, 24) betok, chazon, shav', miqsam, chalaq, 25) hasah, mashak, 26) chazon, 28) mashak

Chapter Thirteen

1) **The word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "**Son of man**, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, prophesy and say to those who prophesy out of their own minds: `Hear **the word of the Lord!**' 3) **Thus says the Lord God**, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4) Your prophets have been like foxes among ruins, O Israel. 5) You have not gone up into the breaches or built up a wall for the house of Israel that it might stand in battle in the day of the Lord. 6) They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie; they say, `Says the Lord,' when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfil their word. 7) Have you not seen a delusive vision and uttered a lying divination whenever you have said, `Says the Lord,' although I have not spoken?" 8) Therefore **thus says the Lord God**: "Because you have uttered delusions and seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you, says the Lord God. 9) My hand will be against the prophets who see delusive visions and who give lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall **know that I am the Lord God**. 10) Because, yea, because they have misled my people, saying, `Peace,' when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets daub it with whitewash; 11) say to those who daub it with whitewash that it shall fall! There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind break out; 12) and when the wall falls, will it not be said to you, `Where is the daubing with which you daubed it?' 13) Therefore **thus says the Lord God**: I will make a stormy wind break out in my wrath; and there shall be a deluge of rain in my anger and great hailstones in wrath to destroy it. 14) And I will break down the wall that you have daubed with whitewash and bring it down to the ground so that its foundation will be laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish in the midst of it; and you shall **know that I am the Lord**. 15) Thus will I spend my wrath upon the wall and upon those who have daubed it with whitewash; and I will say to you, The wall is no more nor those who daubed it, 16) the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of peace for her when there was no peace, says the Lord God. 17) "And you, **son of man**, set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own minds; prophesy against them 18) and say, **Thus says the Lord God**: Woe to the women who sew magic bands upon all wrists and make veils for the heads of persons of every stature in the hunt for souls! Will you hunt down souls belonging to my people and keep other souls alive for your profit? 19) You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death persons who should not die and keeping alive persons who should not live by your lies to my people who listen to lies. 20) "Wherefore **thus says the Lord God**: Behold, I am against your magic bands with which you hunt the souls, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls that you hunt go free like birds. 21) Your veils also I will tear off and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand as prey; and you shall **know that I am the Lord**. 22) Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened him, and you have encouraged the wicked that he should not turn from his wicked way to save his life; 23) therefore you shall no more see delusive visions nor practice divination; I will deliver my people out of your hand. Then you will **know that I am the Lord**."

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* as “and,” not translated in the **RSV**. It’s associated with reference to the familiar words “the *davar* of the Lord came to me,” the last being in 12.26, and the current one with the phrase “son of man.” The *davar* at hand concerns prophesying (*navy*’, cf. 11.4) against (*‘el-*, literally as ‘to’) Israel’s prophets who are in exile in Babylon. Next the English reads “prophesy” whereas the Hebrew has “who prophesy,” this phrase occurring a second time but with the words “out of their minds” where *lev* is used, most commonly as heart (cf. 11.19). In this instance *lev* has a negative sense, that these unnamed prophets (and their number isn’t given) are fabricating their own prophecies to the detriment of their fellow Israelites. One can just imagine them gathered secretly, perhaps at night, figuring out how to deceive their people, oblivious of the harm they’re causing. This makes Ezekiel’s exclamation as to hearing the *davar* of the Lord all the more urgent. It seems that the so-called prophets have blocked their ears to be receptive to this hearing. Given Ezekiel’s experience thus far, it seems highly unlikely they will listen. Still, he remains true to his calling, biting his lips, if you will, as he continues with this *davar*.

Without missing a beat, Ezekiel proceeds in vs. 2 with his *davar* put familiarly as “Thus says (*‘amar*) the Lord,” this following right on the heels of “Hear the *davar* of the Lord.” The prophets are called out for what they are, speaking from their *lev*, the adjective for foolish or *naval* implying wickedness as well as impiety. “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” [Ps 14.1]. Such foolishness results from following their own spirit or *ruach* (cf. 11.24), this being similar but differing from *lev* just mentioned. The former is more dynamic by reason of being associated with the in and out of breathing whereas the latter is located deep within a person and protected by muscle. One could say that *lev* gives birth to *ruach*, that in turn, nourishing its source. In the verse at hand, Ezekiel exclaims that the false prophets have seen nothing, *navy*’, that is to say, the act of prophesying associated with seeing instead of hearing. And it’s this hearing which makes a genuine prophet receptive to hearing the divine *davar*, not spewing forth one’s person visions.

In vs. 4 Ezekiel compares these prophets planning mischief to foxes or *shuhal* which has five other biblical references, one of which is Sg 2.15: “Catch the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for your vineyards are in blossom.” Usually such animals are images of deception and stealth. Here they are true to that image by taking refuge among ruins, this word intimating, albeit vaguely, that Jerusalem is destined to fall at some future date even though the prophecy is in Babylon. The false prophesy at such a great distance from Jerusalem gives those uttering their predictions a certain safety and cushion, if you will. No one can prove or disprove what they are uttering.

So while the inhabitants are being slain and others are being led off into captivity, these foxes will have ensconced themselves safely among the collapsed city walls and come out once the destruction has been wrought. Not only this, but the false prophets failed to repair any breeches or build up the city walls in order to withstand further attacks. Thus the in the end they behave in a cowardly fashion. However, their true nature will be revealed “in the day of the Lord” [vs. 6], a day to which they are completely blind.

Vs. 6 speaks of the falsehood and divination consisting of lies which these prophets pass off in imitation, if you will, of Ezekiel when they proclaim “Thus says the Lord,” *na’am* being the verb (cf. 5.28 but not noted there). Almost always *na’am* is used with respect to a divine communication as through a prophet, but in the case at hand, it lacks validity. So while they utter this *na’am*, in truth they have no expectation (*yachal*) of the Lord fulfilling it. For another sense of this verb, cf. Ps 33.22: “Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us even as we hope in you.” That which is the object of this verb is *davar* which applies to the false prophets.

As for the falsehood and divination involved, the first word consists of two in the Hebrew, *chazah* (to see in the sense of behold; cf. 12.27 but not noted there) and *shav’* (wickedness or iniquity, cf. 12.24). As for “divined,” it’s the noun *qesem* with *kazav*, the former found next in vs. 23 and the latter in vs. 7. For a lie to be divined suggests something both fabricated and summoned from the underworld, this hybrid partaking neither of the truth nor fully a lie. In the situation at hand, the false prophets use this to their advantage to deceive a confused and frightened people.

This first part of Chapter Thirteen consisting of “Thus says the Lord” concludes with a rhetorical question in vs. 7 intended as both a warning and confrontation. That is to say, the false prophets have seen a vision which is delusive, *machazeh* and *shav’* (cf. vs. 6). The verb *chazah* as in vs. 6, *machazeh* being derived from it with two other biblical references, Gen 15.1 and Num 24.4, the former being cited here: “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.” As expected, this question gets no response nor does the Lord expect one.

Through the mediation of Ezekiel the Lord continues uncovering the deceitfulness of the false prophets in vs. 8 with the second of five “Thus says the Lord” utterances. So if this comes on the heels of a previous one, you know it’s quite important. Perhaps these people originally were respected among the people but have succumbed to uttering delusions and have seen lies. Their use of *davar* gives their perversity more weight, if you will, in the negative sense. *Shav’* is the noun for “delusions” just mentioned and will make its appearance several more times in the next few verses. As for lies, the noun is *kazav* with the verb *chazah*, both as in vs. 6. So once the Lord brings this to their attention, he uses the exclamation *hineh* (cf. 11.1) or behold coupled with *laken*, therefore...“therefore behold.” Next follows the succinct statement that the Lord is against these false prophets, the preposition ‘*el-*’ being used, literally as “to” which can be indicative of pushing against them.

Vs. 9 forms part of the preceding verse where the Lord brings his hand literally to (‘*el-*’ once again) the prophets with the delusive visions and lying divinations, *machazeh* and *shav’* (cf. vs. 7). The image is one of a huge hand pressing not so much down upon but up against, as to push away. In other words, the Lord is shoving these so-called prophets away from having any council with his people, *sod* fundamentally meaning a couch or cushion and hence a sitting together. “The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear

him” [Ps 25.14]. Thus *sod* implies a special intimacy and confidentiality among its participants.

The Lord’s hand will push these prophets out from the register of Israel as well as not allow them to return there, the verb *katav* as to write and the noun derived from it, *ketav*. A reference for the latter is 1Chron 28.19: “All this he made clear by the writing from the hand of the Lord concerning it, all the work to be done according to the plan.” Thus not to be registered...written...means to be blotted out of memory and inheritance. Such writing most likely was done on a scroll though it could have been on stone and set up as a kind of memorial to caution future generations. Regardless, to be treated this way was akin to a death sentence. After this thorough condemnation, the combined verses of 8 and 9 end with the familiar “you shall know (*yadah*, cf. 12.20) that I am the Lord God.” If these false prophets chose to know the Lord, what was just recounted never would have happened.

Vs. 10 opens with *yahan hoveyhan* rendered by the **RSV** as “Because, yea” and literally reads “because in because” pretty much for emphasis which applies yet again to a ringing condemnation of the false prophets. Here they’re accused of misleading the people, their very own flesh and blood, *tahah* being the only use of this verb in the Bible which implies being seduced. Such seduction consists of proclaiming *shalom* when it doesn’t exist; most likely the people realize this but in their desperation are willing to be deceived. After all, the false prophets have been active for some time and by now have gathered supporters to their ignoble cause.

A chief way of bringing about this *tahah* is by daubing a newly built wall with whitewash which if applied in a physical sense would mean Jerusalem. This forms the subject of quite a few verses in this chapter, that is, through vs. 16. However, mention of the mere term “whitewash” evokes trying to cover something which eventually will be revealed and broken down. Regardless, Ezekiel is warning Israel not to listen to any proposal by these prophets.

Instead of invaders destroying the wall daubed by the false prophets, the Lord warns those who apply whitewash with its fall by rain, hailstones and a storm. Upon its complete destruction the Lord puts in the mouths of those passing by a question as to where now is the daubing (cf. vs. 12). Although vs. 11 speaks of three natural weather events happening pretty much on their own, vs. 13 attributes them to the Lord in his intent to destroy the wall, *kalah* implying a full end (cf. 11.13).

The Lord continues to address the false prophets, telling them that they will perish, *kalah* again as in the previous verse suggesting that both they and their creation...their daubing...will be wiped out. It seems, however, that the wall built by the people is fine; trouble emerges when the false prophets put their handiwork to it which corrupts everything. However, by now the wall and whitewash are pretty much synonymous as a target of the Lord’s wrath, this being the third mention of *kalah*. In the final analysis such *kalah* of the wall, false prophets and the Lord bring it about combine to effect a

truly lethal blow to any self-made plans at restoring Jerusalem, seeing that city far off from Babylon in a false vision of peace or *shalom* mentioned in vs. 16.

The conjunctive beginning vs. 17 indicates a shift of attention from the Lord concerning the false prophets with Ezekiel all the while being privy to this as he had from the beginning. He finds himself at the center of attention which, if asked, he would rather not be. He is to set his face against (*sum* as in 6.1 with the preposition ‘*el-*’), literally as “to the daughters of your people,” this association making it all the more personal and difficult by the permanence intimated by the verb *sum*. As for the daughters engaged in prophesying, they could be their wives, concubines or associates as recounted in vs. 18. And as for the verb *navy*’ (cf. vs. 1), it’s done literally “upon” them, *hal-* which can be seen in conjunction with the ‘*el-*’ or “to” of vs. 18, “against them.”

In vs. 18 the Lord tells Ezekiel after he is to prophesy “to say” (‘*amar*’) or to express his prophesy, ‘*amar*’ taken as a spelling out of what will be the fate of these daughters as false prophets. These have sewn magic bands upon all wrists, “all” suggesting every Israelite whether complying or not complying. *Taphar* is the verb at hand and has three other biblical references, one of which is Gen 3.7: “And they (the first man and first woman) sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.” As for the magic bands, *kesath* is the noun meaning pillows. It has one other biblical reference in vs. 20, the nature of which is not specified but surely associated with black magic. The daughters also are engaged in fashioning veils to put over the heads of statues, *mispachoth* with one other biblical reference, vs. 1. Such practices have the intent of hunting down souls, *nephesh* found last in 7.19 but not noted there.

The idea laying behind what was just described seems intended to mesmerize unsuspecting victims and seduce them from worship of the Lord. That’s what vs. 19 calls the practice of profanation, *chalal* being the verb (cf. 7.22) which is done for a meager price, that is, barley and bread. And so by their dark arts the daughters put to death those who should remain alive and visa versa by propagating lies or *kazav* (cf. vs. 8). This and the remaining verses of the chapter concerning the daughters is reminiscent of the foolish woman in Proverbs Chapter Nine, the opposite of wisdom.

Despite the deceitful and seductive nature of the daughters just described, from vs. 20 onward we have the Lord stepping in to take matters into his own hands. He begins by tearing off those magic bands of vs. 18 which are associated with hunting souls. These bands might be used as a kind of bait to attract unwitting suspects like birds; the same applies to their veils, the same word in vs. 18 which the women put over the heads of statues. While such practices are abominable and the Lord is quick to take action, nevertheless he shows mercy by the now familiar words “you shall know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 9) that I am the Lord.” This is the fourth and final instance in the current chapter, *yadah* being extended constantly and close to anyone disposed to receive it. The real tragedy consists in this divine closeness not being accepted.

