

14:1-11 The Penalty for Idolatry:

14:1 And men from Israel's elderly came to me, and they sat before me. 14:2 And YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 14:3 Son of Adam / Humanity, these men raised up their idols / logs / blocks upon their heart, and a stumbling-block of their iniquity / guilt they put in front of their faces. Shall I be truly sought by them? 14:4 Therefore speak to them, and you shall say to them, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: A man, a man from Israel's house, who will raise up his idols to / in his heart, and places a stumbling-block of his iniquity / guilt before his face; and he comes to the prophet--YHWH will be answered by him. He came in / with (the) multitude of his idols--14:5 in order to seize (the) house of Israel in / with their heart who were estranged from Me / upon / with Me. By their idols--all of them! 14:6 Therefore, say to Israel's house, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Turn around / Repent! And cause to turn around / repent from (trusting) upon your idols, and from (trusting) upon all your abominations, turn around your faces! / change direction! 14:7 Because a man, a man from Israel's house, and from the temporary resident who resides temporarily in Israel and he is estranged from (following) after Me, and he raises up his idols to / in his heart, and (the) stumbling-block of his iniquity / guilt he places in front of his face, and he comes to the prophet to seek for himself by Me--I, YHWH, was answered by him by Myself. 14:8 And I will place My face against that man; and I will place him for a sign and for proverbs; and I will cut him off from (the) midst of My people. And you (masculine plural) will know that I (am) YHWH! 14:9 And the prophet that is deceived, and speaks a word--I, YHWH, Deceived / Enticed that prophet! And I will stretch out My hand over / against him, and I will exterminate him from (the) midst of My people Israel! 14:10 And they will lift up / bear their iniquity / guilt; like the iniquity / guilt of the one seeking, like the iniquity / guilt of the prophet it will be! 14:11 In order that Israel's house will no longer go astray from (following) after Me, and they will no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions. And they will be to / for Me to / for a people; and I, I will be to /for them to / for a God! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

14:1⁵¹²

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Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-11** "Patrons of False Prophets Condemned." He comments that "After dealing with the false prophets in the preceding chapter, Ezekiel now turns to the people whose encouragement and patronage are responsible for their activity. They respond to a popular demand and announce what the men who inquire of them want to hear. No genuine revelation from God is possible in such circumstances. All that a true prophet can bring to the people is an exhortation to abandon their evil ways." (P. 75)

Matties states that **chapter 14** "introduces a sequence of six chapters (14-19) that challenge readers to take responsibility." (P. 1172)

(continued...)

וַיָּבֹא אֵלַי אַנְשֵׁי־מִזְקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And he came to me, men from Israel's elderly,⁵¹³

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לִפְנָיִ:

and they sat before me.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹²(...continued)

Reimer comments “That the theme of false prophecy continues is clear from **verses 9-11**, although now the problem is viewed from the side of the recipients rather than the producers of false oracles...A second occasion of being approached by the elders (**verse 1**) in exile (compare **Ezekiel 8:1; 20:1**) sets the context for this oracle against idolaters seeking a word from [YHWH]. Although the exilic setting is not required to explain the idolatry of these elders, the new cultural setting and dislocation could promote unthinking syncretism...

“This section turns on [YHWH’s] question in **14:3**, which brings three successive responses. **Verses 4-5** give an apparent ‘yes,’ but what it might mean to lay hold of the hearts (**verse 5**) is unpacked in the following verses...The second response comes in **verses 6-8**; any Divine answer to idolatrous inquirers will be tuned to their repentance (**verse 6**)—which, if not forth-coming, leads to their rejection by [YHWH] (**verse 8**)...The third response (**verses 9-11**) joins inquirer and false prophet as [YHWH] asserts responsibility for deceptions that ensure punishment for both partners in delusion (compare **1 Kings 22:13-28**).” (P. 1517)

Darr states that “Despite the unexpected appearance of a salvation oracle concerning the exiles in **11:14-21**, Ezekiel’s subsequent pronouncements to his immediate audience (**chapters 12-13**) remain grim. He continues relentlessly to press upon them the inevitability of Judah’s utter demise...

“In **14:1-11** Yahweh accuses the exiles of idolatry, the most heinous of sins...How dare these law-breakers seek an oracle from Yahweh, as if the God Who demands absolute fidelity were oblivious or indifferent to their duplicity!” (P. 103)

⁵¹³

Note the grammatical mistake—a singular verb, “he came,” with a plural subject, “men from Israel’s elderly.”

Hilmer says that the “elders of Israel” is “apparently interchangeable with ‘elders of Judah’ (see **8:1**).” (P. 1243) Yes. Since the fall of Northern Israel, Judah has taken up the name of “Israel.”

⁵¹⁴

(continued...)

