

**Jerusalem As a Wayward Adopted Daughter and Prostitute Wife,
Contrasted with Her Sisters, Samaria and Sodom (16:1-63):**

16:1 And YHWH's word was / came to me, saying: 16:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, make known to Jerusalem her disgusting things! 16:3 And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to Jerusalem: Your origin, and your kindred, are out of / from the Canaanite land--your father, the Amorite; and your mother, Chittite! 16:4 And your kindred--on a day of giving birth to you, he did not cut your umbilical cord, and you were not washed with water for cleansing; and you were certainly not salted, and you were certainly not diapered. 16:5 Not an eye looked upon you with pity, to do for you one of these things for you, to spare / have compassion on you. And you were cast out to the open field in loathing for your inner-most being, on a day of giving birth to you! 16:6 And I passed by over / beside you; and I saw you, kicking out in your bloods. And I said to you, in your bloods, Live! And I said to you, in your bloods, Live! 16:7 Ten thousand (things), like growth of the field, I gave you; and you grew, and became tall, and you came into ornaments of ornaments--breasts became firm, and (pubic?) hair grew abundantly--and you (were) naked and bare. 16:8 And I passed by over you; and I saw you. And look! (It was) your time--a time for loves. And I spread out My wing over you, and I covered your nakedness; and I swore to you, and I entered into covenant with you--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--and you became Mine! 16:9 And I washed you with the waters, and I rinsed off your (menstrual ?) blood from upon you, and I anointed you with the oil. 16:10 And I clothed you (with) embroidered cloth, and I sandaled you (with) leather; and I wrapped you with fine linen, and covered you with silk. 16:11 And you were ornamented / adorned (with) ornament(s)--I placed bracelets on your hands, and a chain-necklace upon your neck; 16:12 And I placed a ring in your nose, and rings in your ears, and a crown of beauty on your head. 16:13 And you ornamented yourself (with) gold and silver; and your clothing was fine linen, and silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. And you became beautiful, more and more exceedingly! And you advanced into a queen / a woman exercising kingship. 16:14 And it went out for you--a name / fame among the nations, for your beauty; because it (was) complete / perfect, with My splendor, which I placed over you--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 16:15 And you trusted in your beauty, and prostituted by your name / fame! And you poured out your prostitutions upon everyone passing by--it was his! 16:16 And you took some of your clothes, and you made for yourself high-places with different fabrics, and you prostituted upon them, without income and without enduring! 16:17 And you took your beautiful ornament(s), from my gold and my silver, which I gave to you, and you made for yourself male images, and prostituted with them! 16:18 And you took your embroidered clothes and covered them, and My oil and My sweet-smelling smoke you gave / offered before them! 16:19 And My food, which I gave to you--fine flour, and oil, and honey I had fed you--and you gave it before them, for a soothing smell, and it was--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH! 16:20 And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore for me, and you sacrificed them to them to eat / devour! Was it the least of your prostitutions? 16:21 And you slaughtered my children! And you gave them by causing them to pass through (fire) to them! 16:22 And with all your disgusting actions, and your prostitutions, you did not remember your youth's days, when you were naked and bare,

kicking out in your bloods! 16:23 And it happened, after all your evil—Woe! Woe to you!—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH! 16:24 And you built for yourself a mound, and you made for yourself a high-place in every city-square; 16:25 at the head of every street you built your high-place, and made your beauty disgusting, and opened wide your legs to everyone passing by, and multiplied your prostitutions. 16:26 And you prostituted with the sons of Egypt, your large of flesh (penis) neighbors, and multiplied your prostitution, to provoke Me! 16:27 And look: I stretched out My hand over you, and I withdrew your allowance; and I gave you to (the) desire of those who hate you--daughters of the Philistines, the ones made ashamed by your wickedness. 16:28 Then you prostituted with Assyria's sons, since you were not satisfied / since your satisfaction was not; and you prostituted (with) them, and even (so) you were not satisfied. 16:29 Then you multiplied your prostitution to the Land of Canaan, (and) to Chaldea; but / and even with this you were not satisfied! 16:30 How feeble is your heart!—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—in your doing all these things, (the) work of a domineering prostitute-woman! 16:31 When you built your mound at the head of every way, and you made your high place in every city-plaza—and you were not like the prostitute, to scorn (your) pay! 16:32 The woman, the adulteress, who instead of her husband will receive strangers; 16:33 to every prostitute they will give a gift; but / and you, you gave your gifts to all your lovers, and you bribed them to come into you from all around with your prostitutions! 16:34 And there was a difference in you from the women in your prostitutions; and you afterwards--you were not prostituted—and by your giving pay, and pay was not given to you—and you were for a difference! 16:35 Therefore, prostitute, hear YHWH's word! 16:36 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Because of your copper being poured out, and you uncovered your nakedness in your prostitutions upon / for your lovers, and upon / for all your disgusting images, and according to the bloods of your children which you gave to them. 16:37 Therefore, look at Me—gathering all your lovers, over whom you were sweet, and everyone you loved; above all whom you hated; and I will gather them over you, from all around, and I will uncover your nakedness to them, and they will see all your nakedness! 16:38 And I will judge you (with) the judicial decisions of adulteresses and women shedding blood; and I will give you blood, wrath, and bitter jealousy. 16:39 And I will place you in their hand; and they will tear down your mound(s); and they will break down your high places; and they will strip off your clothes; and they will take your beautiful ornaments; and they will leave you silent, naked and bare. 16:40 And they will raise up an assembly against you; and they will stone you with the stone(s); and they will cut you down with their swords; 16:41 and they will burn down your houses with the fire; and they will execute judgments against you, in the eyes of many women; and I will make you stop from (being) a prostitute; and also you will no longer give pay (to your lovers). 16:42 Then I will cause My wrath against you to rest; and My jealousy will turn away from you; and I will be quiet; and I will no longer be prodded to anger. 16:43 Because you did not remember the days of your youth; and you enraged / pained Me in all these (things); and also I—behold! I have placed your way on (your) head!—(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--and have you not done the wickedness by all your disgusting actions? 16:44 Look— everyone who makes a proverb concerning you will make a proverb saying, Like her mother, her daughter! 16:45 You are the daughter of your mother, one hating her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who hated their husbands and their children. Your (plural) mother is a Hittite, and your father, an Amorite. 16:46 And your big sister—she is Samaria and her daughters--she