In vs. 22 the Lord says that the daughters of Israel have disheartened the righteous in a false manner, *ka'av* being the verb meaning to have pain or to afflict. “And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt” [28.24]. This verse forms a single extended sentence where the Lord speaks decisively against these deceitful women. He begins by saying that they have attempted to cause harm to a righteous heart (*lev* and *tsadyq*, cf. vs. 2 and 3.20), that is, by means of lies or *sheqer*. This, of course, contrasts sharply with the Lord saying that he hadn’t acted in such a fashion. “Behold, the wicked man conceives evil and is pregnant with mischief and brings forth lies” [Ps 7.14].

Vs. 22 continues with the Lord saying that the daughters have encouraged those who are wicked, literally as “strengthened the hands of the wicked,” *chazaq* (cf. 3.14). By doing so, they relinquish the chance for repentance and possibility of saving one’s life which is rendered literally as “not to turn from his evil way to life.” Failure results in the daughters no longer seeing their delusive visions and divinations as noted in vs. 9. Next the Lord says curtly and decisively that he will deliver his people from the daughters...those who belong to Israel but no longer...*natsal* (cf. 7.19) meaning that he will snatch them away from their hands. Yet again he holds out the promise of *yadah* (cf. vs. 21) or knowing him which, given all the wickedness involved, is quite remarkable not only here but elsewhere in the Book of Ezekiel. If it weren’t for such saving words inserted at the right times and places, there would be no hope for Israel nor for anyone else involved.

Son of man: 2

Davar of the Lord: 2

Thus says the Lord: 5

Know the Lord: 4

1) navy’, 2) lev, 3) naval, ruach, 4) shuhul, 6) na’am, yachal, chazah, shav’, qesem, kazav, 8) shav’, kazav, chazah, hineh, 9) machazeh, shav’, sod, katav, ketav, yadah, 10) tahah, shalom, 13) kalah, 14) kalah, 15) kalah, 16) shalom, 17) sum, 18) ‘amar, taphar, kesatoh, mispachoth, nephesh, 19) chalal, 21) yadah, 22) ka’av, lev, tsadyq, sheqer, chazaq, 23) natsal, yadah

Chapter Fourteen

1) Then came certain of the elders of Israel to me; and sat before me. 2) And the **word of the Lord** came to me: 3) "**Son of man**, these men have taken their idols into their hearts and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces; should I let myself be inquired of at all by them? 4) Therefore speak to them and say to them, **Thus says the Lord God**: Any man of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and yet comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him myself because of the multitude of his idols 5) that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are all estranged from me through their idols. 6) "Therefore say to the house of Israel, **Thus says the Lord God**: Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7) For any one of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel

who separates himself from me, taking his idols into his heart and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and yet comes to a prophet to inquire for himself of me, I the Lord will answer him myself; 8) and I will set my face against that man, I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people; and you shall **know that I am the Lord.** 9) And if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10) And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike—11) that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me nor defile themselves any more with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, says the Lord God." 12) And the **word of the Lord** came to me: 13) "**Son of man**, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it and cut off from it man and beast, 14) even if these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord God. 15) If I cause wild 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) even if these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; they alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate. 17) Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword go through the land; and I cut off from it man and beast; 18) though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered. 19) Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood to cut off from it man and beast; 20) even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord God, they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness. 21) "**For thus says the Lord God:** How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four sore acts of judgment, sword, famine, evil beasts and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! 22) Yet if there should be left in it any survivors to lead out sons and daughters when they come forth to you, and you see their ways and their doings, you will be consoled for the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. 23) They will console you when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, says the Lord God."

The conjunctive *v-* opens this new chapter translated as “then” to show that the elders came to Ezekiel immediately after he had dealt with those who had practiced divinization. To his chagrin, they are no better. By now he must have wondered privately whether any true worshipers of the Lord were left in Babylon. Has each and every Israelite simply transferred their abominations from one place to another? Surely Babylon with its multiplicity of gods was fertile ground to continue their wicked ways. As for the elders or representatives of the Israelites in Babylon, they not only came to him but sat before him, *lephanay*, literally as “to faces of me.” In other words, we have a confrontation for which Ezekiel must steel himself once again. So as soon as these elder took their places, much to Ezekiel’s relief the *davar* of the Lord came to him. The shortness of vs. 2 is deliberate in order to make it clear that despite what amounts to the tediousness of dealing with abominable practices, the Lord remains in charge.

While Ezekiel knew what was about to happen even before any elder opened his mouth, the divine *davar* came along, inserted itself into his life and informed him that these men have placed their idols within their hearts. Note two uses of “their” with respect to

idols and hearts which makes the situation doubly wicked in the Lord's eyes. A lot is crammed into these words. The verb is *halah* meaning to go up, to ascend followed by the preposition *hal-* or "upon" with respect to *lev* (cf. 13.22) or hearts—"upon their hearts"—a double upon, if you will. As for idols, the noun is *gilulym* which applies to anything rolled and according to a footnote in the RSV, pertains to dung balls. It's found thirty-nine times in Ezekiel compared with nine other biblical references according to a note concerning 8.10. And so the prophet is saying that the elders have taken dung balls into...upon...their hearts where they cause a stench for all who come into contact with them.

Furthermore, the elders have set up their iniquity or *havon* (cf. 9.9) as a stumbling block, *mikshul* (cf. 3.20). Not only this, but they have placed it deliberately "opposite their faces" or right smack in front of them, an act of defiance against the Lord. No small wonder that Ezekiel asks the Lord whether they should question him, *darash* being the verb which fundamentally means to tread or to inquire. Just like the verse at hand, 20.1 reads "Certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord and sat before me."

In vs. 4 (it continues as one extended sentence into vs. 5) the Lord bids Ezekiel first to speak and then say to these elders, that is, *davar* followed by 'amar. In other words, he wants to make sure this *davar* sinks into them. Both are followed by a second 'amar, "Thus says the Lord." The object of this address is each and every member of Israel who bears that *gilulym*...idol-as-dung...within his heart and sets a stumbling block or *mikshul* of iniquity (*havon*) before his face. All three words are noted in vs. 4. The verb *sum* (cf. 13.17) as to set with regard to the stumbling block suggests planning ahead to set it up almost as a monument of shame not just for Ezekiel to behold but for everyone else.

What was just described is done out of deliberate spite, that is, with the intent of going to a prophet. Such a person may be allied with the Lord and affiliated with Ezekiel though "prophet" could be applied loosely to someone faithful to the Lord. Chances are he is in a leadership or counseling role among the Israelites in exile in Babylon, not one of the elders who approached Ezekiel. Much to the surprise of the one with the idol-as-dung and stumbling block set up in his heart, the Lord will step into the prophet's place and answer him, *hanah* (cf. vs. 7) which has the preposition *l-* or "answer to" him." What rouses the Lord to take such direct action is that the multitude of idols or *gilulym*, given their association with dung (and supposedly that's human), was especially offensive.

Vs. 5 shows the Lord's real intent, that is, to lay hold of the hearts (*lev*, cf. vs. 3) belonging to the house of Israel, house (*bayth*) here as noted in 10.3 implying a domestic element, something homey. The verb *taphas* means not just grasping but taking possession of. "So the sword is given to be polished, that it may be handled" [21.11]. The verse at hand reads literally as "to grasp the house of Israel in their hearts" making the former the direct object of *taphas* with the latter as the real aim. Thus the Lord is

taking pains in coming to grips with the nation of Israel in its Babylonian exile because it has become estranged, *nazar* meaning to separate or to abstain. Once again the disgusting smell, if you will, of the idols or *gilulym* is what the Lord wishes to get rid of. “Tell Aaron and his sons to keep away from the holy things of the people of Israel which they dedicate to me so that they may not profane my holy name” [Lev 2.2].

Vs. 6 continues with the Lord speaking through Ezekiel as he has been doing thus far. When the prophet hears the Lord sometimes speaking in an extended fashion, he doesn’t memorize these words...these *davar*...because they are inserted within him and have a life of their own. For the premier example of this extended speaking, refer to Moses on Mount Sinai, Chapters Twenty-Five through Thirty-One. So when those hear Ezekiel as in the verse at hand, they receive the extended *davar* in the same fashion as he did, hence the meaning of “Thus says the Lord.”

Vs. 6 contains three appeals to the house of Israel: repent, turn away from idols and turn away from abominations where the verb *shuv* is used in each instance. The second has the combined preposition *mehal* or literally “from upon” with respect to *gilulym* and the third concerns *tohevah* (cf. 12.16).

In vs. 7 the Lord addresses two categories of people living together, the house (domicile, if you will) of Israel and strangers sojourning within this house. *Ger* means stranger or foreigner whose verbal root *gur* is used here, both being found in 47.22: “You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you.” Despite the difference between both groups, they are one in the negative sense of inserting these idols/dung into their hearts and being a stumbling block of iniquity first mentioned in vs. 3. Although both may approach a prophet as noted in vs. 4 with the intent to deceive him and those associated with him, the Lord himself will answer in his place, something the two hadn’t anticipated.

Vs. 8 flows from the previous verse as one sentence, the two being joined by the conjunctive *v-*. It shows the immediate action taken by the Lord where he will set his face against “that man,” the phrase referring to the two categories of Israelite and foreigner, they being as one. The text reading bluntly and literally as “I will give my face in (*b-*) that man.” Also the Lord will make this man a sign and byword or *’oth* and *mashal* (cf. 4.3 and 12.22 respectively) after which he will cut him off, *karath* being the verb found next in vs. 13. This cutting off gets to the root of the problem, namely, that the man (again, singular) will be removed from the midst (*min* prefaced to *betok*, cf. 12.24) not of the people of Israel but from “my people.” Despite this eradication in the literal sense of the word, we have the familiar and comforting refrain that the Lord is doing it so his people may know or *yadah* (cf. 13.23) him.

The conjunctive opening vs. 9 intimates that the Lord is quick to deal with any prophet who had been deceived, *patah* meaning to be open and subject to persuasion. “O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived” [Jer 20.7]. In fact the Lord himself is responsible for this. Part of the reason may be that such a person may have started off

with good intentions but later came under the spell of those tied up with idols and have a stumbling block in their hearts. Also he was subject to the numerous exotic deities in Babylon who fostered any abominable practice by the Israelites. Thus the Lord had to put a stop to all this and do so at once. Not only will the Lord destroy him (*shamad* connoting to lay waste), he will do so from the midst of his people, the preposition *min* prefaced to *betok*. In other words, he will suffer the same fate as those described in vs. 8. As for the verb, cf. 25.7: “I will destroy you. Then you will know that I am the Lord.” As for the Lord’s hand, it’s reach extends a long way: from the Lord to *betok* or the midst of the people just mentioned. As for the deception involved, it pertains to the prophet *davar* a *davar*, speaking a word which ultimately turns out to be a lie which is in conformity with those who had influenced him.

Vs. 10 uses the third person plural, “they” referring to both the prophet and the one who has approached him with the intent of deceiving him as well as a larger plot to do the same to Israel in its exile in Babylon. A single punishment or *havon* (cf. vs. 4) is meted out to both, the person influencing the prophet described as an inquirer by the verb *darash* (cf. vs. 3). Vs. 11 continues as an extended sentence, that is, that the house...the domicile...of Israel no longer goes astray from the Lord, *tahah* (cf. 13.10). Similarly, this house no longer can defile itself with their personal transgressions, the verb *tame’* (cf. 9.7) with the noun *peshah*, the latter connoting a falling or breaking away. “None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him” [18.22]. This is followed by the reassuring words of the Lord who says that he will be their God, the verb *na’am* (cf. 13.6) which can be taken more as an affirmation.

Vs. 12 again has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Ezekiel, the conjunctive *v-* showing the close connection between the last intervention and the current utterance and addressing the prophet as “son of man.” Actually vss. 12-20 center upon three notables from Israel’s history, Noah, Daniel and Job though most likely Job is not a historical character. With regard to Daniel, a footnote in the NIV says, “another Daniel may be referred to.” Regardless, all three are within the context of the question of righteousness or *tsedaqah* (cf. 3.20). As for Noah, he had built the ark and was instrumental in repopulating the earth, human and otherwise, after the great flood. As for Daniel...let’s take the biblical one...he had been taken captive in Babylon and had a whole series of prophetic visions with respect to the end of times. By reason of this, he was particularly dear to the current generation of exiles in Babylon. Finally Job was renowned for patient endurance of calamities. In the end, his fortunes were restored more abundantly than before, this coming after an extended monologue by the Lord as to his sovereignty. That’s something the Israelites could learn from given the almost incessant bombardment by the Lord as to their abominations.

So in light of these three prophetic figures—and surely Ezekiel could identify with each of them in different ways—the following four theoretical settings (theoretical yet with direct practical results) may be taken as follows:

1) Vs. 13 speaks of a land (*'erets*, cf. 7.2)—not **the** land which implies Israel—but all nations under heaven which recognize the Lord, *'erets* itself connoting this. Because such a land/people has a certain awareness of divine sovereignty as opposed to a multitude of gods, it knows when its members sin and therefore act faithlessly, the verbs being *chata'* and *mahal*. As for the former, cf. 28.16: “In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned.” As for the latter, it’s used with a noun of the same spelling and reads literally as “to offend offense.” Another reference to the verb is 20.27: “In this again your fathers blasphemed me by dealing treacherously with me.” As for the noun, cf. 15.8: “And I will make the land desolate because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord.”

Also with respect to this land/people the Lord can cause a famine affecting man and beast.

So as vs. 14 posits, if Noah, Daniel and Job were present in this *'erets*, *betok* (cf. vs. 9) or in its midst, they’d be powerless to deliver it and lucky to escape with their own lives, *natsal* (cf. 13.23) being the verb meaning to snatch and used with *nephesh* (cf. 13.18) which often translates as soul. As for these three men, we can substitute or run in parallel with them what they represent, a new creation, prophecy of end times and patience. The righteousness or *tsedaqah* noted a few paragraphs above which belongs to them would be instrumental in this *natsal* or snatching.