14:2 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's Word was / came to me saying:

14:3 בְּן־אָדָם הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה

Son of Adam / Humanity, these men

הָעֵלּוּ גִלּוּלֵיהֶם עַל־לִבָּם

raised up their idols / logs / blocks upon their heart,

וּמִכְשׁוֹל עֲוֹנָם

and a stumbling-block of their iniquity / guilt,

נָתְנוּ נֹכַח פְּנֵיהֶם

they gave / put in front of their faces.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The purpose of the visit is not explicitly stated and can only be inferred. If this section is connected with what precedes, the elders came to Ezekiel for an explanation of his fierce attack. It would appear from **verse 3** that they too were implicated. More probably, then, they wished to consult him on political questions which were giving them concern; and he is commanded by God to administer a rebuke to them.” (P. 75)

Darr comments that “In a brief narrative introduction (**verse 1**), Ezekiel recounts an occasion when ‘certain elders of Israel’ gathered to sit before him...Why would the elders come to Ezekiel, who constantly struggles to dash their hopes?...The end of **verse 3** will confirm the reader’s suspicion that they have come in hopes of receiving Yahweh’s answer to a particular inquiry...But God’s response to the prophet says nothing of the issue presently on their minds. Rather, it discloses the unspoken disposition of their hearts.” (Pp. 103-104)

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Rabbi Fisch notes that “The phrase does not imply that they were worshiping idols, but that their thoughts were influenced by pagan ideas, such as believing in magical spells and divination.” (P. 75)

Darr states that “In two parallel lines, Yahweh reproaches the inquirers: These men have ‘taken their idols [גִּלּוּלִים, *gillulim*, ‘dung-idols’ into their hearts.” (P. 104)

(continued...)

הֲאֶדְרַשׁ אֶדְרַשׁ לָהֶם:

Shall I be truly sought by them?⁵¹⁶

14:4 לְכֵן דַּבֵּר-אוֹתָם

Therefore speak to them,

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם

and you shall say to them,

כֹּה-אָמַר | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

A man, a man from Israel's house,

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲלֶה אֶת-גִּלּוּלָיו אֶל-לִבּוֹ

Who will raise up his idols to / in his heart,

וּמִכְשׁוֹל עֹנָו

and a stumbling-block of his iniquity / guilt

⁵¹⁵(...continued)

We should ask ourselves what Ezekiel means by people who have "set up idols in their hearts," and who have "put wicked stumbling-blocks before their faces." Is there anything parallel to this in our modern world? What about our devotion to more and more Possessions, Power and Pleasure

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Rabbi Fisch comments that instead of "should I be inquired," it is better to translate "shall I allow Myself to be inquired of"--"the question expressing an emphatic negative. They have come to Ezekiel to seek guidance in their perplexity, but he will certainly not give it to them." (P. 76)

Hilmer states that the verb דַּרַּשׁ, **darash** is "a technical term for seeking an oracle from a prophet." (P. 1243) See **2 Kings 1:16; 3:11; 8:8.**

יָשִׁים נֹכַח פְּנָיו

he places before his face;

וּבָא אֶל־הַנָּבִיא

and he comes to the prophet--

אֲנִי יְהוָה נִעֲנִיתִי לוֹ

Should I, YHWH, be inquired of⁵¹⁷ by him?⁵¹⁸

(בָּה) [בָּא] בָּרַב גְּלוּלָיו:

He came in / with (the) multitude of his idols--⁵¹⁹

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The Hebrew verb נִעֲנִיתִי is 1st person niph'al perfect, and can mean "I was answered," or "I was afflicted." The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἀποκριθήσομαι, "I will answer," and most English translations follow the Greek.

Rabbi Fisch quotes Ehrlich who thinks the reply of YHWH is ironical: "God's reply to a person who inquires of Him through the prophet is, 'I beg to be excused in the case of one who comes with a multitude of idols.'" (P. 76)

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Translations of this line vary:

King James, "should I be enquired of at all by them?"

Tanakh, "Shall I respond to their inquiry?"

New Revised Standard, "shall I let myself be consulted by them?"

New International, "Should I let them inquire of me at all?"

New Jerusalem, "Why should I let myself be consulted by them?"

Rahlfs, εἰ ἀποκριθόμενος ἀποκριθῶ αὐτοῖς, "am I to answer them by answering?" (**NETS**); "If being answered, shall I be answered by them?" (Darnell; this is difficult Greek, as is the Hebrew)

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These last two lines are given somewhat varying translations:

King James, "I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols";

Tanakh, "I the LORD will respond to him as he comes with his multitude of fetishes."

New Revised Standard, "I the LORD will answer those who come with the multitude of their idols";

(continued...)

14:5 לְמַעַן תִּפְּשׂ אֶת־בַּיִת־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּלִבָּם

in order to seize (the) house of Israel in / with their heart

אֲשֶׁר נָזְרוּ מֵעָלַי

who were estranged from Me,

בְּגִלּוּלֵיהֶם כָּלָם:

by their idols—all of them!⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹(...continued)

New International, “I the LORD will answer them myself in keeping with their great idolatry.”

New Jerusalem, “will get this answer from me, Yahweh, as the multiplicity of his idols deserves”

Rahlf's, ἐγὼ κύριος ἀποκριθήσομαι αὐτῷ ἐν οἷς ἐνέχεται ἡ διάνοια αὐτοῦ, “I, Lord, I will answer him with those things his mind is subject to / is held fast.”

Hilmer says, “The punishment for idolatry was death (**Deuteronomy 13:6-18**).” (P. 1243)

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Verse 5 is given varying translations:

King James, “That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.”

Tanakh, “Thus I will hold the House of Israel to account for their thoughts, because they have all been estranged from Me through their fetishes.”

New Revised Standard, “in order that I may take hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, all of whom are estranged from me through their idols.”

New International, “I will do this to recapture the hearts of the people of Israel, who have all deserted me for their idols.”

New Jerusalem, “and in this way I hope to win back the hearts of the House of Israel who have all been estranged from me by their foul idols.”

Rahlf's, ὅπως πλαγιάσῃ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν τὰς ἀπηλλοτριω- μένας ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασιν αὐτῶν, “so that he might turn aside the house of the Israel according to their hearts, the ones alienated / estranged from me in the thoughts of theirs.”