who lives upon your left; and your sister who is smaller than you, who lives on your right—Sodom and her daughters. 16:47 And have you not walked in their ways, and practiced their disgusting actions? He was barely disgusted (with you), and you have acted corruptly more than they, in all your ways! 16:48 As I live--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH— she did not do / act, Sodom your sister, she and her daughters, just like you did / acted, you and your daughters! 16:49 Look—this was Sodom, your sister’s iniquity: exaltation / pride, plenty of bread, and there was quietness (with) ease for her and for her daughters; and (the) hand of (the) poor and needy she did not take strong hold of! 16:50 And they became haughty, and they did a disgusting thing before me. And I removed them, just as I saw. 16:51 And Samaria--like the half of your sin, she did not sin! And you multiplied your disgusting actions beyond them; and you justified your sisters by all your disgusting actions which you did! 16:52 You too, bear your disgrace by which you intervened for your sisters by your sins; because you did more abominably than they, they will be justified more than you. And you too, be ashamed, and bear your disgrace since you made your sisters appear righteous! 16:53 And I will return their captivity, those taken captive (from) Sodom and her daughters, and those taken captive from Samaria and her daughters; and those taken captive, your captives, in their midst, 16:54 so that you may bear your disgrace, and may be humiliated on account of all you have done, when you have mercy on them. 16:55 And your sisters, Sodom and her daughters will return to their former state; and Samaria and her daughters will return to their former state; and you, and your daughters, will return to your former state! 16:56 And did not Sodom your sister, become the subject of your conversation in your mouth, in a day of your pride, 16:57 before your wickedness was uncovered? Like (in) a time of reproach of Syria’s daughters, and all those around her, the daughters of the Philistines, the ones treating you with despite from every side--16:58 your wickedness, and your disgusting actions-- you lifted them up (yourselves)!—(It is) a saying of YHWH! 16:59 Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: And I will do to you just as you did, who despised an oath, to violate a covenant! 16:60 But / and I will remember, I (will)!—My covenant with you in (the) days of your youth, and I will cause to stand for you a long-lasting covenant! 16:61 And you will remember your ways, and you will be ashamed, when you take your sisters who are bigger than you to the ones smaller than you, and I will give them to you for daughters, and not from your covenant. 16:62 And I, I will cause My covenant with you to stand; and you will know that I (am) YHWH; 16:63 so that you will remember and be ashamed, and there will not again be for you an opening of mouth, because of your insult / reproach, when I cover over for you all that you did—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!⁵⁵⁴

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Rabbi Fisch comments on **chapter 16** that “Meditating upon the coming end of the kingdom, Ezekiel reviews the people’s past history under the form of an allegory and shows how it inevitably leads up to the coming doom. The nation is represented as a female infant born in the open field and abandoned there immediately after birth...A Benefactor ([YHWH]), passing by, saves her life and cares for her until she grows to fair womanhood. He then marries her and lavishes upon her many tokens of love; but she proves unfaithful to Him...

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“So has it been with Israel. His national birth took place in Egypt in the midst of oppression and servitude. [YHWH] had compassion on the suffering community, sustained them in their affliction, delivered them from their persecutors and took them to be His people. But they abandoned Him for foreign Gods and must suffer the fate of the adulteress. Nevertheless, the nation will not be destroyed. [YHWH]’s ancient covenant with Israel, broken by them, will be replaced by a new covenant of everlasting duration.” (P. 83)

In the Jewish **Mishnah, Megillah 4:10**, Rabbi Eleazar forbids the reading of this chapter--and many a Christian can testify that they have never heard the chapter read or explained in a Christian worship service or **Bible** study class! Why? Because we sense that it uses too graphic of sexual language!

But what this truly shows is that we are afraid to discuss human sexuality in the very open and straight-forward way that is common in the biblical materials. A good example of this hesitation is the **New International's** translation of **16:26**, where the Egyptians are called Israel's "lustful neighbors," while the Hebrew text says they are "great-of-flesh," meaning Jerusalem's Egyptian lovers had larger penises than YHWH!