2) Vs. 15 mentions wild beasts, *rah* (cf. 11.2) being the adjective which fundamentally means evil yet given the context, isn’t far off the mark, these passing through the *'erets* and making it desolate or *shakal* or to be bereaved, childless. It’s found in 5.17 but not noted there. If Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst (*betok*, cf. vs. 14), they would be unable to effect a snatching or *natsal* (cf. vs. 14) with respect to sons and daughters. Such beasts, being “evil,” would make the land desolate, *shemamah* being a noun (cf. 12.20).

3) In vs. 17 the Lord would bring a sword upon (*hal-*) the land which then would go through it, *b-* or literally “in the land” to cut off (*karath*, cf. vs. 8) from it man and beast. Again, Noah, Daniel and Job wouldn’t be able to effect a *natsal* with regard to sons and daughters. Only the three would be delivered, *natsal*.

4) Finally in vs. 19 we have a pestilence or *dever* (cf. 6.11) which is of the same verbal root as *davar*. It’s coupled with divine wrath or *chemah* (cf. 9.8) accompanied by blood meaning bloodshed. Noah, Daniel and Job would be helpless to effect *natsal* with regard to son and daughter, being only to *natsal* their own lives (*nephesh*, cf. vs. 14). As for mention of son and daughter, only #1 with respect to vss. 13 and 14 lack their mention.

After using three notables from Israel’s history as examples, in vs. 21 the Lord speaks (“Thus says the Lord” occurs last in vs. 6) with a rhetorical question regarding the just detailed four sore acts of judgment, *shephatym* (cf. 5.10) modified by *rah* or evil (cf. vs. 15). This verse is applicable to Jerusalem concerning survivors or *palyt* (cf. 6.9), those who have escaped from the destruction wrought there. Once brought to Babylon and

having joined the exiles already there (this implies a twofold destruction of Jerusalem), those already in exile will be consoled for the evil God has brought upon the capitol city. *Nacham* is the verb which, given its alternate meaning of to lament or to groan, is apt in this context. “When Pharaoh sees them, he will comfort himself for all his multitude” [32.31].

The *nacham* given by the Lord to the survivors will be transferred to those in Babylon once they see their ways and doings (*derek* (cf. 11.21) and *halylah*, the latter suggesting an accomplishment and is found next in 20.43 along with *derek*: “And there you remember your ways and all the doings with which you have polluted yourselves.” And so Chapter Fourteen concludes with the Lord saying that he has brought calamity upon Jerusalem as depicted within the modes of life represented by the three notables of Noah, Daniel and Job, men who were barely able to save themselves compared with that city’s inhabitants.

With regard to the plural “you” in vs. 23, reference is made to those already in exile in Babylon who will be consoled. So when they see the wickedness of those brought to Babylon from Jerusalem, they will know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 8) that the Lord had acted justly and not without cause, *chinam* (cf. 6.10) which also means in vain. As for those already in Babylon, they can’t help but have a certain dread that the multiplicity of gods there will foster their inclinations to abominable practices. Nevertheless, throughout all this both are Israelites and to both is held out the ultimate possibility of knowing...*yadah*...the Lord.

Son of man: 2

Davar of the Lord: 2

Thus says the Lord: 3

Know the Lord: 1

3) *halah*, *lev*, *gilulyim*, *havon*, *mikshul*, *darash*, 4) ‘*amar*, *ilulyim*, *mikshul*, *havon*, *sum*, *hanah*, 5) *lev*, *bayth*, *taphas*, *nazar*, *gilulyim*, 6) *shuv*, *gilulyim*, *tohevah*, 7) *ger*, *gur*, 8) ‘*oth*, *mashal*, *karath*, *betok*, *yadah*, 9) *patah*, *shamad*, *betok*, 10) *havon*, *darash*, 11) *tahah*, *tame’*, *peshah*, *na’am*, 13) ‘*erets*, *chata’*, *mahal*, 14) *betok*, *natsal*, *nephesh*, *tsedaqah*, 15) *rah*, *shakal*, 16) *betok*, *natsal*, *shemamah*, 17) *karath*, *natsal*, 19) *dever*, *chemah*, 20) *nephesh*, 21) *shephatym*, *rah*, *palyt*, 22) *nacham*, 23) *derek*, *halylah*, *yadah*, *chinam*

Chapter Fifteen

1) And the **word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "**Son of man**, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the forest? 3) Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do men take a peg from it to hang any vessel on? 4) Lo, it is given to the fire for fuel; when the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? 5) Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing; how much less when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything! 6) Therefore **thus says the Lord God**: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest which I have given to the fire

for fuel, so will I give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7) And I will set my face against them; though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them; and you will **know that I am the Lord**, when I set my face against them. 8) And I will make the land desolate because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord God."

The conjunctive *v-* begins this shortest chapter in the Book of Ezekiel¹, "*davar* of the Lord" having occurred last in 14.12. As in other instances, the verb "came" is lacking; instead the verb "to be" ('was') is preferred. Chapter Fifteen comprises an allegory of a vine or *gephen* which automatically suggests wine and is found next in vs. 6. Actually *gephen* is used with *hets* or wood, and in the first of four rhetorical sentences to Ezekiel it's compared to *hets* of the forest. With regard to this *hets*, the RSV notes that "vines are common figures but the reference to the wood is unique."

Vs. 6 gets to the heart of the matter as introduced by "Thus says (*amar*) the Lord God." While the rhetorical questions are addressed to Ezekiel, the Lord passes him over, if you will, in his eagerness to the heart of the matter. Already he has rummaged through the forest and picked out a particular wood of the vine, an interesting statement because we don't associate vines as growing in such wild places. Instead, they are cultivated with great care, and the vines at hand seem to have grown wild or never had been cultivated. If the latter, that means their wine is bitter, this getting closer to what's bothering the Lord.

As Ezekiel is listening to the Lord expound upon what appears to be an uncultivated vine, right away he intuits where he's going with this. It becomes crystal clear when the Lord says he will give up (*natan*, cf. 7.8) the inhabitants of Jerusalem as fuel for fire or '*aklah* which derives from a verbal root meaning to eat. "You shall be fuel for the fire" [21.32].

And so while Jerusalem is set ablaze, vs. 7 doesn't say outright that the Lord will watch though this implicit. What is said, though, is that he will set his face against them, the verb *natan* (to give) with his face directed literally "in (*b-*) them." Then and only then the second person plural or "you" will know (*yadah*, cf. 14.23) that "I am the Lord." Such knowing is conditioned compared to other examples of knowing, that is, by setting his face (*b-*) in them. The "you" seems to be both the inhabitants of Jerusalem as well as other Israelites. Note that the verb in this second act of setting is *sum* (to set as to place) compared with *natan* (to give) in vs. 7. In other words, it's a more permanent, unchanging type of setting.

Chapter Fifteen concludes with an extension of the divine devastation wrought against Jerusalem, that is, by making the land (*erets*, cf. 14.13) desolate, *shemamah* (cf. 14.16) being a noun. Because the Lord is addressing Ezekiel, quickly he realizes that such burning of the capitol and desolation of the land is a result of the Israelites faithlessness.

¹Compare with the chapter right after it, Chapter Sixteen being the longest in the Book of Ezekiel which is comprised of sixty-three verses. Among those verses the phrase "son of man" occurs only once.

This is expressed literally as “they offend an offense,” the verb being *mahal* from which the noun of the same spelling is derived. This is expressed the as in 14.13.

Son of man: 1

“*Davar* of the Lord:” 1

Thus says the Lord: 1

Know the Lord: 1

1) *gephen*, *hets*, 6) *natan*, ‘*aklah*, 7) *natan*, *yadah*, *sum*, 8) ‘*erets*, *mahal*, *shemamah*

Chapter Sixteen

1) Again the **word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "**Son of man**, make known to Jerusalem her abominations 3) and say, **Thus says the Lord God** to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. 4) And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you nor rubbed with salt nor swathed with bands. 5) No eye pitied you to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred on the day that you were born. 6) "And when I passed by you and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live, 7) and grow up like a plant of the field.' And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. 8) "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my skirt over you and covered your nakedness: yes, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine. 9) Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. 10) I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather, I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. 11) And I decked you with ornaments and put bracelets on your arms and a chain on your neck. 12) And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown upon your head. 13) Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and came to regal estate. 14) And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord God. 15) "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your renown and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by. 16) You took some of your garments and made for yourself gaily decked shrines and on them played the harlot; the like has never been, nor ever shall be. 17) You also took your fair jewels of my gold and of my silver which I had given you and made for yourself images of men and with them played the harlot; 18) and you took your embroidered garments to cover them and set my oil and my incense before them. 19) Also my bread which I gave you—I fed you with fine flour and oil and honey—you set before them for a pleasing odor, says the Lord God. 20) And you took your sons and your daughters whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter 21) that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them? 22) And in all your abominations and your harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare, weltering in your blood. 23) "And after all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! says the Lord God), 24) you built yourself a vaulted chamber and made yourself a lofty place in every square; 25) at the head of every street you built your lofty place and prostituted your beauty, offering yourself to any passer-by and

multiplying your harlotry. 26) You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your harlotry to provoke me to anger. 27) Behold, therefore, I stretched out my hand against you and diminished your allotted portion and delivered you to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. 28) You played the harlot also with the Assyrians because you were insatiable; yea, you played the harlot with them, and still you were not satisfied. 29) You multiplied your harlotry also with the trading land of Chaldea; and even with this you were not satisfied. 30) "How lovesick is your heart, says the Lord God, seeing you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen harlot; 31) building your vaulted chamber at the head of every street and making your lofty place in every square. Yet you were not like a harlot because you scorned hire. 32) Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! 33) Men give gifts to all harlots; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from every side for your harlotries. 34) So you were different from other women in your harlotries: none solicited you to play the harlot; and you gave hire while no hire was given to you; therefore you were different. 35) "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the **word of the Lord**: 36) **Thus says the Lord God**, Because your shame was laid bare and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotries with your lovers, and because of all your idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, 37) therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you loathed; I will gather them against you from every side and will uncover your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness. 38) And I will judge you as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged and bring upon you the blood of wrath and jealousy. 39) And I will give you into the hand of your lovers, and they shall throw down your vaulted chamber and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your fair jewels and leave you naked and bare. 40) They shall bring up a host against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. 41) And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women; I will make you stop playing the harlot, and you shall also give hire no more. 42) So will I satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you; I will be calm, and will no more be angry. 43) Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, behold, I will requite your deeds upon your head, says the Lord God. "Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations? 44) Behold, every one who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you, 'Like mother, like daughter.' 45) You are the daughter of your mother who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. 46) And your elder sister is Samaria who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister who lived to the south of you is Sodom with her daughters. 47) Yet you were not content to walk in their ways, or do according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. 48) As I live, says the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. 49) Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of food and prosperous ease but did not aid the poor and needy. 50) They were haughty and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them, when I saw it. 51) Samaria has not committed half your sins; you have committed more abominations than they and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations which you have committed. 52) Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have made judgment favorable to your sisters; because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous. 53) "I will restore their fortunes, both the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes

in the midst of them, 54) that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. 55) As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former estate, and Samara and her daughters shall return to their former estate; and you and your daughters shall return to your former estate. 56) Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride 57) before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you have become like her an object of reproach for the daughters of Edom and all her neighbors and for the daughters of the Philistines, those round about who despise you. 58) You bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, says the Lord. 59) "Yea, **thus says the Lord God:** I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, 60) yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. 61) Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. 62) I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall **know that I am the Lord**, 63) that you may remember and be confounded and never open your mouth again because of your shame when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord God."

The conjunctive *v-* opens this lengthy chapter translated as “again” along with “*davar* of the Lord,” the only other occurrence being in vs. 35. While the previous chapter has the Lord pretty much making a full end of Jerusalem, we see here that Ezekiel is to make known (*yadah*, cf. 15.7) her abominations or *tohevah* (cf. 14.6). Although the Lord spent his wrath against Jerusalem, her abominations remain which shows the extraordinary endurance of defiance against him. It’s almost as though these abominations took on a life of their own after those who gave them birth had perished. Such a perverse inclination shows that not only Jerusalem but the entire nation of Israel’s future is dependent upon whether or not her people will do away with such practices. So many times to date we’ve encountered what seems the end of the line for Israel, but at each time it happens the Lord extends his mercy and we begin again.

Vs. 2 continues as part of the previous verse with “Thus says the Lord God,” the direct result of the divine *davar* coming to Ezekiel and giving an account of abominations committed in Jerusalem. It begins with a lengthy description of that city’s origins and birth or *mekurah* and *moledeth*. The first literally means a cutting out with two other biblical references, 21.30 and 29.14, the former cited here: “In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge you.” As for the latter, references are more frequent as in vs. 4 and 23.15, the second cited here: “all of them looking like officers, a picture of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea.”

Next the Lord outlines Jerusalem’s lineage and by implication, that of Israel, tracing the nation’s roots back to the Canaanites; her father is an Amorite and her mother a Hittite. In sum, the lineage is nothing to be proud of. However, if the people listening to this extended embarrassing account from the Lord can stick with it, they can achieve knowledge of the Lord which is what really counts and sets them apart despite such human origins. An invitation concerning that is found towards the end of this lengthy chapter where we have the familiar “know (*yadah*) the Lord.” Ezekiel as mediating

these words knew this was the goal but surely must have groaned inwardly as he continues with mediating the Lord's anger toward Jerusalem.

Vs. 4 commences with Israel's birth or *moledeth* (*mekurah* or origin as in vs. 3 isn't mentioned) at which the Lord was present, the unfavorable circumstances being in conformity with her ancestors mentioned in vs. 3. Despite this divine presence, Israel seems to lack any awareness that the Lord was with her as she wallowed in her filth, this being a code word for abominable practices that later would haunt Israel. In vs. 5 apparently Israel had been abandoned without anyone either to have pity upon her or show compassion. The two verbs *chus* and *chamal* are found together in 9.5 and have the preposition *hal-*, that is, pity and compassion upon you.