It appears that these English translations are assuming that YHWH is the subject; however, it seems to us that the subject is one of the elders whose heart is filled with idols, and
(continued...)

14:6 לִכְּן אָמַרְתִּי אֶל-בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Therefore, say to Israel's house,⁵²¹

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

שׁוּבוּ

Turn around / Repent!⁵²²

⁵²⁰(...continued)

who wants to capture the heart of the house of Israel with his idols. What do you think?

Rabbi Fisch mentions the interpretation, “Caught in the evil inclinations of their heart, they will experience the retribution which overwhelms them.” Or, as Ehrlich suggests, “in order to hold the house of Israel responsible for what is in their mind.” (P. 76)

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Darr comments that “In the light of Yahweh’s speech in **verse 3**, the reader is likely surprised immediately to read God’s command that Ezekiel declare an oracle [to them].” (P. 104)

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Matties comments that “A threefold use of the word *repent / turn* emphasizes that the exilic community must make a decision, not to nullify the judgment but to open a window to the future.” (P. 1173)

Rabbi Fisch says that “The only message which Ezekiel is able to convey to his inquirers is a call to repentance by complete abandonment of their pagan ideas.” (P. 76)

Yes—and in this Ezekiel falls in line with the basic message of Jeremiah and Israel’s other “prophets of doom.” But the call to repentance does not cease to be the prophetic Message after the Babylonian captivity is over. Christians will recall the statement of **Mark 1:14-15** concerning Jesus’ initial message:

14 Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην
But then after the John’s being handed over / arrested,
ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν
the Jesus came into the Galilee,
κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ
preaching the good news of the God,

(continued...)

15 ⁵²²(...continued)
καὶ λέγων ὅτι
and saying that
πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς
The time has been fulfilled,
καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ·
and the kingdom of the God has drawn near;
μετανοεῖτε
repent / change your mind!
καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.
And believe in the good news!

We say, any so called prophetic Message, or Word of God, that does not include the call to repentance, is suspect!

Hilmer states that this is “the first of three calls for repentance from Ezekiel, who elsewhere proclaims inescapable judgment.” (P. 1243) See:

Ezekiel 18:30,

לְכֹן אִישׁ כְּדַרְכּוֹ אֲשַׁפֵּט אֹתְכֶם

Therefore each man / person, according to his ways, I will judge you,

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

house of Israel—

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—

שׁוּבוּ

Turn around / repent!

וְהִשִּׁיבוּ מִכָּל-פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם

And cause to turn around / repent from all your transgressions!

וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לְמַכְשׁוֹל עֵוֹן;

And it will not be for you (plural) for a stumbling-block of iniquity!

Ezekiel 33:11,

11 אֲמַר אֲלֵיהֶם

Say to them,

חַי-אֲנִי

(As) I live—

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—

(continued...)

וְהִשִּׁיבוּ מֵעַל גְּלוּלֵיכֶם

And cause to turn around / repent from (trusting) upon your idols,

וּמֵעַל כָּל־תּוֹעֲבֹתֵיכֶם

and from (trusting) upon all your abominations,

הִשִּׁיבוּ פְּנֵיכֶם:

turn around your faces! / change direction!

14:7⁵²³ כִּי אִישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

Because a man, a man from Israel's house,

⁵²²(...continued)

אִם־אֶחָפֵץ בְּמוֹת הַרְשָׁע

I do not desire (the) death of the wicked person!

כִּי אִם־בְּשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ

But rather (I desire that the) wicked person turn from his way,

וְחָיָה

and will live!

שׁוּבוּ שׁוּבוּ מִדַּרְכֵיכֶם הַרְעִים

Turn! Turn from your (plural) evil ways!

וְלִמָּה תָּמוּתוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And for what reason will you (plural) die, household of Israel?

Darr comments that “In the midst of juristic language, an urgent appeal for repentance, for a ‘turning away’ from Israel’s idols and abominations (**verse 6**) appears for the first time in Ezekiel’s scroll...It signals that Yahweh’s larger goal in confronting the house of Israel with its sin is reconciliation.” (P. 105)

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Darr comments that “Returning to the legal language of **verse 4**, **verses 7-8** set forth a threefold punishment of the accused, here broadened also to include ‘the aliens who reside in Israel.’ The first judgment, ‘I will set My Face against them,’ appears ten time in Scripture...Second, Yahweh says, ‘I will make them a sign...and a byword...The meaning of the third punishment, ‘I will cut them off...from the midst of my people’ is debated...At the least it involves ejection from the faith community...Greenberg argues that more than banishment is at issue. The phrase connotes premature death inflicted not by human agents (e.g., by stoning), but by God.” (Pp. 105-106)

וּמִתְגֵּר אֲשֶׁר-יָגֹר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

and from the temporary resident who resides temporarily in Israel⁵²⁴

וַיִּנָּזֵר מֵאַחֲרַי

and he is estranged from (following) after Me,

וַיַּעַל גְּלוּלָיו אֶל-לִבּוֹ

and he raises up his idols to / in his heart,

וּמִכְשׁוֹל עֲוֹנוֹ

and (the) stumbling-block of his iniquity / guilt

יָשִׁים נֹכַח פְּנָיו

he places in front of his face,

וּבָא אֶל-הַנָּבִיא

and he comes to the prophet

לְדַרְשׁ-לוֹ בִּי

to seek for himself by Me--

אֲנִי יְהוָה נִעֲנֶה-לוֹ בִּי:

I, YHWH, was answered by him by Myself.⁵²⁵

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Rabbi Fisch's translation has "the strangers," and he comments that "Kimchi defines these as Babylonians who embraced the Jewish faith and joined the community of exiles. More probably when Nebuchadnezzar *carried away all Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:14)*, the population included residents who were strangers." (P. 77)

We think that the phrase תִּגֵּר means "the temporary resident," constantly mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible** as living in Israel, and treated as responsible to Jewish teaching as well as Jewish acceptance and care, along with orphans and widows, as a touchstone of governmental righteousness.