We question Rabbi Fisch's understanding that this chapter came as a fruit of Ezekiel's "meditation." We say the chapter is another of Ezekiel's vision-stories, given by [YHWH] to Ezekiel. Like all visions and dreams, this vision-story has some puzzling elements--but still, it is a powerful story, with YHWH as an orphan-Father, and loving Husband, Who suffers the sexual betrayal of His wife--who well deserves the death penalty, but who is nevertheless taken back by YHWH, in a new covenant of marriage. And what a powerful vision-story it is--one that could have well been acted out as a drama before the leaders of the exiles, or before the people of Jerusalem. We say this vision-story demonstrates the "triumph of grace in the theology of **Ezekiel**"!

Evelyn Darr comments that "Ezekiel knew what contemporary philosophers and literary critics now acknowledge: Metaphors convey ideas that can be stated in no other way..."

"Ezekiel has pressed upon his exilic audience (and his readers) the impending, inevitable, and fully justified destruction of Jerusalem many times in preceding chapters. The message of **chapter 16** is not new. Neither is the method. In **chapter 15**, the prophet took up a familiar vine metaphor in order to convey to his audience, in an unanticipated way, the uselessness of Jerusalem's inhabitants. So also in the present chapter, this 'master of metaphors' both adopts and adapts the female city imagery of his ancient Near Eastern world in order, in an extraordinarily sustained manner (63 verses), not only to cast Jerusalem's history in the most scandalous of terms, but also to underscore Yahweh's mercy, to justify 'his' (in this context, the masculine pronoun is entirely appropriate) murderous wrath and to set out a 'solution' to the problem posed
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⁵⁵⁴(...continued)

by a persistently faithless female (people). The result, as we shall see, is a powerful, painful, and deeply troubling text that demands that its modern-day readers attempt both to understand why Ezekiel spoke as he did and to consider the implications of his trope [a figurative or metaphorical use of a word or expression] for ancient and modern times.

“Ezekiel’s oracle consists of three interrelated parts. The first section (**verses 3-43**) tells the story of a hapless infant left to die in an open field by her Amorite father and Hittite Mother. Yahweh passes by her and saves her life. When the infant has grown to sexual maturity, Yahweh passes by her again, marries her, and lavishes upon her both tender care and the finest provisions. She becomes exceptionally beautiful, fit for royalty, renowned among the nations (**verses 13-14**). Tragically, however, Jerusalem forgets her humble beginnings and the husband who rescued her from certain death. She plays the harlot, worshiping male images cast from God’s silver and gold, sacrificing God’s children to them, and offering her body to passers-by at every crossroad. So vulgar are her nymphomaniacal actions that even Philistine women are offended. Moreover, her harlotries also include liaisons with other nations—Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia. In short, Ezekiel portrays her as acting in a manner that, he insists, fully justifies the exorbitant violence her husband now threatens to inflict upon her. He will summon her former lovers and shame her in their sight. They, in turn, will inflict multiple lethal wounds upon her body.

“Section two (**verses 44-58**) belittles Jerusalem via a proverb (‘Like mother, like daughter’), reiterates her odious pedigree, and contrasts her unfavorably with her two ‘sisters’—Samaria and Sodom. Here, Yahweh introduces ‘hope’ for Jerusalem’s future, yet in a way that further heaps shame upon her. So abhorrent is she that her sister cities appear righteous by comparison. They also will be restored; Sodom’s revival especially will shame Judah’s capital, since the former was regarded as the epitome of the wicked city prior to God’s exposure of Jerusalem’s own abominations.

“Section three (**verses 59-63**) begins with Yahweh’s assertion of the justice of his dealings with his adulterous wife: ‘I will deal with you as you deserve’ (**verse 59**). But then, remarkably, he promises to remember the covenant with Jerusalem established in her youth. Here, indeed, is an unexpected reconciliation, especially in the light of the murderous violence inflicted upon her in **verses 35-42**. Still, Ezekiel permits his readers no glimpse of a joyous reunion. Instead, his metaphorical narrative concludes with Jerusalem shamed and silenced in the face of her husband’s forgiveness.” (Pp.117-118)

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Reimer states that “This is both the most infamous passage in [**Ezekiel**] and also its longest single oracle. The infamy rests not only on the brutal violence it depicts but also on Ezekiel’s shocking use of sexual language...On a general level, the meaning of the passage [we call it
(continued...)]

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

16:2 בֶן־אָדָם הוֹרַע אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־תּוֹעֵבֹתֶיהָ:

Son of Adam / Humanity, make known to Jerusalem her disgusting things!⁵⁵⁶

16:3 וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹה־אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה לִירוּשָׁלַם

And you shall say,⁵⁵⁷ In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to Jerusalem: ⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁵(...continued)

another ‘vision-story,’ a powerful vignette, capable of presentation in X-rated street theater] is clear: the infidelity of Jerusalem has brought upon it the just punishment of [YHWH]...However, at the level of detail it is very complex, and the boundary between the metaphorical and the literal is sometimes difficult to discern. Some interpreters have also voiced concerns about the legitimation that might be given by this metaphorical description of the violent attacks by the adulteress's husband (**verses 37-42**). Yet it must be remembered that this is an extended metaphor portraying [YHWH]'s judgment on the nation, and it is by no means intended as a pattern for any human punishment of adultery.” (P. 1519)

What do you think? Does not the **Hebrew Bible** depict the punishment for adultery in similar terms, i.e., stoning, burning, death by the sword?