Such rejection is a result of Israel being abhorred when she had been born, *gahal* connoting loathing as well as being cast out and the only use of this noun in the Bible. So if the non-Israelites have treated Israel this way, what hope is there? Perhaps Jesus had this story in back of his mind with regard to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Here the tables are turned, the Samaritan being a foreigner who took pity on a Jew in distress (cf. Lk 10.29-37). Like the Samaritan, the Lord is in the act of passing by but stops and sees Israel weltering in her blood, *bus* meaning to tread with the feet making the image all the more pitiable. "When you were naked and bare, weltering in your blood" [vs. 22].

Without coming to Israel's aide in the physical sense, all the Lord has to do is utter a word in order for her to live (this is at the end of vs. 6) and grow up. According to footnoted in the RSV, the Hebrew reads "I have made you a myriad," the noun being *ravav* (ten thousand) as in Mic 6.7: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" This *ravav* is born out by Israel having achieved full maidenhood which a footnote of the RSV text reads literally as "ornament of ornaments," the noun being *hady* as in 7.20 but not noted there.

As for growing up, Israel did it on her own unaided either by those who had abandoned her or anyone else who may have passed by with the exception of the Lord. Apparently he stayed in the vicinity watching all those years while Israel came to the throes of adult womanhood. Nevertheless, her plight remained the same which is why the end of vs. 7 says "yet you were naked and bare," the two similar sounding words being *heyrom* and *harom*. The former implies helplessness while the latter means to be clad poorly. A reference to both is in vs. 22: "You did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare, weltering in your blood."

Vs. 8 speaks of a later time or when Israel had matured into a woman, not necessarily a full adult, but capable of bearing children which is put as "at the age for love," *dod* also meaning a friend as well as the brother of a father, this term occurring very frequently in the Song of Songs as "beloved." "And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their lust" [23.17]. In the verse at hand, *heth* (cf. 12.27 but not noted there) or time is associated with *dod* which also means opportunity. In

order to project Israel—most likely still weltering in her blood—the Lord spread his skirt over her in her nakedness, *kanaph* as in 7.2 also as wing. This image brings to mind the six seraphim in Isaiah’s vision which have wings to cover themselves in the presence of the Lord (cf. Is 6.2). Also this practice is described in Rt 3.9 as entering a marriage relationship which is implied here. Also *kanaph* evokes those wings of the four living creatures in 1.6.

In vs. 8 the **RSV** reads “I plighted my troth to you” which is rendered better in the **NIV** as “I entered into a covenant with you,” *beryth* being the noun and first mention of it in this book. “I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant” [vs. 59]. *Beryth* is a reminder to Israel of former times, the one with Abraham from which all other flow (cf. Gen 17.2), for it had been smeared and covered by abominable practices. The words “and you became mine” (*ly*) or “to me” reveal the intimacy of this old covenant which the Lord makes new again.

The Lord proceeds to adorn Israel in sixteen different ways which are outlines as follows, that is, through vs. 14:

-Vs. 9: Wash Israel from her blood and accumulated filth. The two verbs associated with this washing are *rachats* and *shataph*, the former pertaining more to the human body and the latter as to inundate or to overwhelm. For the former, cf. vs. 4 but not mentioned there; the same applies to the latter, mentioned in 13.11.

-Anoint with oil or *suk*. “But you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off” [Dt 28.40].

-Vs. 10: Cloth with embroidered cloth or *riqmah* found next in vs. 13. “The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes; in many-colored robes she is led to the king with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train” [Ps 45.14].

-Shod with leather, *nahal* also as to bolt a door. “A garden encloses is my sister, my spouse” [Sg 4.12].

-Swathed her with fine linen, *chavash* meaning to bind. “I will bind up the crippled” [34.16]. *Shesh* is the material at hand (cf. vs. 13).

-Covered her with silk or *kasah* as in 16.8 but not noted there.

-Vs. 11: Decked with ornaments, *hadah* also in vs. 13 from which ornaments is derived, *hady* (cf. vs. 7).

-Put bracelets on her arms or *tsamyd* as in 23.42: “They put bracelets upon the hands of the women and beautiful crowns upon their heads.”

-Chain on her neck or *ravyd* with one other biblical reference, Gen 41.42: “And (pharaoh) put a gold chain about his (Joseph) neck.”

-Vs. 12: Ring on her nose or *nezem*. “She decked herself with her earrings” [Hos 2.13].

-Beautiful crown upon her head or “crown of beauty” (*tiph’arah*) as in vs. 17.

-Vs. 13: decked with gold and silver, *hadah* as in vs. 11.

-Raiment of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth or *shesh*, *meshy* and *riqmah*, all as in vs. 10.

-Ate fine flour, honey and oil, the former being *soleth* as in vs. 19.

-Grew exceedingly beautiful (*me'od* used twice for emphasis, cf. 9.9) and came to regal estate. *Tsalach* is a verb meaning to come upon, prosper and found in 15.4 but not noted there.

-Vs. 14: The noun for renown is *shem*, the common word for name which here is associated with Israel's beauty or *yophey* found next in vs. 15, this connoting splendor or brightness. Compare with *tiph'arah* which is more a piece of jewelry as in vs. 12. While Israel may be taking credit for the spread of her fame, she has forgotten that the Lord had given it to her.

While reading the past few verses describing the Lord's treatment of wayward Israel, you could sense the tension building up. Precisely here or in vs. 15 with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "but" we have a series of condemnations by the Lord. But if Israel were to pay close attention, she would bare it willingly because after all, it is the Lord who is speaking. Regardless, we have a long way to go to vs. 62 when we attain that redemptive "*yadah* the Lord." In the meanwhile, Israel must learn to sit tight.

Vs. 15 begins Jerusalem's downward spiral mentioned in vs. 2 and thus by implication, the entire nation of Israel. She trusted in her own beauty or *yophey* (cf. vs. 14) which led to her playing the harlot, *zanah* (cf. 6.9). She used this to pour out her services to everyone who passed by, *shaphak* (cf. 7.8 but not noted there). Such pouring out represents a flagrant in-your-face attitude which the Lord finds impossible to comprehend. In sum, she did this with full knowledge of all that the Lord had done for her as recounted in the sixteen references noted above, instead trusting in her renown or *shem*, name (cf. vs. 14).

Vs. 16 begins a series of four verses with the verb *laqach* (cf. 3.14) or "took" which are outlined as follows:

-Garments to shrines described as being gaily decked, that is, *bamah* (cf. 6.3) or high places. It is with the participle *tala'* fundamentally as spotted where references in Genesis as to be taken in a negative sense, for example, 30.32: "Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb." Upon such high places Jerusalem/Israel plays the harlot.

-Vs. 17: Fair jewels made from God's gold and silver to fashion images of men. Implied is money stolen from Jerusalem's temple to promote abominable practices. Two nouns: *kely* (cf. 9.2) and *tiph'arah* (cf. vs. 12) or "instruments of beauty" from precious metals from the treasury. *Tselem* i (cf. 7.20 but not noted there) is the noun for image which also means a shadow, that insubstantial reality being implied here.

-Vs. 18: Embroidered garments to cover the images of men mentioned in the previous verse (*riqmah*, vs. 13) as well as the Lord's oil and incense used for worship, again, presumably taken from the Jerusalem temple. Vs. 19 includes bread, fine flour, oil and honey to make a pleasing odor, a *ruach* (cf. 13.3) which is *nychuach* (cf. 13.3 but not noted there), two similar sounding words.

-Vs. 20: Sons and daughter offered as sacrifices and thus devoured; i.e., an instance of cannibalism. This verse contains a rhetorical question spilling into vs. 21 as

to the harlotries causing Jerusalem's children to be offered. Then vs. 22 the Lord accuses the city as failing to remember her own youth when she had weltered in her own blood. If she had retained memory of those early years, things would have turned out quite differently.

Vs. 23 continues with the Lord's condemnation of Jerusalem now fully identified as a harlot, this description running through vs.34. He speaks of her wickedness or *rah* (cf. 14.21) after which he interjects a double "woe" or 'oy (cf. 2.10), understandable since he is putting up with all this abuse. Through it all the Lord can see that Jerusalem is blind to her lusts and that curing this blindness automatically would solve the problem at hand. In the meanwhile Ezekiel is the one communicating this to the people which pains him just as much.

Not only did Jerusalem/Israel glory in her harlotries, in vs. 24, she decided to build an elaborate structure in which to carry out her trade. She erected both a vaulted chamber and lofty place (*gav* and *ramah*, cf. 10.12 as 'rims' and vs. 25), presumably the former located in the ladder. Not only that, the verse says that her brothel was smack "in every square" intimating that she had more such places. The same applies in vs. 15 to this *ramah* at the head of every street in which she practiced prostitution, *zanah* (cf. vs. 14). These words intimate that she has taken over the entire city and its inhabitants, transforming Jerusalem into one enormous house of prostitution. Such a description bears close resemblance with the adulterous woman in Proverbs Seven which is countered by wisdom who calls "beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals" [Prov 8.3].

Once so established, Jerusalem/Israel sells herself to four of foreigners:

1) The Egyptians in vs. 26 described as lustful neighbors which reads literally as "being great of flesh." Such greatness, if you will, corresponds to her as multiplying her harlotries or *zanah*, this provoking the Lord to anger, *kahas* also meaning to grieve (cf. 8.17 but not noted there).

2) In vs. 27 the Lord extends his hand against Jerusalem/Israel, literally "on you," and diminished her allotted portion. *Garah* (cf. 5.11) means to scrape off which can be taken as the Lord doing it slowly and deliberately. *Choq* (cf. 11.20) is the noun for portion, more generally as a decree or ordinance. Once done, the Lord hands her over to the Philistines or those in the more immediate vicinity compared with the Egyptians just mentioned. In other words, she will be squeezed from without and from within. Even these people who had been at enmity with Israel for so long will be ashamed of her lewd behavior, *kalam* found next in vs. 61.

3) In vs. 28 it is the Assyrians to the east with whom Jerusalem/Israel plays the harlot (*zanah*, cf. vs. 26). The Lord speaks of her insatiability or *savah* (with the negative; cf. next verse) with this people which suggests she's getting desperate.

4) Vs. 20 mentions the land of Chaldea described as a land engaged in trading which suggests that Jerusalem/Israel traded in harlotries.

Vs. 30 is approximately midway in this lengthy chapter, so by now Ezekiel must be quite dismayed while communicating the Lord's *davar* and is looking for ways to sustain himself since he knows full well there's plenty more to say. Indeed there is, starting with the Lord who exclaims that the heart (*lev*, cf. 14.5) of Jerusalem/Israel is lovesick, '*amal* meaning to languish or to droop as well as to be sad. "For the fields of Heshbon languish and the vine of Sibmah" [Is 17.8]. These are quite poignant remarks as they take into consideration all that she had done as a brazen harlot, *shalteth* being the only use of this adjective in the Bible.

It seems the Lord has the full attention of Jerusalem/Israel now that she has become lovesick, using the opportunity to remind her of having built places of ill repute to ply her trait. Despite this rather extensive enterprise, in essence she wasn't a harlot...more a john, if you will...because she had not hired herself out. In fact, she scorned it, *qalas* also meaning to mock and has three other biblical references, one being 22.5: "Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you infamous one, full of tumult."

In vs. 32 she is called a wife who behaves adulterously, *na'aph* connoting rebellion, preferring it over her own husband, this inferring the Lord. "And I will judge you as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged" [vs. 38]. Instead of men giving gifts to her as a harlot, she gives them to her lovers in order to bribe them. *Nedeh* is the noun for gifts, the only use of this word in the Bible. They resemble bribes, the verb being *shachad* which had one other biblical reference: "From your wealth offer a bride for me" [Job 6.22]. Jerusalem/Israel is different from other harlots because she is unsolicited. She had to go off on her own which set her apart, *hephek* in vs. 34 (only use of this term in the Bible) implying perversity or what is contrary to normal behavior.

In vs. 35 the Lord continues his invective through the mouth of Ezekiel who, as noted earlier, doesn't enjoy this a bit. Outrightly he calls her a harlot or *zanah* (cf. vs. 28) who now must hear the *davar* of the Lord. Even though what follows for the bulk of the chapter is painful, chances are that Jerusalem/Israel is relieved at being discovered for what she has become. She knows inwardly that her current demeanor doesn't reflect her divine election. Surely she must be thinking to herself that her inmost desire is in sharp conflict with her external behavior, and she can't see to reconcile the two.

Vs. 36 contains three instances of "because," that is, relative to instances of disgraceful behavior:

1) Shame and nakedness or *nechosheth* and *hervah*. The former fundamentally means brass and is found last in 9.2 but not noted there. The same applies to the latter, cf. vs. 8. Note the two verbs pertaining to involuntary manifestation, *shaphak* and *galah*. The former means to pour out (cf. vs. 15) and the latter, to uncover or lay bare (cf. vss. 15 and 12.4 respectively).

2) Idols or *gilulym* (cf. 14.6).

3) Blood of your children offered to the just mentioned idols.

As a result of this, in vs. 37 the Lord resolves to gather or *qavats* (cf. 11.17) each and every lover of Jerusalem/Israel which consists of four types:

- 1) Lovers.
- 2) Those with whom she had taken pleasure, *harav* meaning to make a pledge or surety and thus has a transactional sense about it. “Your dealers in merchandise” [27.27].
- 3) Those whom she had loved (*ahav*).
- 4) Those whom she loathed, *sane*’ meaning to hate. “Behold, I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate” [23.28]. Once assembled, the Lord will present her to all four and uncover her nakedness that they may behold her in this condition which not just resembles the state from which she had started out when the Lord found her but is even worse.