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(continued...)

14:8 וְנָתַתִּי פָנַי בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא

And I will place My face against that man;

וְהִשְׁמַתִּיהוּ לְאוֹת וּלְמִשְׁלִים

and I will place him for a sign and for proverbs;

וְהִכְרַתִּיו מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי

and I will cut him off from (the) midst of My people.⁵²⁶

וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and you (masculine plural) will know that I (am) YHWH!⁵²⁷

14:9 וְהַנְּבִיא כִּי־יִפְתָּהּ

And the prophet that is deceived,

וְדַבֵּר דְּבָר

and speaks a word--

⁵²⁵(...continued)

The last line of **verse 7** is translated by most English translations as **King James** has it, “I the LORD will answer him by myself.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἐγὼ κύριος ἀποκριθήσομαι αὐτῷ ἐν ᾧ ἐλέγχεται ἐν αὐτῷ, “I, Lord, will answer him by what is held within him / what he is loaded down with.” We think the line is fairly obscure, and represents another of the “enigmatic elements” characteristic of Hebrew prophecy.

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Rabbi Fisch notes that “The exemplary punishment of the sinful among the Israelites will become proverbial and act as a deterrent.” (P. 77)

⁵²⁷

Darr comments, “That is, knowledge of Yahweh emerges as the ultimate goal of the preceding Divine speech.” (P. 106)

אֲנִי יְהוָה פָּתִיתִי אֶת הַנְּבִיא הַהוּא

I, YHWH deceived / enticed that prophet!⁵²⁸

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It is a strange situation. The prophet is deceived, but YHWH has put the deceptive message in his mouth! And so we say, Listen to the prophets, both the true prophets and the false prophets, the mis-leading prophets. YHWH is teaching His people through both of them! Learn what the deceptive message is, and enable those who listen to the deceptive prophets to be able to avoid being misled!

What do you think? Did you ever imagine that YHWH might be speaking through the very person you think is a “false prophet”? It is very difficult to be certain in such situations; and therefore it is best to listen carefully and prayerfully to whoever it is that is speaking, instead of dogmatically rejecting the person without hearing what he or she is trying to say.

Rabbi Fisch quotes Davidson concerning the words “I the LORD have enticed that prophet.” “The meaning appears to be: if the prophet, entering into the ‘heart’ of the idolaters, the circle and direction of their thoughts, and the general spirit which animates them, gives them a prophetic oracle which coincides with the line of their thoughts, and thus helps to foster their delusions, that prophet himself has been seduced or enticed; and it is the Lord Who has enticed him...

“The passage has resemblance to **1 Kings 22:23**. There a lying spirit came forth from the Lord and entered into the prophets of Ahab and deceived them, so that they entered into the designs of the wicked king and gave an answer favorable to him. Here it is the Lord Himself Who entices the prophet. In both cases this enticement or deception was in punishment for previous sin.” (P. 77)

Hilmer states that all of this is “related to the Divine hardening.” (P. 1243)

Darr comments that “Returning to the idiom of casuistic sacral law, God addresses the case of the prophet who, unlike Ezekiel, responds to the idolatrous inquirer’s query (**verse 9**). Such a prophet is deceived (the niph'al of the verb פָּתָה which means ‘to be enticed, deceived’), and Yahweh is his Deceiver!” (P. 106) Compare **Deuteronomy 13:5; 1 Kings 13, 22**, and **Jeremiah 20:7**.

Darr comments that “Even more is a stake in the claim that Yahweh is the source of the prophets’ deception (**verse 9a**). This statement also functions to protect both God’s and Ezekiel’s reputations. On the one hand, an idol-minded Israelite who thinks that he can dupe Yahweh into giving a credible response to his inquiry is deceiving himself; and any prophet who
(continued...)

וְנִטְּיִתִּי אֶת־יָדִי עָלָיו

And I will stretch out My hand over / against him,

וְהִשְׁמַדְתִּיו מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

and I will exterminate him from (the) midst of My people Israel!⁵²⁹

14:10 וְנִשְׂאוּ עֲוֹנָם

And they will lift up / bear their iniquity / guilt;⁵³⁰

⁵²⁸(...continued)

acts as his intermediary betrays, by that very action, his utter lack of credibility. As a consequence, the idolatrous inquirer has lost any chance of initiating communication with God and receiving an honest response. On the other hand, Ezekiel's status as Yahweh's authentic prophet is vindicated because he has not functioned as these exiles' conduit to God." (P. 107) Do you follow Darr's reasoning? We cannot.

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Ezekiel does not have to bother himself with trying to get rid of the misleading prophets. YHWH will take care of that. What Ezekiel must do is to listen carefully for the Divine Voice, and faithfully proclaim the Message given him to the people! It will enable the people to recognize the misleading messages, and will guide them into YHWH's Ways!

530

Rabbi Fisch comments that "Both the inquirer and the false prophet are equally culpable and will suffer the same punishment." (P. 77-78) Compare:

Jeremiah 14:15-16,

- 15 Therefore, in this way YHWH spoke,
concerning the prophets, the ones prophesying in My name,
and I did not send them;
and they are saying A sword and a famine
will not be / come in this land!
By the sword and by the famine I will finish off these prophets!
- 16 And the people to whom they are prophesying
will be thrown out into Jerusalem's streets,
from before the famine and the sword--
and there is no one burying for them--
them, their wives and their sons and their daughters.
And I will pour out upon them their evil!