Matties likewise states that “This infamous **chapter 16**, with its shocking depiction of Israel as an orphan become prostitute, and the Lord as loving father turned vengeful lover, borders on literary violence...The theological question remains: How is it possible to depict [YHWH] as both compassionate father and vindictive partner?” (P. 1174) The same question is oftentimes asked of the **Scroll of Revelation**: How can Jesus be depicted as both the Lion and the Lamb?

⁵⁵⁶English translations often have “abominations.”

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Rabbi Fisch quotes Kimchi as remarking, “The command [say] really means ‘put into writing,’ because Ezekiel was in Babylon and the message was to be addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” (P. 84)

Throughout the **Scroll of Ezekiel** we see passages which are intended for the inhabitants of Jerusalem—and it seems that the only way that they could be heard and understood by the
(continued...)

מְכֹרֶתֶיךָ וּמִלְדֵיֶיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי

Your origin,⁵⁵⁹ and your kindred, are out of / from the Canaanite land--

אָבִיךָ הָאֱמֹרִי

your father, the Amorite;

וְאִמֶּךָ חִתִּית:

and your mother, Chittite!⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁷(...continued)

Jerusalemites is if they were written down and then sent to Jerusalem—where perhaps fellow priests / prophets could play the role of Ezekiel in the vision-story / vignette. What do you think?

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Darr comments that “Now, Ezekiel unleashes his most pernicious [damaging / hurtful] indictment of the city, taking up the conventional metaphor of Jerusalem as Yahweh’s unfaithful wife and exploiting it in ways that, almost 2,500 years later, still shock readers.

“Yahweh’s first words to Jerusalem recall her dishonorable past. Born in the land of the Canaanites to non-Israelite parents, she was denied basic post-natal care and abandoned to certain death in an open field (**verses 3b-5**). In exposing their infant, her parents ceded all legal rights to their child. Ezekiel supplies no motivation for their lack of parental compassion (**verse 5**), leaving his readers to think the worst of these parents.” (Pp. 122-123)

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Literally, “places of digging out.” Hilmer comments that “Jerusalem had a centuries-old, pre-Israelite history...and the city long resisted Israelite conquest.” (P. 1244) See **Genesis 14:18; Joshua 5:63** and **2 Samuel 5:6-9**. As Reimer puts it, “Jerusalem’s recorded history predates its takeover by David...by centuries.” (P. 1519)

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Compare the confession made in Israel at the time of offering the first-fruits: אֲרָמִי אָבִי, wandering / perishing Aramean was my ancestor (that is, Abraham / Jacob)...” (**Deuteronomy 26:5**) It is a confession that the Israelites are close kin to their Near-Eastern neighbors, just as this statement in **Ezekiel 6:3** affirms. Hilmer notes that “Like the Canaanites, the Amorites were pre-Israelite, Semitic inhabitants of Palestine...The Hittites were non-Semitic

(continued...)

16:4⁵⁶¹ וּמִוֹלְדוֹתֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם הַוּלְדָתְךָ אֶתְךָ

And your kindred--on a day of giving birth to you,

לֹא-כָרַת שְׂרָךְ

he did not cut your umbilical cord,

⁵⁶⁰(...continued)

residents of Canaan, who earlier had flourished in Asia Minor during the second millennium B.C.E.” (P. 1244)

Rabbi Fisch notes that this statement about Amorite and Hittite ancestry occurs “again in **verse 45**. These were two of the principal nations which inhabited Canaan. Hence the whole country is described as ‘the land of the Amorite’ (**Amos 2:10**) or ‘the land of the Hittites’ (**Joshua 1:4**).” (P. 84)

Eichrodt states that “Adihepa, the name of the king of Jerusalem in the Tell el Amarna letters of the second half of the fourteenth century, seems to be of Hurrite provenance. So here we receive a surprising confirmation of the prophet’s statement that the city owed its origin to a Canaanite population of mixed race...This piece of information is ingeniously woven into the tale of the foundling by the statement that its father and mother were representative of the different racial stains.” (P. 204)

Modern Israeli claims concerning “pure-blooded Jews” have been demonstrated by DNA to be unfounded. We should have known that simply by reading the **Hebrew Bible!** See **Wikipedia**, “Genetic Studies on Jews” (6/25/2020).

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Rabbi Fisch notes that “Like a newborn infant who is neglected and deprived of all the attentions which are essential to survival, Israel began his national existence in a state of helpless slavery.” (P. 84) Rabbi Fisch constantly uses male terminology for Israel in his comments, but we think Ezekiel is talking about Jerusalem, and female terminology is much more appropriate, especially since this is Ezekiel’s terminology.