From here (vs. 38) it gets pretty nasty for Jerusalem/Israel, still a long way off until vs. 62 to hear “*yadah* or to know the Lord.” Now the Lord is going to pass judgment or *shaphat* (cf. 11.10) as a disloyal wife as well as bringing upon her not just wrath and jealousy (*chemah* and *qin’ah*, 14.18 and 8.3 respectively) but blood associated it which implies murder. Following this the Lord will have her former lovers do the reverse of what he had done for her, that is to say, tear down her chamber and lofty places, strip her and leave her exposed for all to gawk at. Next she will be stoned, cut to pieces, all in the sight of women which makes her plight all the more humiliating.

Vs. 42 provides some relief from this all-out assault, if you will. The Lord says that he will satisfy his fury, *nuach* and *chemah*, 5.13 and vs. 38 respectively, the verb meaning that such anger will come to a rest. The same applies to his jealousy or *qin’ah* (cf. vs. 38) followed by being calm and having no anger. The two verbs are *shaqat* and *kahas* (cf. vs. 26), the former also meaning to lie down. The former occurs next in vs. 49 as “prosperous ease.”

Vs. 43 gets to the root of this extended tragedy, namely, that Jerusalem/Israel hasn’t remembered the days of our youth when the Lord found her and cared for her. Early on her own beauty got in the way which led down this path to disaster causing the Lord to be enraged, *ragaz* also meaning to tremble as in Ps 18.7: “Then the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations also of the mountains trembled and quaked because he was angry.” Such anger will result in requiting her deeds which reads literally as “I will give your way in your head” or slam her where she’s most vulnerable. Vs. 43 continues with a second sentence rhetorical in tone, telling her that she has committed lewdness along with her abominations, *zimah* and *tohevah* (cf. vss. 43 and 1 respectively).

Vs. 44 shifts to a different level, that is, the Lord (again, keeping in mind the mediation of Ezekiel) recounting the ignominious past of Jerusalem/Israel in terms of a proverb or *marshal* (cf. 14.8) with *hineh* (cf. 13.8) or “behold” with the intent not just of grabbing attention but to have this past remembered. It runs “Like mother, like daughter.” We

can see the roots of this proverb back in vs. 3, “and your mother a Hittite.” Vs. 45 takes up the same theme and adds the father, an Amorite, also hearkening back to vs. 3.

In vs. 46 the Lord throws in Samaria as elder sister and younger sister as Sodom. It seems that the former is singled out by reason of her attachment to idols as in Is 10.11: “Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols as I have done to Samaria and her images?” Just the mere mention of these two places, especially the latter, is embarrassing in the extreme. As this chapter has shown, the Lord certainly knows how to deal out humiliations which, after all, are well deserved.

Vs. 47 hits pretty hard by saying that Jerusalem/Israel wanted more than the abominations of both Samaria and Sodom; in fact she was more corrupt, *shachath* (cf. 9.8). This is put in two ways, *derek*: those of the two just mentioned and her own. As for Sodom, the Lord singles out this city as being a sister who was well off yet failed to use its wealth to assist the poor and needy, *hany*’ and ‘*evyon* both found together in 18.12: “oppresses the poor and needy.” The verb here is *chazaq* (cf. 13.32) meaning to hold firm or fast. Note that the text puts all three—Jerusalem/Israel, Samaria and Sodom—as sisters meaning that they are related closely in their abominable practices. However, as vs. 51 says, Samaria hadn’t committed half her sins, making her appear righteous, the verb being *tsadaq*. This, of course, compelled the Lord remove them, *sur* (cf. 6.9) also as to withdraw. “He was angry at Job because he justified himself rather than God” [25.1].

In light of this unfavorable comparison, in vs. 52 the Lord commands Jerusalem/Israel to bear her disgrace, *klimah* also as shame (cf. vs. 54). Here the verb *tsadaq* occurs twice and used with respect to a comparison with her sisters.

In vs. 53 the Lord says that he will restore (*shuv*, cf. 14.6) the fortunes of Sodom, Samaria and finally, that of Jerusalem/Israel, the noun being *shevyth* which literally means captivity, *shuv* and *shevyth* sounding similar. “Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel” [39.25]. In other words, the captivity in which all three found themselves due to their own devices will be resolved. Note that the daughters of each are mentioned (not sons) which can intimate the potential for an eventual espousal relationship with the Lord. As for Jerusalem/Israel, her restoration will be in the midst (*betok*, cf. 14.16) of the other two, in their very center.

Vs. 54 is a sentence continued joined with the previous verse and presents a condition introduced by the important phrase “so that.” That is to say, Israel/Jerusalem is to first bear her disgrace and be ashamed what she had done, *kalam* being translated as both (cf. vs. 27). “So that” doesn’t stop there but continues into her becoming a consolation for Sodom and Samaria, *nacham* (cf. 14.22).

Shuv or return is found next in vs. 55 (again, mention of daughters relative to Sodom and Samaria) with respect to their original state or *qadmah*. “And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times” [36.11].

Vs. 56 is a rhetorical question by the Lord to Jerusalem/Israel, expecting no answer of course, but meant to put her on the spot. He calls her sister Sodom a byword, *shemuhah* also as report, this being derived from the common verb to hear and found last in 7.26 but not noted there. It's associated not just with pride or *ga'on* (cf. 7.20) but a day of pride, day in the extended sense of encompassing the time since the Lord had come to her rescue as described earlier in this chapter. However, she had her noteriety until the Lord uncovered her wickedness (*rah*, cf. vs. 23) for all to behold.

Vs. 57 mentions two other daughters, if you will, those of Edom (the Hebrew has Aram) and those of the Philistines. To them Jerusalem/Israel is an object of reproach with the **RSV** denotes "uncertain" and can be rendered literally as "time of reproach" or *cherpah* (cf. 5.15 but not noted there). This is applicable to the former whereas to the latter she is despised, *shut*, having two other biblical references, 28.24 and 28.26, the former running as follows: "And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt."

This extended tirade against Jerusalem/Israel concludes in vs. 58 with the Lord telling her that she is responsible for her lewdness and abominations, *zimah* and *tohevah*, both found in vs. 43.

At last or at the end of a very difficult experience for Jerusalem/Israel to bear the Lord shifts gears, if you will, to a desire to console her. Although he will deal with her as those who have despised their oath and broke the covenant, *'alah* and *beryth*, he will relent. The first also can mean a curse and applies to a covenant confirmed by an oath such as *beryth*, that being noted last in vs. 8. As for the covenant, the Lord will remember (*zakar*, cf. 6.9) it, that is, the one going back to the days of her youth, and make a lasting one. This refers to vs. 43 when Jerusalem/Israel failed to remember the days of her youth.

In vs. 60 the Lord will remember this covenant whereas in vs. 61 he says that she will remember her ways. Thus we have two forms of remembering or *zakar*, divine and human. The latter causes shame or *kalam* (cf. vs. 27) when the Lord takes both the elder and younger sister of Jerusalem/Israel and gives them as her daughters. However, this will not take into account the covenant noted above. Note that vs. 61 of the **RSV** has "I" in reference to the Lord whereas the Hebrew has "you." The meaning of this transference, of two sisters to becoming daughters isn't spelled out. However, what's important is the Lord making a covenant with the intent of knowing (*yadah*) that in the end he is in charge of the matter at hand.

Vs. 63 brings to conclusion this longest chapter in the Book of Ezekiel with the consequence of knowing...*yadah*...the Lord as being sovereign, that is to say, Jerusalem/Israel will remember and be confounded, *bosh* (cf. vs. 53 but not noted there). This instance of remembering or *zakar* flows from the one of vs. 61 with respect

to her ways (*derek*, cf. vs. 47), and she will be silenced because of her shame, *klimah* (cf. vs. 52). Such silence is more negative whereas the positive type comes about when the Lord forgives what she had done, the verb being *kaphar* meaning to cover or to conceal. "This is the offering for cereal offerings...to make atonement for them" [45.15]. Despite this concealment, Jerusalem/Israel will know about it and hopefully keep it in mind so as not to fall into further abominations, etc.

Son of man: 1

Davar of the Lord: 2

Thus says the Lord: 3

Know the Lord: 1

1) yadah, tohevah, 3) mekurah, moledeth, 4) moledth, chus, chamal, gahal, 6) bus, 7) hady, heyrom, harom, 8) dod, heth, kanaph, beryth, 9) rachats, shataph, suk, 10) riqmah, nahal, chavash, shesh, kasah, 11) hadah, tsamyd, ravyd, 12) nezem, tiph'arah, 13) hadah, shesh, meshy, riqmah, soleth, me'od, tsaleach, 14) yophey, zanah, shem, 15) shaphak, 16) laqach, bamah, tala', 17) kely, tiph'arah, tselem, 18) riqmah, 19) ruach, nychuach, 23) rah, 'oy, 24) gav, ramah, 25) ramah, zanah, 26) kahas, zanah, 27) garah, choq, kalam, 28) zanah, savah, 30) lev, shalteth, 31) qalas, 32) na'aph, nedeh, 33) shachad, 34) hephek, 35) zanah, 36) nechosheth, hervah, shaphak, galah, gilulym, 37) qavats, harav, 'ahav, sane', 38) shaphat, chemah, qin'ah, 42) nuach, chemah, qin'ah, shaqat, kahas, 43) ragaz, zimah, tohevah, 44) mashal, hineh, 47) shachath, hany', 'evyon, chazaq, 50) sur, 51) tsadaq, 52) tsadaq, klimah, 53) shuv, shevyth, betok, 54) kalam, nacham, 55) shuv, qadmah, 56) shemuhah, ga'on, 57) rah, cherpah, shut, 58) zimah, tohevah, 59) 'alah, beryth, 60) zakar, 61) kalam, 62) yadah, 63) bosh, derek, klimah, kaphar

Chapter Seventeen

1) **The word of the Lord** came to me: 2) "**Son of man**, propound a riddle and speak an allegory to the house of Israel; 3) say, **Thus says the Lord God**: A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colors, came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar; 4) he broke off the topmost of its young twigs and carried it to a land of trade and set it in a city of merchants. 5) Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil; he placed it beside abundant waters. He set it like a willow twig, 6) and it sprouted and became a low spreading vine, and its branches turned toward him, and its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine and brought forth branches and put forth foliage. 7) "But there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage; and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him and shot forth its branches toward him that he might water it. From the bed where it was planted 8) he transplanted it to good soil by abundant waters that it might bring forth branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine. 9) Say, **Thus says the Lord God**: Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its branches so that all its fresh sprouting leaves wither? It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it from its roots. 10) Behold, when it is transplanted, will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind strikes it—wither away on the bed where it grew?" 11) Then the **word of the Lord** came to me: 12) "Say now to the rebellious house, Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, Behold, the king of

Babylon came to Jerusalem and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon. 13) And he took one of the seed royal and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. (The chief men of the land he had taken away 14) that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and that by keeping his covenant it might stand.) 15) But he rebelled against him by sending ambassadors to Egypt that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Can a man escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape? 16) As I live, says the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwells who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke, in Babylon he shall die. 17) Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war when mounds are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. 18) Because he despised the oath and broke the covenant, because he gave his hand and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. 19) Therefore **thus says the Lord God:** As I live, surely my oath which he despised, and my covenant which he broke, I will requite upon his head. 20) I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treason he has committed against me. 21) And all the pick of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken." 22) **Thus says the Lord God:** "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out; I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain; 23) on the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a noble cedar; and under it will dwell all kinds of beasts; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. 24) And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord bring low the high tree and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it."

As with the last chapter this new one begins with the familiar conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” but not in the **RSV** translation and shows the close connection between what had just transpired and what is to follow. In actuality there is no gap between the two instances of *davar* coming (the verb ‘to be’ is used, not coming) to Ezekiel. This implies that for him there is no temporal gap between the two sets of events.

Now the divine *davar* addresses Ezekiel as “son of man, the only occurrence of this phrase in Chapter Seventeen. He is to speak to the house of Israel both a riddle and allegory or *chydah* and *mashal* (cf. 16.44), the former a kind of enigma and the latter a saying. As for *chydah* as well as *mashal*, cf. Prov 1.6: “To understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.” The verbs involved are the roots for each noun, *chud* and *mashal* (cf. 12.23), the former has three other references, all from Judges, one being 14.13: “Put your riddle that we may hear it.” As for what’s involved, it pertains to two eagles. The first eagle (both it and the second of vs. 7 are ‘great’) or *nesher* (cf. 10.14 but not noted there) is characterized by large wings, long pinions and rich plumage, the last consisting of many colors or the noun *riqmah* which means something embroidered and found last in 16.18. What this eagle does may be outlined briefly as follows, that is, through vs 6, the cast of characters being (see a footnote in the **RSV** for further information) Nebuchdrezzar, house of David, Jehoiachin, Babylonia, Babylon and Zedekiah. Note that twig starts out as a cedar and becomes a vine, the latter associated with producing wine:

- Having flown to Lebanon, it took the top of a cedar, that land being famous for such trees as used in Solomon's temple.

-Young twigs from the topmost of the cedar are brought to a land of trade.

-Planted the seed of the land in fertile soil.

-Set this seed as a willow twig which sprouted as a vine and brought forth foliage.

In vs. 7 the *davar* of the Lord speaks again by way of riddle and allegory of a second great eagle which the RSV identifies as Psammetichus II of Egypt described as follows:

-Similar to the first great eagle with great wing and much plumage but lacking *riqmah* or being embroidered (many colors).

-Mention of a vine, the source not being given whose roots and branches inclined to the eagle so that he might water it.

-Transplanted or *shatal* (the Hebrew is passive, 'was transplanted') to good soil by abundant waters to bear fruit and become a noble vine.

Between vss. 9 and 10 we have five rhetorical questions put forth by the Lord prefaced with Thus says the Lord:

-Will it (the vine) thrive? *Tsalach* is the verb also meaning to prosper as in 16.13.