Jeremiah 27:15,

(continued...)

כְּעוֹן הַדֹּרֵשׁ

like the iniquity / guilt of the one seeking,

כְּעוֹן הַנְּבִיא יִהְיֶה:

like the iniquity / guilt of the prophet it will be!

14:11 לְמַעַן לֹא־יִתְעוּ עוֹד בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַחֲרַי^p

In order that Israel's house will no longer go astray from (following) after Me,⁵³¹

וְלֹא־יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד בְּכָל־פְּשָׁעֵיהֶם

and they will no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions.

וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם

And they will be to / for Me to / for a people;

וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים

and I, I will be to / for them to / for a God!⁵³²

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

Verses 14:12-23 Noah, Daniel, and Job

⁵³⁰(...continued)

Because I did not send them forth--

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

and they (are) prophesying in My name for the falsehood,

in order for me to drive you out, and you will perish--

you and the prophets, the ones prophesying to you!

531

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The purpose of Divine judgment is not revenge but correction. It is intended to be a deterrent from evil and a medium of reformation.” (P. 78)

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Darr comments that “Such is the ultimate goal of Yahweh’s punishments—that the covenant relationship between God and Israel be restored.” (P. 107)

Could Not Save This Idolatrous People by Their Righteousness!

14:12 And YHWH's word was / came to me, saying: 14:13 Son of Adam / Humanity, a land that will sin against Me to truly act faithlessly; and I will stretch out My hand against it, and I will break for it a supply of bread / food, and I will send forth against it a famine and I will cut off from it human and animal! 14:14 And there will be / should there be these three men in its midst--Noah, Daniyyel and Iyyobh / Noah, Daniel and Job; these, in / by their righteousness will / would deliver their inner-most-being. (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH! 14:15 What if I should cause evil wild beast(s) to pass through the land? And it should bereave it--and it should become a devastation / waste, from no one passing through because of the wild beasts' presence? 14:16 These three men, (being) in its midst, as I live--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--if sons and if daughters they would deliver, they alone / by themselves would be delivered, and the land would be a devastation / waste! 14:17 Or (if) I should bring a sword against this land, and I should say, Sword, pass through / in the land!--and I should cut off from it human(s) and animal(s); 14:18 and these three men (were) in its midst--as I live--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--they would not deliver sons and / or daughters; because they by themselves they would deliver! 14:19 Or (if) I should send forth a plague / pestilence to / into this land, and I should pour out My wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it human(s) and animal(s); 14:20 and Noah, Daniel, and Job (were) in its midst--(as) I (am) alive--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--whether a son, whether a daughter--they would (not) deliver! They, by their righteousness, would (only) save their innermost-being / life. 14:21 Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Also if / when My four Judgments (on) the evils--sword and famine, and evil beasts and pestilence--I sent forth to / upon Jerusalem to cut off from it human and animal--14:22 and look--there was left remaining in it an escapee / escaped remnant--the ones being found--sons and daughters--look at them, going forth to you (plural) and you (plural) will see their way, and their practices. And you will be consoled / comforted for the evil which I brought upon Jerusalem, all that I brought upon her (Jerusalem). 14:23 And they will console / comfort you when you will see their way, and their practices. And you will know that not without cause have I done all that I did against her (Jerusalem)--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

14:12 ⁵³³

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When the Divine Judgment falls upon a country, with the four-fold Divine Punishment (compare **Revelation 6:1-8**, the four horsemen of the **Apocalypse**), even those renowned for their right relationship with YHWH (Noah, Daniel, and Job) could not save others from their just punishment.

(continued...)

⁵³³(...continued)

This is the earliest reference to either Daniel or Job in the **Jewish Bible**. At the very earliest, Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, and it seems very early for that Daniel to be referred to as a widely-known righteous person. There is an ancient "Danel" spoken of in the Ugaritic texts from Ras Shamra.

Hilmer states that "Another Daniel may be referred to (Ugaritic literature speaks of an honored 'Danel'; since the biblical Daniel's righteousness probably had not become proverbial so soon (Daniel and Ezekiel were contemporaries; see **Daniel 1**). If the biblical Daniel is meant, what he shared in common with Noah and Job was not only righteousness but also deliverance (part of Ezekiel's emphasis)." (P. 1243)

In **verse 23**, the "you" is in the plural, and Ezekiel means that the Jews living in Babylonian captivity, when they see the practices of their fellow-Jews who come to captivity from Jerusalem, they will understand why YHWH has come upon them in Judgment, and will know that YHWH Has Not Acted against them without just reason.

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 12-23** "The Righteous in Jerusalem Cannot Save it." He comments that "The question suggests itself to Ezekiel, or may have been put to him, whether the presence of righteous men in Jerusalem may not spare it from destruction. The precedent of Sodom and Gomorrah, in which Abraham's plea on this ground was accepted by [YHWH] (**Genesis 18:23ff.** [that is, if a certain number of righteous people are found in Sodom, it will not be destroyed]), may have been in his mind. The doctrine preached both by Jeremiah and Ezekiel is that each person must suffer for his sins and none can make expiation for him." (P. 78)

And we wonder what Ezekiel would make of his contemporary prophet, Deutero-Isaiah, with His insistence that YHWH wants the exiles to become suffering servants, bearing the sins of others (**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**)? What do you think?