For example, here in **verse 4** the word for “your birth” is מִוֹלְדוֹתֶיךָ, “your birth,” with the 2nd person feminine singular suffix. And so it is throughout the vision-story. Jerusalem is YHWH’s daughter / wife—not a “he.”

וּבְמֵי־מַיִם לֹא־רָחַצְתָּ לְמִשְׁעֵי

and you were not washed with water for cleansing,⁵⁶²

וְהַמְלַח לֹא הַמְלַחְתָּ

and you were certainly not salted,⁵⁶³

וְהַחֲתַל לֹא חֲתַלְתָּ:

and you were certainly not diapered.

16:5 לֹא־חָסָה עַלְיֶיךָ עֵין

Not an eye looked upon you with pity,

לַעֲשׂוֹת לְךָ אֶחַת מֵאֵלֶּה לְחַמְּלָה עָלֶיךָ

to do for you one of these things for you, to spare / have compassion on you.

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Rabbi Fisch notes the the Hebrew noun מִשְׁעֵי, **mish(iy)**, that occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, “has been connected with the Assyrian root *misu*, ‘to wash.’ However, its meaning seems fairly certain, since it occurs in the phrase “you were not washed for *mish(iy)*, leading to the translations “to supple thee” (make you flexible?); “to smooth you,” “to cleanse you,” “to make you clean.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ἐν ὕδατι οὐκ ἐλούσθης, “in water you were not washed.” We think the translation “for cleansing” is most appropriate.

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “It was an ancient custom to rub a child at birth to harden and strengthen its body. Dr. Masterman describes present-day customs [early 1900's] in Palestine: As soon as the navel is cut, the midwife rubs the child all over with salt, water and oil, and tightly swathes it in clothes for seven days; at the end of that time she removes the dirty clothes, washes the child and anoints it, and then wraps it up again for seven days—and so till the fortieth day (**Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement**, 1918, pp. 118-19).” (P. 84)

וַתִּשְׁלַח־נַפְשִׁי אֶל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּנֹעַל נִפְשִׁי

And you were cast out to the open field⁵⁶⁴ in loathing for your innermost being,

בְּיוֹם הַלֵּדָת אֶתְּךָ׃

on a day of giving birth to you!⁵⁶⁵

16:6⁵⁶⁶ וָאֶעְבַּר עָלֶיךָ

And I passed by over / beside you;⁵⁶⁷

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Reimer comments that “Exposure clearly implies an unwanted birth and certain death.” (P. 1519) Infanticide [or ‘abortion’] was a common practice among both the Greeks and the Romans in pre-Christian centuries. An unwanted child was simply left alongside a road, or in a field, to be devoured by scavenger birds and animals. Here, such a practice is assumed for the City of Jerusalem, even though Hilmer and others claim that such a practice was “abhorrent to Israel.” (P. 1244)

565

Matties comments that “Jerusalem suffers from three disadvantages: born in the wrong place (Canaan), of the wrong parentage (Amorite and Hittite, two of the pre-Israelite groups in the land), and is unloved. **Verse 4** describes the birth rituals. Instead of feeling devoted compassion for the newborn (**verse 5a**), her parents renounced their obligations and rejected the child by practicing infanticide (**verse 5b**).” (P. 1175)

566

Darr comments that “Against all odds, the fondling is saved when Yahweh passes by and notices her flailing about in her birth blood. With the power of the spoken word he twice commands her, ‘In your blood, live!’ M. Malul identifies Yahweh’s words as a formal declaration of legal adoption. The scenario is reminiscent of a situation legislated in #185 of the Old Babylonian law code of Hammurabi, which reads: ‘If a man has adopted an infant while still in its amniotic fluid and raised him up, that adopted child may never be reclaimed.’” (P. 123)

567

Rabbi Fisch comments that “As against all others who looked with pitiless eyes upon the babe left to die, God had compassion on it and resolved that it should live.” (P. 85)

Eichrodt, seeing the unwanted baby girl rescued by YHWH, as the story of Jerusalem, states, “the city of [YHWH], and with it the people of [YHWH], already owe their very existence to an act of grace which was not grounded upon any superiority or merit on the part of the object
(continued...)

וְאָרְאָךְ מִתְבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶּיךָ

and I saw you, kicking out in your bloods.⁵⁶⁸

וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי

And I said to you, in your bloods, Live!⁵⁶⁹

וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי:

And I said to you, in your bloods, Live!⁵⁷⁰

16:7⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷(...continued)

of that grace. Indeed, this origin from heathen blood presents a remarkable contrast to the dogmatic theory of being children of Abraham, used by the rest of Israel as a proof of their claim to be a peculiar people.” (P. 205)

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Translations of the last phrase in this line vary, from “polluted in your own blood,” to “wallowing in your blood,” to “flailing about in your blood,” to “kicking about in your blood,” to “kicking on the ground in your blood,” to πεφυρμένῃ ἐν τῷ αἵματι σου, “having been mixed in / with your blood.” NETS has “fouled by your own blood.”