-Will not the Lord uproot it?

-Will it thrive once transplanted, *shatal* (cf. vs. 8)?

-Will it not utterly wither, *yavesh* also as to dry up? "The east wind dried it up; its fruit was stripped off" [19.12].

-Will it not utterly wither, this time when the east wind strikes it?

After having spoken of these two eagles in terms of a riddle and enigma, in vs. 11 the *davar* of the Lord comes or literally "is to me" or Ezekiel as in vs. 1. Such a statement acts as a kind of introduction to something new or related to what had just been uttered. Of course Ezekiel was aware when this *davar* was not present within him and most likely was glad when it was so because of the dire messages he has been communicating. However, he knew the Lord was not finished with him yet.

And so the divine *davar* in vs. 12 predictably yet inauspiciously is addressed to the rebellious (*mery*, cf. 12.2) house, the proper name "Israel" being omitted pretty much out of disgust. It presumes that Ezekiel's listeners have been paying attention to the words of Chapter Seventeen, the reason for the rhetorical question as to them knowing (*yadah*, cf. 16.62) what they mean. Without waiting for a response, the Lord jumps the gun on them with word about the king (ie., Nebuchadrezzar) of Babylon's invasion of Jerusalem and exile of her princes. That seems to be the first great eagle with the second one being Psammetichus II of Egypt.

Much of what follows between vs. 13 and 21 deals with king Zedekiah's relationship with the two kings just mentioned. Although details here are omitted, what counts is that these verses are being spoken by the Lord. They form that *davar* begun a second time in vs. 11 enabling the people of Israel to sustain themselves through the current tribulations. The trick, if you will, for them to come through all this is to continue listening to this *davar* and not turn away. One of the key words of this section is in vs. 20, *mahal* (cf. 15.8) which means to commit treason, this in reference to king Zedekiah. It follows in vs. 21 predicably and with tremendous relief, "you shall know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 12) that I, the Lord, have spoken." Such is one overall pattern of the Book of Ezekiel that has become familiar and is bound to repeat itself, simultaneously distressing and comforting.

Vs. 22 through 24 or to the conclusion of this chapter has the Lord speaking of the cedar, mostly likely hearkening back to the one from Lebanon in vs. 3. In other words, the previous imagery is used in a totally new and unexpected way. For Israel to properly comprehend it, they need to *yadah* the Lord as noted in vs. 21, for it seems that whenever this invitation is extended, nothing is said of Israel accepting it.

From vs. 22 to the conclusion of this chapter the Lord adopts a positive stance starting out by taking a sprig from the cedar's top, *tsamereth* having four other biblical references, all in Ezekiel. *Tsamereth* occurs last in vs. 3 but isn't noted there. Note that it's the Lord who is doing this, not the eagle as in vs. 3, and he transfers it to a mountain which is both lofty and high, *gavah* (cf. vs. 24 but not noted there) and *talal* (only use of this word in the Bible). In other words, the height of the cedar will be transformed into the height of the mountain which can be taken as Mount Zion. And as remarked earlier, Solomon used cedars for construction of the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, the next verse speaks of the "mountain of Israel" which can represent both the nation or Zion; regardless, the two are pretty much synonymous.

Once this sprig has been brought over to the mountain height of Israel its bough will bear fruit and become a cedar which it had been originally. In its shade or in its temple built of cedar will dwell various types of beasts, this image being reminiscent of the parable of the mustard seed. Despite being the smallest of seeds, it becomes the greatest of shrubs for birds to make their nests (cf. Mt 13.31-32).

Chapter Seventeen concludes with all the trees of the field knowing (*yadah*, cf. vs. 21) that the Lord exalts the lowly tree and brings low the high tree. The Lord is explicit here, that is, he has spoken (*davar*) and will do it, saying and doing being one and the same. As for this exalting and bringing low, those listening to Ezekiel can't but recall the story of Jerusalem/Israel starting out as having been abandoned but raised by the Lord after which she debased herself. The same can happen again and most likely it will, both the Lord and Israel knowing it. That's the remarkable thing about all these events. Despite the people's abominations and disloyalty, the Lord steps and redeems them over and over.

Son of man: 1

Davar of the Lord: 2

Thus says the Lord: 4

Know the Lord: 0

2) chydah, mashal, 3) neshet, riqmah, 8) shatal, 9) tsalach, shatal, yavesh, 12) mery, yadah, 20) mahal, 21) yadah, 22) tsamereth, gavah, talal, 24) yadah

Chapter Eighteen

1) The **word of the Lord** came to me again: 2) "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? 3) As I live, says the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. 4) Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die. 5) "If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right—6) if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman in her time of impurity, 7) does not oppress any one but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 8) does not lend at interest or take any increase, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between man and man, 9) walks in my statutes and is careful to observe my ordinances—he is righteous, he shall surely live, says the Lord God. 10) "If he begets a son who is a robber, a shedder of blood, 11) who does none of these duties but eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, 12) oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, 13) lends at interest and takes increase; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominable things; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself. 14) "But if this man begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and fears and does not do likewise, 15) who does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, 16) does not wrong any one, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, 17) withholds his hand from iniquity, takes no interest or increase, observes my ordinances and walks in my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. 18) As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what is not good among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity. 19) "Yet you say, 'Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?' When the son has done what is lawful and right and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. 20) The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. 21) "But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22) None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live. 23) Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? 24) But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die. 25) "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? 26)

When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die for it; for the iniquity which he has committed he shall die. 27) Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life. 28) Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29) Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? 30) "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. 31) Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? 32) For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live."

A new chapter beginning with the familiar conjunctive *v-* as “and” not translated in the RSV; the same applies to the word “again.” Apparently this coming of the divine *davar* to Ezekiel gives him no respite, unrelenting in its purpose. As noted earlier, there’s no coming to Ezekiel, if you will. The *davar* simply is (the verb ‘to be’ is used) with him as he turns attention to a new manifestation not unlike moving down a scroll to a different section.

In vs. 2 the *davar* is a question consisting of a proverb or *mashal* as in 17.2. A similar situation with *mashal* pertains to the land or ‘*adamah* of Israel in 12.22, not ‘*erets* which intimates the people as a nation. As for the proverb itself, fathers eating sour grapes and their children’s teeth being set on edge mocks divine justice. The verb *qahah* means more to blunt and has three other biblical references, one of which is Eccl 10.10: “If the iron is blunt, and one does not whet the edge, he must put forth more strength.” It seems that the transgressions of one generation are carried over to the other, and some divine intervention is required to break this cycle. There can’t help but come to mind the banishment of the first man and woman from the garden which had affected all subsequent generations.

In vs. 3 the Lord makes a substantial alternation to this proverb indicated by the words “As I live” meaning that he throws his full weight behind them, this having a more profound effect upon Ezekiel communicating his *davar*. In sum, the proverb will apply no longer in Israel because to the Lord belong all souls (*nephesh*, cf. 14.20). In the context of the proverb includes that of the father and his children. In place of the above mentioned transmission of sin, the individual will be responsible.

This new emphasis upon individual responsibility is spelled out almost through the rest of Chapter Eighteen, that is, from vs. 5 through vs. 25, and may be outlined as follows. Note the three lengthy conditional sentences upon which this responsibility rests, namely, “if” which comes across as the conjunctive *v-*:

-Vs. 5 actually extends all the way through vs. 9. “If” righteous or *tsadyq* (cf. 13.22) from which flows doing what is lawful and right or *mishpat* and *tsedaqah*, 11.19 and 14.14 respectively.

-Vs. 6: “If” as pertaining to desisting from idol worship, *gilulyim* (cf. 16.36). Here it’s specified as belonging to the house of Israel, that the nation has put into its very home these abominations. Also included: eating upon mountains or participation in idol worship plus refraining from sexual relationships with a woman other than one’s wife.

-Vs. 7: The “if” of the previous verse with regard to not oppressing or *yanah* which also means to act violently. “And my princes shall no more oppress my people” [45.8]. Also included in this verse are restoring a pledge to a debtor, not robbing, feeding the hungry and covering the naked. This is reminiscent of Jesus’ words in Mt 25.35+ at the judgment between the sheep and the goats.

-Vs. 8: Doesn’t lend at interest, keeps hands from iniquity or *havel* (cf. 3.20) and does justice or *mishpat* (cf. vs. 5).

-Vs. 9: The “if” continues and terminates, as it were, here concerning walking in divine statutes and observing ordinance, *choq* and *mishpat*, 16.27 and vs. 8 respectively. The Hebrew reads literally “has kept my ordinances, to deal truly” or ‘*emeth*, the noun for truth. Such a person is righteous, *tsadyq* (cf. vs. 5).

-Vs. 10 begins the second lengthy conditional sentence, i.e., “if.” The first type of person is a robber who commits murder.

-Vs. 11: Eats upon the mountains, a way of saying that he participates in idol worship plus has illicit sex with his neighbor’s wife.

-Vs. 12: Oppresses the poor and needy or *hany* and ‘*evyon* as in 16.47 as well as raises his eyes to idols, this suggestive of the mountains in vs. 10 and of committing an abomination, *tohevah* (cf. 16.58).

-Vs. 13: Lends at interest (cf. vs. 8) plus abominable practices, *tohevah* (cf. vs. 12).

-Vs. 14 begins the third lengthy conditional sentence, i.e., “if” which includes *hineh* or behold (cf. 16.44; not translated). It starts off with a son seeing the sin of his father and doesn’t do the same.

-Vs. 15: Doesn’t eat upon the mountains nor raise eyes to the idols in the house of Israel, both as in vs. 6. Also includes is refraining from adultery.

-Vs. 16: Reminiscent of Jesus’ words of Mt 25.35+ as in vs. 7.

-Vs. 17: Does not iniquity takes no interest which in Hebrew reads as poor, ‘*evyon* (cf. vs. 12), observes divine statutes and ordinances, *choq* and *mishpat* (cf. vs. 9).

-Vs. 18: On the other hand, the father of a person acting in this moral fashion is unlike his father who practiced extortion and robbery which makes him die for his iniquity or *havon* (cf. 14.10).

Vs. 19 is a heart-felt question by Israel to the Lord, quite natural to ask, about why the son should suffer for the father’s iniquity. Literally it reads “bear in iniquity (*havon*, cf. vs. 18).” The Lord responds immediately, that what had applied ever since the banishment of the first man from the garden no longer is in effect. However, responsibility rests upon the son to do what’s lawful, right and observing God’s commandments, *mishpat*, *tsedaqah*, *choq*: vss. 17, 5 and 17 respectively. The same applies inversely: the father doesn’t have to “bear in iniquity (*havon*, cf. vs. 18)” what the son had done, this being mentioned in vs. 20. The final analysis is that the soul

(*nephesh*, cf. vs. 4) which committed sin shall die. With respect to righteousness and wickedness, both will be upon (*hal-*) the person responsible.

In vs. 21 the Lord continues with this theme of personal responsibility, drilling it in Israel's head, because this is such a radical departure from what had been handed down to them. In other words, sin is contagious and points to the role of memory, so vital to maintain a people's identity at a time when most people were illiterate. This comes out clearly in vs. 22 when the Lord says that no transgression (*peshah*, cf. 14.11) will be remembered against the person who had committed it. He follows up on this in vs. 23 by exclaiming that he has no delight in the death of the wicked, *chaphets* found next in this chapter's last verse, pretty much the same context. This remembrance function is a similar inverse fashion, that is, righteous deeds won't be remembered due to treachery or *mahal* (cf. 17.20).

The conjunctive *v-* opening vs. 25 translates as "yet" in response to the Lord's lengthy words about committing sin, who is responsible and most importantly, that sin's transference does not extend from one generation to the next. Thus the weight of guilt built up over so many generations is lifted and placed squarely upon the shoulders of the person responsible. This is revolutionary that the Israelites listening to it can hardly believe their ears. Some reacted with sheer joy while most had considerable dismay and even were dumb-founded that such an ancient way of doing things is hereby suspended.

In light of this it's only natural for Israel to question the Lord—not that they don't trust him—but want to make sure they are hearing correctly. For this reason we have the exclamation "The way of the Lord is not just," the verb *tachan* being used also as to make even or level (cf. vs. 29). Right away the Lord turns the table with a rhetorical question saying that Israel's way is not just. This leads into a recap of sorts of what he had said through a good part of Chapter Eighteen, namely, that the new order of things is here to stay whether Israel likes it or not. Responsibility for any wrong-doing falls upon the individual, stops there and is not transferable to the next generation. The same applies to earlier generations impacting the present.

Vs. 27 puts the emphasis upon that which is lawful or *mishpat* (cf. vs. 19). Here it's helpful to keep in mind the other meaning of this noun, judgment. The person responsible for wrong-doing who has renounced his past evil ways and does what's right bring an automatic judgment on himself. This, in turn, sets him right with the Lord as well as the community of Israel.

Vs. 28 has an important verb relative to all this which reads "considered" or the common *ra'ah* (cf. 12.3) meaning to see implying that the guilty person has looked over his life and has decided to do something about it. Immediately after this seeing he turns away, *shuv* (cf. 16.55) with respect to *peshah* (cf. vs. 22) or transgressions. The result? Surely he will live which reads literally "to live he shall live."

Because we have such a unheard of way to view not just the transmission of sin and what it entails but how the memory is to function in light of divine revelation, it's to be expected that Israel will say again that the Lord's way is not just or *tachan* as in vs. 25. And so the Lord leaves Israel with saying the opposite is true, that her ways are not just. With all this in mind, surely the people will struggle to digest it for a long time to come.