We observe that over against this conviction, that no one can bear the sins of others, is the teaching of **Isaiah 53**, concerning YHWH's desire for Israel to be His "suffering-servant," bearing the sins of a sinful world—a passage that Jesus of Nazareth beautifully fulfilled, giving his life for "the world," bearing the sins of others.

Reimer comments on **14:12-23** that "Five clearly formed paragraphs make up this oracle: the first four detail four modes of Divine Judgment on Jerusalem: famine (**verses 12-14**); beasts (**verses 15-16**); sword (**verses 17-18**); and pestilence (**verses 19-20**). The final paragraph provides a summary and holds open the possibility of a remnant (**verses 21-23**)...For this oracle's holding up righteous heroes of the past, compare **Jeremiah 15:1**...For its implied hope that a few righteous might suffice to save many wicked, compare **Genesis 18:22-33**...

(continued...)

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying:

⁵³³(...continued)

“The implicit assertion that each individual is held to account for his or her own life (the summary phrase of each paragraph here) was an implicit theme of **Ezekiel** from the start (see **Ezekiel 3:16-21**) and will see its fullest treatment in **chapter 18**.” (P. 1517)

Darr entitles **Ezekiel 14:12-15:8** “Jerusalem Is Doomed! Test Case and Metaphor.”

She comments in her overview that “**Ezekiel 14:12-23** and **15:1-8** buttress the prophet’s ongoing argument that Yahweh has justly doomed the sinful inhabitants of Jerusalem to destruction.”

She states that the test case, “first introduced in **verse 14**, insists that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job—three legendary paragons of piety—were within Ezekiel’s hypothetical land, they could save only their own lives by their righteousness...

“The second figure of this triad, Daniel, is more elusive, though the company he keeps suggests that he, too, should be sought among exemplary figures of antiquity. In the opinion of many scholars, we find him in the Canaanite Epic of Aqhat, discovered in the 1930s among the ruins of ancient Ugarit (a city-state located near the Mediterranean coast of northern Syria and destroyed soon after 1200 B.C. E.). This epic poem tells of king Danel, a man of meticulous virtue and devotion, favored by the Gods... Danel appears at significant junctures within the story, ever the model of piety and responsibility...Block insists that Ezekiel was referring to Daniel, the hero of the biblical book bearing his name. From a purely critical perspective, this option must be ruled out. The **Scroll of Daniel** was not composed until centuries after **Ezekiel’s Scroll** was completed...

“With Ezekiel’s assertion that three such virtuous men could save only themselves from God’s punishment, the problem of Theodicy—Divine justice—emerges. This is so, in part, because ancient Israel’s traditions do not speak with one voice about the possibility of salvation for the many based on the righteousness of a few.” See the story of Abraham and YHWH’s dialogue in **Genesis 18:16-19:29**. “**Ezekiel 14:13-20**, like **Genesis 18:23-26**, affirms that the righteous do not perish with the wicked. But it rules out any possibility that God might forgive / סַרַּף a land’s sinful inhabitants for the sake of its pious residents.” (Pp. 110-111)

See **Jeremiah 15:1-3** with its close similarity to this text in Ezekiel, and its statement that even if Moses and Samuel were present in Jerusalem, YHWH would not forgive the city’s sinful inhabitants. It seems obvious that neither Jeremiah nor Ezekiel believe in the idea of a “saving remnant”!

14:13 בְּן־אָדָם אֶרֶץ כִּי תַחַטֵּא־לִי

Son of Adam / Humanity, a land that will sin against Me

לְמַעַל-מֵעַל

to truly act faithlessly;

וְנִטִּיתִי יָדִי עָלֶיהָ

and I will stretch out My hand against it,

וְשָׁבַרְתִּי לָהּ מִטֶּה־לֶחֶם

and I will break for it a supply of bread / food,

וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי־בָהּ רָעָב

and I will send forth against it a famine

וְהִכַרְתִּי מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה:

and I will cut off from it human and animal!

14:14 וְהָיוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה בְּתוֹכָהּ

And there will be / should there be these three men in its midst--

נֹחַ (דָּנִיֵּאל) [דָּנִיֵּאל] וְאִיּוֹב

Noach, Daniyyel and Iyyobh / Noah, Daniel and Job;

הֵמָּה בְּצִדְקָתָם

These, in / by their righteousness

יִנְצְלוּ נַפְשָׁם

will / would deliver their innermost-being--⁵³⁴

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English translations all make additions to the text to make it say these three righteous men could only save their own innermost-beings, although the Hebrew text does not say this.

(continued...)

⁵³⁴(...continued)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) like the Hebrew text, makes no such addition to the text: καὶ ἐὰν ὧσιν οἱ τρεῖς ἄνδρες οὗτοι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῆς Νωε καὶ Δανιηλ καὶ Ἰωβ αὐτοὶ ἐν τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ αὐτῶν σωθήσονται λέγει κύριος, “And if these three men should be in it midst, Noe and Daniel and Job, these in / by their righteousness will be saved, says Lord” [with no “only”].

Rabbi Fisch comments that these three men, “Noah, Daniel and Job are mentioned as men renowned for their piety who were saved by their righteousness while others perished in their wickedness. Noah and his family survived the universal destruction in the flood. Daniel, who lived at the time when temple and state fell, was elevated to high office in the Babylonian court because he was steadfast in his loyalty to “God, whereas his Jewish contemporaries suffered death or humiliation...Job was spared while his children met with fatal accidents. In none of these instances did their righteous character protect the wicked from their fate, and even if all these three pious men lived at one time in a sinful land, they would only be able to save themselves. A similar argument is employed in **Jeremiah 15:1**, ‘Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people.’” (Pp. 78-79)

Reimer comments on **14:14, 20**, that “Noah and Job are well-known righteous men of the past (see **Genesis 6:9; Job 1:1**). Noah saved only his family; the protection of Job’s piety did not even extend that far..