⁵⁶⁹

Rabbi Fisch states that “The literal interpretation is, although the child was so repellent a sight, God decreed that it should live.” (P. 85) That is, the new-born baby girl, considered worthless by its parents, is considered precious, of great value in YHWH’s eyes, and He commands the child to live!

⁵⁷⁰

Note the repetition of this line,

וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי

And I said to you in your blood, Live!

וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶּיךָ חַיִּי:

And I said to you in your blood, Live!

Why do you think this line is repeated? We think it is for the sake of emphasis. Think about it! That’s the Divine attitude towards abortion! And shouldn’t that be our attitude?

⁵⁷¹

(continued...)

רַבָּבָה כְּצִמְחַת הַשָּׂדֶה נִתְתִּיךְ

ten thousand (things), like growth of the field, I gave you;⁵⁷²

וַתִּרְבִּי וַתִּגְדְּלִי

and you grew, and became tall,

⁵⁷¹(...continued)

Translations of **verse 7** vary:

King James, “I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy* breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou *wast* naked and bare.”

Tanakh, “I let you grow like the plants of the field; and you continued to grow up until you attained to womanhood, until your breasts became firm and your hair sprouted. You were still naked and bare ⁸ when I passed by you *again*...”

New Revised Standard, “and grow up like a plant of the field.” You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.”

New International, “I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew and developed and entered puberty. Your breasts had formed and your hair had grown, yet you were stark naked.”

New Jerusalem, “and I made you grow like the grass of the fields. You developed, you grew, you reached marriageable age. Your breasts became firm and your hair grew richly, but you were stark naked.”

Rahlf's, “...From your blood is life; grow up, just like the sprouting of the field I have rendered you.” And you grew up and became tall and entered into cities of cities; your breasts were set right, and your hair grew, but you were naked and disgraced.”

And we wonder what the vision-story means at this point. Did YHWH not adopt the baby girl and raise it in His home? Did He let her grow up on her own, “in the wild”? The vision-story seems to imply this. What do you think? Was it not until she was at the age for marriage that YHWH again took notice of her?

⁵⁷²

Rabbi Fisch thinks that this wording applies to the nation of Israel rather than to the young woman: “Under God’s care, the nation increased numerically (compare **Exodus 1:7, 12**).” (P. 85) It is difficult to disagree with this in this line, but immediately the vision-story returns to the imagery of a young woman.

וַתְּבֹאִי בְעֲרֵי עֲדָיִים

and you came into ornaments of ornaments--⁵⁷³

שָׁרִים נָכְנוּ

breasts became firm,

וּשְׁעָרֶיךָ צִמְּחוּ

and (pubic?) hair grew abundantly--

וְאַתָּה עָרְמָה וְעָרְיָה:

and you (were) naked and bare.

16:8⁵⁷⁴

573

Translations of this phrase **בְּעֲרֵי עֲדָיִים**, **ba(adhiy (adhayim)**, literally, “in the ornaments of ornaments,” vary, from “and thou art come to excellent ornaments:” to “until you attained to womanhood,” to “and arrived at full womanhood,” to “and entered puberty” to “you reached marriageable age,” to *καὶ εἰσηλθεις εἰς πόλεις πόλεων*, “and you entered into cities of cities.”

And we wonder—does the **King James** translation consider firm breasts and pubic hair “excellent ornaments”? At least it uses the Hebrew words for “ornament” in its translation. And where did the Greek translator get “you entered into cities of cities”?

Darr comments that the Hebrew text, “ornament of ornaments” means “‘the loveliest of ornaments’: well-formed breasts and ‘sprouted’ pubic hair..The text invites its readers to imagine her, nubile [of a young woman, sexually attractive] and stark naked.” (P. 123)

574

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verses 8-14** that “The foundling, now grown to beautiful womanhood, is espoused (married) by her Rescuer. The relationship between God and Israel is frequently depicted by the prophets under the metaphor of marriage.” (P. 86)

Darr states that “Now, Yahweh passes by her again, and, seeing that she has reached the age for sexual lovemaking (**דְּדִיִּים**, **dodhiym**; see also **Proverbs 7:18**; **Song of Solomon 4:10**; **7:10-11**), spreads the edge (literally ‘wing’) of his cloak over her, covering her nakedness. The significance of this gesture is apparent from **Ruth 3:9**; it signifies ‘the establishment of a new
(continued...)

וְאָעֲבַר עָלֶיךָ וְאָרְאֶךָ

And I passed by over you; and I saw you.

וְהִנֵּה עֵת דְּלִים

And look! (It was) your time--a time for loves.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁴(...continued)

relationship and the symbolic declaration of the husband to provide for the sustenance of his future wife.’ Yahweh seals their covenant union with an oath, and she becomes his spouse.

“A detailed description of God’s tender and extravagant care for his new bride follows in **verses 9-14**...How much greater will Jerusalem’s guilt appear when, despite all that her husband has done for her, she turns faithless!” (P. 123)

⁵⁷⁵

Notice how similar this language is to that of **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**:

- 1 For the whole--a time,,
and a time, for every pleasure under the heavens.
- 2 A time for giving birth, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to root up what has been planted;
- 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break through, and a time to build;
- 4 a time to cry, and a time to rejoice;
a time to lament, and a time to to dance;
- 5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to collect stones;
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embracing;
- 6 a time to seek, and a time to destroy;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
- 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silent,, and a time to speak.
- 8 a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

YHWH could tell by looking at this beautiful, fully developed young woman that it was her time, a time for loves. The phrase here in **Ezekiel** is עֵת דְּלִים, “a time of loves”; the phrase in **Ecclesiastes** is עֵת לְאַהֲבָה, “a time to love.”