The rest of Chapter Eighteen or from vs. 30 through vs. 32 has the Lord passing judgment (*shaphat*, cf. 16.38) upon Israel or applying the newly established order of personal responsibility. Here the verb for repent and turn away is *shuv* as in vs. 28. The rest of this verse reads literally as "so that they shall not be a stumbling block (*mikshul*, cf. 14.4) of iniquity to you." Given what has been spelled out to date, this *mikshul* is the memory attempting to grasp on to past sins and attempting to let them influence both the present and future. Part of this double *shuv*, if you will, is a new heart and new spirit, *lev* and *ruach* (cf. 16.30 and 16.19 respectively). This will preclude the Lord from taking delight or *chaphets* in the death of anyone which is what he had said in vs. 23. So once again, almost desperately, the Lord says "turn" or *shuv* which is the equivalent of living.

Son of man: 0

Davar of the Lord: 1

Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

2) *mashal*, 'adamah, qahah, 4) *nephesh*, 5) *tsadyq*, *mishpat*, *tsedaqah* 6) *gilulym*, 7) *yanah*, 8) *havel*, *mishpat*, 9) *choq*, *mishpat*, 'emeth, *tsadyq*, 12) *hany* and 'evyon, *tohevah*, 13) *tohevah*, 14) *hineh*, 17) 'evyon, *choq*, *mishpat*, 18) *havon*, 19) *havon*, *mishpat*, *tsedaqah*, *choq*, *havon*, 20) *nephesh*, 22) *peshah*, 23) *chaphets*, 24) *mahal*, 25) *tachan*, 28) *ra'ah*, *shuv*, *peshah*, 29) *tachan*, 30) *shaphat*, *shuv*, *mikshul*, 31) *lev*, *ruach*, *chaphets*, 32) *shuv*

Chapter Nineteen

1) And you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel 2) and say: What a lioness was your mother among lions! She couched in the midst of young lions, rearing her whelps. 3) And she brought up one of her whelps; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men. 4) The nations sounded an alarm against him; he was taken in their pit; and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt. 5) When she saw that she was baffled, that her hope was lost, she took another of her whelps and made him a young lion. 6) He prowled among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men. 7) And he ravaged their strongholds and laid waste their cities; and the land was appalled and all who were in it at the sound of his roaring. 8) Then the nations set against him snares on every side; they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit. 9) With hooks they put him in a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into custody, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel. 10) Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard transplanted by the water, fruitful and full of branches by reason of abundant water. 11) Its strongest stem became a ruler's scepter; it towered aloft among the thick boughs; it was

seen in its height with the mass of its branches. 12) But the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried it up; its fruit was stripped off, its strong stem was withered; the fire consumed it. 13) Now it is transplanted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. 14) And fire has gone out from its stem, has consumed its branches and fruit so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for a ruler. This is a lamentation and has become a lamentation.

In addition to this chapter beginning with the conjunctive *v-*, the Lord addresses Ezekiel not by “son of man” but simply as “you,” the sense of the two being pretty much the same in that both indicated what had transpired just before. Here we have two lamentations with regard to the royal family of Judah, the lioness (1-9) and “your mother” (10-14), “your” most likely being the princes of Israel. *Qynah* (cf. 2.10) is the noun for lamentation or a mournful song or dirge with taking up intimating that Ezekiel is to play a musical instrument to express the two. The subject is the princes of Israel, *nasy*’ (cf. 12.12 but not noted there) which derives from the same verbal root for “take up,” *nasa*’ (cf. 3.14).

The subject of the first lament through vs. 9 is Judah presented as a lioness or *levya*’, the only use of this word in the Bible although related to the more frequent *lavy*’. Judah-as-lioness thus crouches between young lions, *ravats* being typical of quadrupeds which put their legs under their bodies when laying down. In sum, Judah is comfortable among rivals...young lions...and shows this by the remarkable courage of raising among them one of her whelps. These lions stay their distance as the whelp matures, it growing up and learning to devour human beings. In other words, right from the beginning this young lion had acquired a taste of human flesh while the others did not.

This appetite to go after people instead of the usual prey associated with lions served to rally nations. An alarm is sounded against Judah which reads literally “they are hearing or summoning to him nations,” the common verb being *shamah*. This alliance didn’t seem to have much difficulty in capturing Judah, for quickly they dug a pit for him and brought him, the first whelp being Jehoahaz, with hooks to Egypt.

Obviously Judah was keeping a close eye upon these events and transformed a second whelp (Jehoiachin) into a young lion, this after having seen her hopes dashed. Vs. 5 reads literally as “she had waited.” This second lion devoured men, ravaged cities and lands around him, which made the nations form an alliance as they had done earlier. Instead of bringing him to Egypt, he went into exile in Babylon. This, they hoped, would put a definitive end to any threat arising from Judah. Such is the conclusion of the first lament.

The second lament speaks of Judah as mother, a vine in a vineyard whereas the text reads literally “in your blood.” This place–blood, if you will–is not its natural ground because the text says it had been transplanted by the water. Despite becoming strong, etc., it was plucked up in fury (*chemah*, cf. 16.42) and cast to the ground where after being ravaged, is translated yet again but this time to a dry land. Although Judah-as-vine has pretty much been brought low, apparently it is not destroyed but left to

languish in exile, Zedekiah being stripped by the east wind of vs. 12, namely, **Nechuchadrezzar**.

Son of man: 0

Davar of the Lord: 0

Thus says the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

Know the Lord: 0

1) ravats, qynah, nasy', nasa', 2) levyah, 4) shamah, 12) chemah

Chapter Twenty

1) In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day 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: 3) "**Son of man**, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, **Thus says the Lord God**, Is it to inquire of me that you come? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 4) Will you judge them, **son of man**, will you judge them? Then let them know the abominations of their fathers 5) and say to them, **Thus says the Lord God**: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the seed of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I swore to them, saying, I am the Lord your God. 6) On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. 7) And I said to them, Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God. 8) But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not every man cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. "Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend 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 dwelt, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. 10) So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. 11) I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances by whose observance man shall live. 12) Moreover I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between me and them that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them. 13) But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not walk in my statutes but rejected my ordinances by whose observance man shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. "Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness to make a full end of them. 14) But I 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. 15) Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, 16) because they rejected my ordinances and did not walk in my statutes and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. 17) Nevertheless my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make a full end of them in the wilderness. 18) "And I said to their children in the wilderness, Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers nor observe their ordinances nor defile yourselves with their idols. 19) I the Lord am your God; walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances 20) and hallow my Sabbaths that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may **know that I the Lord am your God**. 21) But the children rebelled against me; they did not walk in my statutes and were not careful to observe my ordinances by whose observance man

shall live; they profaned my Sabbaths. "Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. 22) But I withheld 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) Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries 24) because they had not executed my ordinances but had rejected my statutes and profaned my Sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers' idols. 25) Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life; 26) and I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born that I might horrify them; I did it that they might **know that I am the Lord.** 27) "Therefore, **son of man,** speak to the house of Israel and say to them, **Thus says the Lord God:** In this again your fathers blasphemed me by dealing treacherously with me. 28) For when I had brought them into the land which I swore to give them, then wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their soothing odors, and there they poured out their drink offerings. 29) (I said to them, What is the high place to which you go? So its name is called Bamah to this day.) 30) Wherefore say to the house of Israel, **Thus says the Lord God:** Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and go astray after their detestable things? 31) When you offer your gifts and sacrifice your sons by fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 32) "What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, 'Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries and worship wood and stone.' 33) "As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I will be king over you. 34) I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and 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, says the Lord God. 37) I will make you pass under the rod, and I will let you go in by number. 38) I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will **know that I am the Lord.** 39) "As for you, O house of Israel, **thus says the Lord God:** Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols. 40) "For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord God, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts with all your sacred offerings. 41) As a pleasing odor I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. 42) And you shall **know that I am the Lord,** when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country which I swore to give to your fathers. 43) And there you shall remember your ways and all the doings with which you have polluted yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. 44) And you shall **know that I am the Lord** when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord God." 45) And **the word of the Lord** came to me: 46) "**Son of man,** set your face toward the south, preach against the south and prophesy against the forest land in the Negeb; 47) say to the forest of the Negeb, **Hear the word of the Lord: Thus says the Lord God,** Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree; the blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from south to north shall be scorched by it. 48) All flesh shall 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 a maker of allegories?'"

This verse opens with a specific time and date as is the case with the first verse of this book as well as 8.1 and 14.1. It has the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated in the RSV meaning that the meeting at hand takes place right on the heels of the Lord judging Israel as in the verse of the last chapter. Apart from the context at hand, the power, if you will, of such a small word as this conjunctive at the beginning of a chapter along with a particular frame of time lends a definite expectation and anticipation as to what will follow despite our not knowing about it.

In the last meeting (cf. 8.1+) the Lord's hand fell upon Ezekiel whereas here certain elders of Israel inquired of the Lord, *darash* being used as in 14.3 or when the prophet asks the Lord whether he should be *darash* by this delegation. By now Ezekiel had gained a reputation among the people, the reason why these elders trusted him to do the *darash*, the reason why they "sat before me," directly opposite or face-to-face. In the face of a looming crisis the elders wish to get right down to business, dispensing with any pleasantries. One can't but help wonder about the mental state of these representatives, of what they discussed before meeting the prophet. They must have held numerous other meetings and came to the present one with a sense of foreboding, knowing in advance what they will hear.

Without missing a beat as indicated by the conjunctive *v-* as "and," the *davar* of the Lord came to Ezekiel and speaks with him through vs. 45 after which comes another mention of this phrase, a second *davar*, if you will, continuing to the end of the chapter. It resumes beginning with Chapter Twenty-One in what appears to be another context. As for the elders, nothing is said about their response, that being left to the reader's imagination. Given the rather dire nature of what the divine *davar* had communicated thus far, it's not off the mark to expect more of the same.

Ezekiel is to *davar* the divine *davar* to the elders smack in front of him, and despite its length (through this entire chapter), it's transmitted instantaneously, the verses at hand simply being an unpacking in space and time of that *davar*. The Lord begins with a question which has the ominous tone of a rebuke, that is, why these representatives had approached Ezekiel. He says outrightly that he won't subject himself to their *darash* which is what Ezekiel expected. Even the elders could see that by the expression on his face though he hadn't yet communicated the Lord's *davar* to them. Then in the same breath (vs. 4) the Lord speaks to the prophet about judging these elders and through them, Israel, the verb being *shaphat* (cf. 18.30). He mentions *shaphat* not just once but twice for emphasis.

In vs. 4 Ezekiel...predictably...is to inform the elders not just of their abominations but those of their fathers, *tohevah* (cf. 18.13) with the verb *yadah* (cf. 17.24), to know them in a very intimate fashion. "Fathers" means that these abominations had been practiced long before they came on the scene and are the current bearers of such practices. The

question, then, is will they be able to bring a stop to this transmission of evil. Vs. 5 continues as one sentence with a further “Thus says the Lord God,” indicative of the seriousness at hand.

In vs. 5 the Lord hearkens back to the day which may be called a *kairos* event when he had chosen Israel, for example, Dt 7.6: “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession (etc.).” Note the use here as well as in vs. 5 not just of the “Lord” but of the “Lord your God,” a way to bring home the fact of who is in charge. Then he adds not just the house of Jacob but its seeds, meaning the past is brought into the present. More specifically that past is when the Lord made himself known (*yadah*, cf. vs. 4) in Egypt which seems to imply not his revelation to Moses in the Sinai desert but the miracles, plagues and crossing of the Red Sea.

Vss. 5-26 is a recap of the Lord’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, this theme found frequently throughout the Bible and repeated by reason of its importance. Behind it are the four hundred years of prosperity in that land and before that, Israel having been in Canaan since Abraham’s time. In fact, we know nothing of this extended period of time in Egypt. If it were filled with trials and persecutions, surely we’d know about them. After Egypt comes forty years in Sinai as a preparation of re-entering Canaan and taking possession of it. Despite this being repeated endlessly, Israel forgets almost at once, indicative of the weakness of human memory both individually and collectively. The repetitive nature of vss. 5-26 is outlined as follows. The conjunctive *v-* introduces many of the verses such as “then, because, nevertheless.” Note the seven uses of the verb *chalal*, to profane:

-In both vs. 5 and vs. 6 the Lord says that he swore to the Israelites in Egypt which reads literally that he lifted up his hand: the first with respect to being the Lord your God as noted above and the second with respect to bringing Israel from Egypt into a land flowing with milk and honey, this image used first (cf. Ex 3.8) when the Lord addressed Moses for the very first time. Also in the verse at hand this land is called the most glorious one of them all, *tsevy* (cf. 7.20 but not noted there) being a noun which also means a hart or roe.

-Vs. 7: The Lord tells the people before departing Egypt to cast away all detestable things or *shiquts* (cf. 11.18) which their eyes were fastened upon as well as not to defile themselves by the idols of Egypt, *gilulym* (cf. 18.6). Interestingly, the Israelites didn’t seem to succumb to this during their four hundred year stay in Egypt which says something about their cohesiveness and leadership though we have no information about it. It simply comes from inference, and we could trust the author of Exodus (traditionally Moses) to mention it. Only when the people had entered the Sinai wilderness and later Canaan did the issue of idolatry arise and plague the nation for generations afterwards.

-Vs. 8: The Lord continues with the theme of Israel’s rebellious behavior, *marah* (cf. 5.6) with the preposition *b-*, literally “rebelled in me.” One instance of this rebellious attitude is not listening to the Lord in their failure to cast away detestable

things and idols. Vs. 8 continues with a second sentence where the Lord muses about pouring out his wrath, *chemah* (cf. 19.12) and spending his anger, ‘*aph* (cf. 7.8), the two verbs being *shaphak* and *kalah*, 16.36 and 13.15 respectively. This twofold flowing of divine anger is aimed directly at Israel in the midst (*betok*, cf. 16.53) of Egypt from which it would spread throughout the entire land and consume it.