“The identity of Daniel (compare also **Ezekiel 28:3**) has been disputed. Traditionally, he is identified with the hero of the **Scroll of Daniel**, a contemporary of Ezekiel, who served in the court of Babylon and then of Persia [long after the time of Ezekiel]. His reputation might have spread widely enough by this time for Ezekiel to expect his audience to recognize him (compare **Daniel 2:1**, which is well before Ezekiel’s call, although it is hard to say whether he was widely known outside the court, and Ezekiel was not in Babylon itself)..

“Others suggest, however, that the Daniel mentioned here should be identified with an ancient sage of the Syrian region, known from the Ugaritic texts as a just and pious ruler (which seems also to fit well with **Ezekiel 28:3**, addressed to Tyre. This is suggested by the fact that the other two figures, Noah and Job, are from the distant past, and are not Israelite (contrast **Jeremiah 15:1**, using Moses and Samuel).” (Pp. 1517-18)

We add that although the **Scroll of Daniel** consistently spells the name **דַּנְיֵאל**, in both Aramaic and Hebrew, in the **Scroll of Ezekiel** it is spelled according to the *kethibh*, “what is written,” **דַּנְיֵאֵל**, and according to the *qere*, “to be read,” **דַּנְיֵאל**, in all three occurrences in the **Scroll**. Reimer does not mention this difference between the *kethibh* and the *qere* in **Ezekiel**,
(continued...)

נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

14:15 לֹו־חַיָּה רָעָה אֶעְבִּיר בְּאֶרֶץ

What if I should cause evil wild beast(s) to pass through the land?⁵³⁵

וְשִׁכַלְתָּהּ

and it should bereave it–

וְהָיְתָה שְׂמָמָה

and it should become a devastation / waste,

מִבְּלִי עוֹבֵר מִפְּנֵי הַחַיָּה:

from no one passing through because of the wild beasts' presence?

14:16 שְׁלֹשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה בְּתוֹכָהּ

These three men, (being) in its midst,

⁵³⁴(...continued)

which complicates the conclusion that should be drawn. He simply notes that “many students of **Ezekiel** think it points to the Daniel in Ugaritic texts.” (P. 1518) We venture the conclusion that the original Hebrew text of **Ezekiel 14:14, 20** and **28:3**, the *kethibh*, points to the Daniel of the Ugaritic texts, while the change insisted on by the Masorettes, the *qere*, points to the Daniel of the biblical **Scroll of Daniel**.

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “It is to be noted that the four forms of punishment which are enumerated correspond to those threatened in **Leviticus 26**.” (P. 79)

See **Leviticus 26:14-33**, where the four forms of punishment are mentioned: # 1, **verses 14-17** (panic, disease, crop-failure); # 2, **verses 18-20** (withholding of rain); # 3, **verses 21-22** (wild beasts); and # 4, **verses 23-26** (sword of the enemy and pestilence). **Verses 27-33** continue with even more punishments. All of these different forms of punishment could be numbered in different ways, but there is no question that the four named by Ezekiel are at the heart of **Leviticus 26**; nor is there any question that the biblical teaching is that human sinfulness results in Divine punishment.

חַי־אֲנִי נְאֻם יְהוָה

as I live⁵³⁶—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

אִם־בָּנִים וְאִם־בָּנוֹת יִצְּלוּ

if sons and if daughters they would deliver,

הֲמָה לְבָדָם יִנְצְלוּ

they alone / by themselves would be delivered,

וְהָאָרֶץ תְּהִיָּה שְׂמָמָה:

and the land would be a devastation / waste!

14:17 אוֹ חֶרֶב אָבִיא עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת

Or (if) I should bring a sword against this land,

וְאָמַרְתִּי חֶרֶב תַּעֲבֹר בְּאָרֶץ

and I should say, Sword, pass through / in the land!--

וְהִכַּרְתִּי מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה:

and I should cut off from it human(s) and animal(s);

14:18 וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה בְּתוֹכָהָּ

and these three men (were) in its midst--

חַי־אֲנִי נְאֻם יְהוָה

as I live⁵³⁷—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

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This phrase, “As I live,” on the mouth of YHWH, is of the nature of a Divine oath. It occurs many times in the **Scroll of Ezekiel**, revealing YHWH’s unalterable intention. It is used often in **Ezekiel (5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16, 19; 18:3; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; 35:6, 11)**.

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See footnote 461 for this Divine oath, “as I live” in the mouth of YHWH.

לֹא יִצְיִלוּ בָנִים וּבָנוֹת

they would not deliver sons and / or daughters;

כִּי הֵם לְבָדָם יִנְצְלוּ:

Because they by themselves they would deliver!

14:19 אוּ דְבַר אֲשַׁלַּח אֶל-הָאָרֶץ הֲהִיא

Or (if) I should send forth a plague / pestilence to / into this land,

וּשְׁפַכְתִּי חַמְתִּי עָלֶיהָ בְּדָם

and I should pour out My wrath upon it with blood,⁵³⁸

לְהַכְרִית מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה:

to cut off from it human(s) and animal(s);

14:20 וְנֹחַ (דְּנִיָּאל) וְאִיּוֹב בְּתוֹכָהּ

and Noah, Daniel,⁵³⁹ and Job (were) in its midst--

חַי-אֲנִי נֹאֵם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(As) I (am) alive--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

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Here, says Rabbi Fisch, “blood” is used in the sense of “death.” Compare **Psalm 30:10**,
What profit (is there) in my blood / death,
in my descending to (the) pit?
Will dust confess / praise You?
Will it declare Your true-faithfulness?