וּפָרַשׁ כַּנֹּפֵי עָלַיךָ

And I spread out My wing⁵⁷⁶ over you,

576

The noun כַּנֹּף is literally “wing,” or “extremity,” or “corner.” **English Standard Version** translates by “the corner of my garment,” **Tanakh** has “my robe,” and so likewise, most English translations. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is τὰς πτέρυγὰς μου, “the wings of mine.” Rabbi Fisch notes that this is “a biblical idiom for marriage.” (P. 86)

A man’s spreading his garment over a woman indicates his intention to marry her. Compare **Ruth 3:9**, where Ruth identifies herself to Boaz as his maid, and requests him, וּפָרַשׁתָּהּ כַּנֹּפֶךָ עַל-אִמְתִּיךָ, “and you shall spread your wing / corner over your maid.” YHWH’s spreading His wing over the young woman indicates intention to protect and care for her as His wife.

For other occurrences of the Hebrew word for “wing,” in terms of a “garment,” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see: **Numbers 15:38, 38; 1 Samuel 15:27; 24:5, 6, 12, 12; Jeremiah 2:34; Ezekiel 5:3; Haggai 2:12, 12; Zechariah 8:23**. All of these have to do with the corner or wing of a garment / robe, but have no connotation concerning marriage.

But the following three passages from **Deuteronomy** should be seen together, the first simply having to do with the corners / wings of man’s robe, while the next two passages use “wing / corner” with connotations of marriage, just as is true in **Ruth 3:9** and also here in **Ezekiel 16:8**.

Deuteronomy 22:12,

גְּדֵלִים תַּעֲשֶׂה-לָּךְ

Twisted threads / tassels you shall make for yourself

עַל-אַרְבַּע כַּנְּפוֹת כְּסוּתֶךָ

upon (the) four wings / corners of your covering,

אֲשֶׁר תִּכְסֶה-בָּהּ:

with which you cover yourself. (Compare **Numbers 15:38**)

Deuteronomy 23:1,

לֹא-יִקַּח אִישׁ אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ אָבִיו

A man shall not take / marry his father’s wife (probably his step-mother);

וְלֹא יִגְלֶה כַּנֹּף אָבִיו:

and he shall not uncover his father’s wing / corner!

(We take this to mean that his father’s wife is the one who gets under his father’s “wing / corner,” his covering at night. A son is forbidden sexual relation with his step-mother.)

Deuteronomy 27:20,

(continued...)

וְאֶכְסָה עֲרוֹתֶיךָ

and I covered your nakedness;⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶(...continued)

אָרוּר שֹׁכֵב עִם־אִשְׁתּוֹ אָבִיו

Cursed (is) one who sleeps / has sexual intercourse with his father's wife,

כִּי גִלָּה כַּנֶּף אָבִיו

because he uncovered his father's wing!

(That is, the father's wife is called the father's "wing," since she sleeps under the corner / wing of his robe; and the son is forbidden sexual relationship with her.)

וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן:

And all the people will say, Amen!

Ezekiel 16:8a, b (here),

וְאֶפְרַשׁ כַּנְּפִי עֲלֶיךָ

And I spread out My wing over you,

וְאֶכְסָה עֲרוֹתֶיךָ

and I covered your nakedness;

(that is, YHWH spread the corner / wing of His garment / robe over the young woman, thereby covering her nakedness—meaning her nakedness belonged to Him, and she became His wife—came under His protection. YHWH did to this young woman what Boaz did to Ruth—according to this vignette / vision-story!)

577

The phrase לְגַלּוֹת עֲרוּוָה, literally “to uncover nakedness,” is a Hebrew euphemism for “to engage in sexual intercourse.” For its occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

Exodus 20:26, You shall not go up on steps upon My altar, so that your nakedness will not be uncovered upon it!, probably meaning that your nakedness not be seen by surrounding worshipers; but sexual implications are nearby in Canaanite religion, in which “sacred prostitution” was commonly practiced as part of the ritual of religion;

Leviticus 18:6, uncovering a family member's nakedness for sexual intercourse;

Leviticus 18:7, the nakedness of father and mother not to be uncovered—forbidding sexual intercourse with one's mother; perhaps implying homosexual intercourse with one's father; but this is not clear;

Leviticus 18:8, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's step-mother;

Leviticus 18:9, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's sister;

Leviticus 18:10, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's granddaughter;

Leviticus 18:11, forbidding sexual intercourse with a step-sister or full sister;

(continued...)