-Vs. 9: The Lord changes his mind for his own sake, that his name not to be profaned or *chalal* (cf. 13.19) among nations in which the Israelites dwelt. This is the first of seven instances in Chapter Twenty and used here with *betok*, on the heels of the *betok* of vs. 8. Since *chalal* fundamentally means to pierce through, the image we can get here is that these nations (*goy*, cf. 2.3) would shoot or sling profanations at the divine name even though the Lord had made himself known (*yadah*) to Israel by bringing her from Egypt.

-Vs. 10: A simple statement where the Lord brings Israel from Egypt into the wilderness.

-Vs. 11: In the wilderness the Lord gave Israel his statutes and showed them his ordinances, *choq* and *mishpat*, the latter with the verb *yadah* (cf. vs. 9) or to make known. Both nouns are found together in 18.19.

-Vs. 12: The Lord singles out Sabbaths or *shavath* (cf. vs. 3) with the intent that they being a sign (‘*oth*, cf. 14.8), these consisting of seven days followed by six of work, a time of reflection. Such reflection or knowing (*yadah* again) has as its aim the fact that the Lord is sanctifying the people, *qadash* fundamentally as to set apart which is the story of the forty years of wandering in the Sinai desert. “Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel when my sanctuary is in the midst of them for evermore” [37.28].

-Vs. 13 contains something very familiar to Israel, that the people failed to live up to all this, the Lord singling out their profanation of his Sabbaths, second instance of *chalal* (cf. vs. 9). This verse continues with a second sentence where the Lord had considered (the common verb ‘*amar* or to say is used) of pouring out his wrath or *chemah* as he had threatened as in vs. 8 which would bring them to a full end, *chalah* also as in vs. 8 but not noted there.

-Vs. 14: A certain desire to protect his name prevented the Lord from this, the third mention of *chalal* (cf. vs. 13). Here he doesn’t wish such profanation be done in the sight of those nations who had witnessed this divine threat of extermination.

-Vs. 15: The Lord swore to bring Israel into a land of milk and honey (cf. vs. 6) as well as being the most glorious (*tsevy*, cf. vs. 6) one of them all.

-Vs. 16: Fourth mention of the verb *chalal* or to profane (cf. vs. 14) relative to Sabbaths, this time in conjunction with the collective (singular) heart of Israel (*lev*, cf. 18.31) going after the idols of other nations, *gilulyim* (cf. vs. 7).

-Vs. 17: Despite the idolatry depicted in vs. 16, the Lord decides to spare Israel, *chus* (cf. 16.4 as to pity) or more accurately, his eye decides to do this, an indication that the Lord is taking a close look at what he will do moments before he puts it into action. *Chus* is the opposite of *shachath* and *kalah* (16.47 and 13.13 respectively), destroy and full end, the latter being a noun.

-Vs. 18: The Lord warns the children about their fathers, that is, those who had been raised in Egypt, as to not walking in their statutes nor observing their ordinances,

choq and *mishpat*, the same pair as in vs. 11. He throws in a prohibition against defilement by idols, the verb being *tame'* (cf. 14.11).

-Vs. 19: The Lord commands the sons, not fathers, to walk and observe or *halak* and *shamar* his statutes and ordinances which is opposite of the *halak* and *shamar* (cf. 3.11 and 11.20 respectively) in the previous verse.

-Vs. 20: Hallow the Sabbaths, *qadash* being the verb which as in vs. 12 are a sign or *'oth* relative to knowing (*yadah*) the Lord.

-Vs. 21: However, the children, like their fathers, rebelled against the Lord, *marah* (cf. vs. 8), this rebellion consisting of not observing divine ordinances which thereby makes them profane the Sabbaths, fifth mention of the verb *chalal* (cf. vs. 16). The second sentence of this verse relative to the Lord pouring out his wrath (*chemah*), is the same as in 13.

-Vs. 22: Sixth mention of *chalal* (cf. vs. 21), here with respect to God's name in the sight of nations and intimating a kind of divine embarrassment.

-Vs. 23: Two similar verbs, scatter and disperse or *puts* and *zarah* (cf. 12.15 and 12.14 respectively).

-Vs. 24: The scattering and dispersing of the previous verses result in Israel not doing the Lord's ordinances but a rejection of his statutes (*mishpat* and *choq* as in vs. 18) and profanation of his Sabbaths. This is the seventh and last mention of *chalal* (cf. vs. 22).

-Vs. 25: Statutes and ordinances (*choq* and *mishpat*, cf. vs. 24) which are different insofar as they are neither good nor have life.

-Vs. 26: The Lord defiles (*tame'*, cf. vs. 18) the people by reason of offering their first-born by fire. Such defilement is designed to cause them horror or *shamam* (cf. 6.4) but ultimately that they know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 20) the Lord.

The conjunctive *v-* ('then') introducing vs. 27 signifies a shift from the above twenty-two verses outlined pertaining to Israel's relationship with the Lord in Egypt as well as in the Sinai wilderness. Now the scene shifts to their entry into Canaan where the Lord bids Ezekiel to speak...to *davar*...to the house of Israel, "house" again signifying a certain domestic unity and family relationship. Ezekiel does comply, of course, but with that same reluctance he had shown to date since the content of the *davar* certainly is less than desirable. The same applies here in vs. 27 when he mentioned how Israel's fathers had blasphemed the Lord, use of *hod* as "again" echoing this as well as the Lord's sentiment. *Gadaph* is the verb at hand which connotes revilement. "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me" [Is 37.10]. Tied in with *gadaph* is *mahal* (cf. 18.24) or to deal in a treacherous fashion.

In vs. 28 the Lord recounts how he had brought Israel into a land (*'erets*, cf. 15.8) he swore to give them, this being rendered literally as "I lifted my hand," a gesture associated as when making an oath. The frequently commented upon tendency of Israel to idol worship, etc., has shown no sign of abetting after forty years of wandering. Right away the people made a beeline for any hill or leafy tree with the provocations offered to native divinities, *kahas* (cf. 16.42) being the noun which connotes displeasure or

grief. In both places the people also sent up soothing odors and drink offerings, the former consists of *ruach* or smell, breath with *nychuach* (18.31 and 16.19 respectively) and the latter, *nesek* as in 45.17: “It shall be the prince’s duty to furnish the burnt offerings, cereal offerings and drink offerings.”

The RSV has vs. 29 in parentheses even though the Lord continues to speak, the purpose being an interjection in the form of a rhetorical question as to which high place (*bamah*, cf. 16.16) the people favor, *Bamah* being the proper name for it; this word occurs very frequently in both First and Second Kings. In the verse at hand, the words “to this day” is both an insult and eyesore for the Lord.

Right after mention of this place of abominations the Lord comes off with two further rhetorical questions, the first in vs. 30 as to the people defiling (*tame’*, cf. vs. 26) themselves in imitation of their fathers in the Sinai desert and the second in vs. 31 as to human sacrifice and defilement by idols, the second use of *tame’* with *gilulym*. No small wonder that the Lord exclaims disgust at being inquired, *darash* (cf. vs. 1).

In vs. 32 the Lord is emphatic in saying that what’s in the mind of the people never will come to pass, *ruach* (cf. vs. 28) intimating their spirits. It seems they have paid attention to nations around them, that is, in Canaan, and were tempted sorely to follow their religious practices. Such exotic practices must have been irresistible after so many years in the desert with worship of one God.

Despite this tendency to infidelity, the Lord is determined to govern Israel as king, the phrases “mighty hand” and “outstretched arm” of vs. 33 being typical of the Book of Deuteronomy as in 4.34. In other words, the same lordship exerted there will extend into Canaan but with the condition of divine wrath (*chemah*, cf. vs. 21) being poured out, this being repeated in the next verse (34). Then the Lord throws in a threat that must have terrified the Israelites, that is, by sending them back into the desert and entering judgment with them, *shaphat* (cf. vs. 4) made all the worse by the words “face to face.” He’s quick to remind the people that he had done this with their fathers in the wilderness as recounted in Chapter Eleven of Numbers.

Vs. 37 reads literally as “I will bring you into the bond of the covenant” or *beryth* (cf. 16.59), that is, restore the original covenant made at Mount Horeb. The next step (vs. 38) is purging rebels and transgressors (*marad* and *pashah* both verbs found in 2.3), *barar* being the verb which means to cleanse. “With the pure you show yourself pure” [Ps 18.26]. Although they won’t be permitted to enter the land of Israel, the Lord will bring them from the land of their sojourning (*magor*). “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” [Ps 119.54]. Note the two different words for “land,” *‘erets* with regard to *magor* and *‘adamah* with regard to Israel. The former can apply to a nation whereas the latter is land in the physical sense. Despite this half promises, if you will, rebels and transgressors will be able to leave the *‘erets* of their sojourn, be freed from being part of any allegiance to nations in that place. Still, the earthy-ness of *‘adamah* mentioned with regard to Israel intimates the contrast, of what

these people are missing. In the end the only thing that matters and transcends these divisions is knowing (*yadah*, cf. vs. 26) the Lord.

Vs. 39 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated “as for you” with regard to Israel, this small word indicative of fear and concern for those listening. The Lord adopts a somewhat sarcastic tone, giving permission for the people to serve their idols or *gilulym* (cf. vs. 31) if they prefer not listening to him. Even if they opt for this, they won’t be able to profane the Lord’s name, *chalal* (cf. vs. 24) meaning that despite going through the motions they won’t have the slightest effect except to harm themselves.

Vs. 40 has a threefold identity: the Lord’s holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel and the land or ‘*erets*. Note that in vs. 38 ‘*adamah* is used with regard to Israel. So in this holy place the Lord will both accept and require (*darash* also as to seek; cf. vs. 31 and *ratsah*) Israel’s contributions, choicest gifts and sacred offerings. The first verb means to delight or to please and the second suggests an ongoing process of inquiry. These three may be said to correspond to the threefold identity just noted: *terumah*, *re’shyth* and *mas’eth*. The first two are found in 44.30: “And the first of all the first fruits of all kinds and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings shall belong to the priests.” As for the third, cf. Ps 141.2: “Let my prayer be counted as incense before you and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.”

In vs. 41 the Lord will accept Israel as an odor (*ruach*) which is pleasing (*nychuach*), both found in vs. 28, the verb at hand being *ratsah* (cf. vs. 40). This will happen once he brings Israel from the peoples and countries and will manifest his holiness, the verb *qadash* (cf. vs. 2) which reads literally “in (b-) you.” Such manifestations is not to be done in isolation but in the eyes of the nations who, once Israel has been taken away, will realize that something important in their lives is missing, prompting them to follow. As so often in the Book of Ezekiel, all this has one goal, that of knowing (*yadah*, cf. vs. 38) the Lord which hopefully the nations will do as well.

Vs. 43 intimates clearly that once in the ‘*erets* of Israel it won’t be easy for the people because they will have clear remembrance of their former ways which consist in having polluted themselves, *tame’* (cf. vs. 31). Inevitably this will lead to self-loathing or *qut* found last in 6.9. However, this attitude which can be destructive is offset in vs. 44 by the Lord extending his mercy in the form of knowing (*yadah*) him, this despite the people’s evil ways or corrupt doings.

Vs. 45 is vs. 1 of Chapter Twenty-One in the Hebrew.

Vs. 45 begins with the conjunctive *v-* to show that the Lord continues to speak with Ezekiel as he had been doing ever since vs. 2, “*davar* of the Lord” but here in conjunction with the phrase “son of man” (cf. vs. 27). Now in vs. 46 the prophet is to set his face to the south, preach against that direction and prophesy, all three being accomplished as one. The verbs are *sum*, *nataph* and *navy*; the first and second are found in 15.7 and 13.1 respectively whereas the second implies dropping down, almost a

slow drip. It, along with the other two, are found in 21.2: “Set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries; prophesy against the land of Israel.” As for the Negeb forest, the Lord will set it on fire with the intent of scorching all faces from south to north as in vs. 47, the verb *tsarav* also as to be scabby or rough, the only use in the Bible.

Chapter Twenty concludes with Ezekiel coming off this second mediation of the divine *davar* rather quickly or from vs. 45, and shouts out with some alarm that people are calling him a maker of allegories. Apparently he had overheard someone saying this and naturally feels ridiculed. At the same time he can understand it, knowing full well that the *davar* of which he had just been an instrument is difficult for the people to accept since it tells them too much about their behavior. As for the two words relative to maker and allegories, we have the verb *mashal* (cf. 18.2). Privately Ezekiel hopes his time for being an instrument of the Lord’s *davar* has come to a conclusion. Apparently the Lord is showing him not the slightest bit of sympathy. To top it off, by now people are not just talking about him but most likely engaged at a plot to silence him.

Son of man: 4

Davar of the Lord: 3

Thus says the Lord: 6

Know the Lord: 5

1) darash, 4) shaphat, tohevah, yadah, 5) yadah, 6) tsevy, 7) shiquts, gilulyim, 8) marah, chemah, ‘aph, shaphak, kalah, betok, 9) chalal, betok, goy, yadah, 11) choq, mishpat, yadah, 12) shavath, ‘oth, yadah, qadash, 13) chalal, chemah, chalah, 14) chalal, 15) tsevy, 16) chalal, gilulyim, 17) chus, shachath, kalah, 18) choq, mishpat, tame’, 19) halak, shamar, 20) qadash, ‘oth, yadah, 21) marah, chalal, chemah, 22) chalal, 24) mishpat, choq, chalal, 25) choq, mishpat, 26) tame’, shamam, yadah, 27) gadaph, mahal, 28) ‘erets, kahas, ruach, nychuach, nesek, 29) bamah, 30) tame’, 31), tame’, gilulyim, darash, 32) ruach, 33) chemah, 35) shaphat, 37) beryth, 38) marad, pashah, barar, magor, yadah, 39) gilulyim, chalal, 40) ratsah, darash, terumah, re’shyth, mas’eth, 41) ruach, nychuach, ratsah, 42) qadash, yadah, 43) tame’, qut, 44) yadah, 45) sum, nataph, navy’, 47) tsarav, 49) mashal