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The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” דְּנִיָּאל; and second, the *qere*, דְּנִיָּאל—a matter of correct spelling.

אִם־בֶּן אִם־בַּת יִצִּילוּ

whether a son, whether a daughter—they would (not) deliver!⁵⁴⁰

הִמָּה בְּצִדְקָתָם יִצִּילוּ נַפְשָׁם:

They, by their righteousness, would save their innermost-being / life.

14:21 כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

אִךְ כִּי־אַרְבַּעַת שְׁפָטַי | הָרָעִים

Also if / when My four judgments (on) the evils—

חֶרֶב וְרָעַב וְחַיָּה רָעָה וְדָבָר

sword and famine, and evil beasts and pestilence--⁵⁴¹

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Hilmer comments that “When [YHWH] comes in judgment against a nation or people, no one can count of another’s righteousness—not even that of his parents—to deliver him.” (P. 1244)

541

Hilmer says to “compare the ‘four horsemen of the **Apocalypse**’ (see **Revelation 6:1-8**, and especially **Revelation 6:8**.” (P. 1244)

καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἶδὸν ἵππος χλωρός,

And I looked, and behold, a pale horse!

καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ ὄνομα αὐτῷ [ὁ] θάνατος,

And the one seated upon it’s name was [the] death;

καὶ ὁ ᾗδης ἠκολούθει μετ’ αὐτοῦ

and the hades followed with him.

καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐξουσία ἐπὶ τὸ τέταρτον τῆς γῆς

And they were given authority over the fourth of the earth,

ἀποκτεῖναι ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ καὶ ἐν λιμῷ

to kill with sword and with famine

καὶ ἐν θανάτῳ καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν θηρίων τῆς γῆς.

and with death [pestilence] and by the wild beasts of the earth.

שִׁלַּחְתִּי אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַם

I sent forth to / upon Jerusalem

לְהַכְרִית מִמֶּנָּה אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה:

to cut off from it human and animal--⁵⁴²

14:22 וְהָיָה נֹתְרָה־בָּהּ פְּלִטָּה

and look--there was left remaining in it an escapee / escaped remnant--⁵⁴³

הַמּוּצָאִים בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת

the ones being found--sons and daughters--

הֵנָּם יוֹצְאִים אֵלֵיכֶם

look at them, going forth to you (plural)

וְרֵאִיתֶם אֶת־דְּרָכָם וְאֶת־עֲלִילוֹתָם

and you (plural) will see their way, and their practices.

וְנִחַמְתֶּם עַל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר הֵבֵאתִי עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם

And you will be consoled / comforted⁵⁴⁴ for the evil which I brought upon Jerusalem,

542

Rabbi Fisch comments, “If when only one of the four punishments is inflicted upon a land the righteous are unable to save the wicked, how much truer will this be in the case of Jerusalem which is to suffer all four (compare **verse 17**)!” (P. 80)

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “In apparent contradiction to what has been said, a part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will survive the catastrophe; but they will be allowed to live to serve a Divine purpose. ‘If some of the wicked in Jerusalem escape it is with a special design, viz. that those spared should reveal their great wickedness to the earlier exiles among whom they shall come, and thus show how inevitable the destruction of the city was’ (Davidson).” (P. 80)

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(continued...)

את כל־אשר הבאתי עליה:

—all that I brought upon her (Jerusalem).

14:23 וּנְחַמְנוּ אֶתְכֶם כִּי־תִרְאוּ

And they will console / comfort you when you will see

אֶת־דְּרָכְכֶם וְאֶת־עֲלִילוֹתֵיכֶם

their way, and their practices.

וַיֵּדְעוּתְּכֶם כִּי לֹא חִנָּם עָשִׂיתִי

And you will know that not without cause have I done

את כל־אשר־עָשִׂיתִי בָּהּ

all that I did against her (Jerusalem)--⁵⁴⁵

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

⁵⁴⁴(...continued)

The phrase here is וּנְחַמְנוּתְּכֶם, **wenichamtem**, from the root נחם, which can mean either “be sorry” or “be consoled / comforted.” From the context it seems obvious that seeing the character of the survivors will enable those witnessing them to realize how appropriate YHWH’s visitation in punishment has been. Rabbi Fisch comments that “The more recent arrivals will bring with them evidence of their wickedness which had been the cause of Jerusalem’s downfall. From this it will be evident that what had happened was the judgment of God, and the older captives will take comfort in that fact since it will teach them that by loyalty to Him they would escape a similar fate.” (Pp. 80-81)

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Hilmer comments that “The exiles in Babylon will be consoled when they see the wickedness of those brought to Babylon from Jerusalem; they will know that [YHWH’s] judgment on the city was just.” (P. 1244) Matties comments that Ezekiel “concludes by limiting salvation...to only those with righteousness (Hebrew *tsedaqa*) and moral integrity that corresponds to [YHWH’s] character...Ezekiel’s audience is invited to recognize the complicity of these survivors in the sins of Jerusalem and to acknowledge that [YHWH’s] action has not been arbitrary.” (Pcxz . 1174)