⁵⁷⁷(...continued)

- Leviticus 18:12**, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's aunt on the father's side;
Leviticus 18:13, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's aunt on the mother's side;
Leviticus 18:14, forbidding sexual intercourse with an uncle's wife, possibly forbidding homosexual intercourse with one's uncle;
Leviticus 18:15, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's daughter-in-law;
Leviticus 18:16, forbidding sexual intercourse with one's sister-in-law;
Leviticus 18:17, forbidding sexual intercourse with a woman and her daughter, leading to confusion;
Leviticus 18:18, forbidding taking of one's wife's sister as a rival wife during the wife's life-time;
Leviticus 18:19, forbidding sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period;
20:18, similar;
Isaiah 47:3, symbolical—the daughter of Babylon is summoned to get ready to be raped;
Ezekiel 16:36, 37, Jerusalem, the wanton prostitute, has had sexual intercourse with her lovers;
Ezekiel 23:10, the Assyrians uncovered Samaria's nakedness—having sexual intercourse with her;
Ezekiel 23:18, Jerusalem uncovered her nakedness—had sexual intercourse—with the Babylonians;
Ezekiel 23:29, Jerusalem's nakedness was uncovered in her prostitutions.

The opposite of “uncovering nakedness,” meaning to have sexual intercourse with, is “to cover nakedness,” which means, we think, to claim the one covered as one's own, and taking responsibility for providing for the one covered. Rabbi Fisch states that the phrase means that “God provided for Israel's [we say, ‘the young woman's’] needs.” (P. 86) See **Hosea 2:11**^{Heb / 9}^{Eng},

לְכֵן אָשׁוּב

Therefore I will return,

וְלִקְחֹתִי רְגְנִי בְעֵתוֹ

and I will take (away) My grain in its season,

וְתִירוֹשֵׁי בְמוֹעֲדוֹ

and my new wine in its appointed time;

וְהִצַּלְתִּי צֹמְרִי וּפְשָׁתִי לְכֶסֶת אֶת-עֲרוֹתָהּ:

and I will snatch away My wool and My linen (used) to cover her nakedness.

וַאֲשַׁבַּע לָךְ

and I swore to you,⁵⁷⁸

וַאֲבֹא בְּבְרִית אִתְּךָ

and I entered into covenant with you--⁵⁷⁹

נֶאֱמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--⁵⁸⁰

וַתְּהִי לִי:

and you became Mine!⁵⁸¹

578

What do you think it was that YHWH swore to the young woman? We think YHWH was entering into a marriage covenant with the young woman, swearing His loyalty to her, to be her Husband and to provide for all her needs.

579

Hilmer comments that “Since the maiden symbolizes Jerusalem, this does not refer to the Sinai covenant but to marriage as a covenant.” (P. 1245)

See **Malachi 2:14 b, c, d**, YHWH has a complaint against the Israelites,

עַל כִּי־הָיְתָה הָעֵד בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין אִשְׁתְּ נְעוּרֶיךָ כִּי

because YHWH was witness / testified between you and (the) wife of your youth,

אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה בִּגְדַתָּהּ

against whom you acted faithlessly—

וְהִיא חֲבֵרְתְּךָ וְאִשְׁתְּ בְרִיתְךָ:

and she (was) your companion, and wife of your covenant.

(Here in **Ezekiel 16**, YHWH is entering into just such a covenant with this young woman, swearing to be faithful to her and provide for her.)

580

Ezekiel claims that this matter of YHWH’s marriage to the young woman (Jerusalem) is not something he has made up, but is something that has been revealed to him by YHWH Himself.

581

(continued...)

16:9 וְאַרְחֻצֶנּוּ בַּמַּיִם

And I washed you with the waters,⁵⁸²

וְאִשְׁטַף דְּמִיךָ מֵעַלֶיךָ

and I rinsed off your (menstrual ?) blood from upon you,⁵⁸³

וְאִסַּכְךָ בַּשֶּׁמֶן:

and I anointed you with the oil.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸¹(...continued)

Eichrodt comments that “The little savage grows into a young woman with whom her Rescuer falls in love. At a second meeting, which takes place accidentally, the girl, who has nothing but her natural beauty, is wooed and won by her Benefactor, taken out of her poverty and loneliness, and elevated to the status of a wife and consort. He lovingly covers her nakedness with His Own garment, and by a vow and contract accords to her the full legal status of a wife.” (Pp. 205-06)

582

Rabbi Fisch notes that this is “descriptive of the purification of a bride as a preparation for her marriage.” Compare **Ruth 3:3a**, where the wise mother-in-law instructs her daughter-in-law how to prepare for meeting her future husband: “And you must wash, and anoint yourself (with perfume)...”

583

And we ask, “What blood?” Is this vision-story thinking of the blood the unwanted baby girl was wallowing in at her birth (**verse 8**)? Surely that was too long ago, now that she has reached maturity. Can it be her menstrual blood, that she has just now begun to experience, and has no knowledge of sanitary measures to take? We suspect that this last is the answer. What do you think?

584

This matter of anointing, especially anointing with (olive) oil, is reflected in numerous passages from the **Hebrew Bible: Genesis 28:18; Exodus 25:6; 28:41; 29:7; 30:25-32; 35:28; Leviticus 8:12, 30; Deuteronomy 28:40; Ruth 3:3; 1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 14:2; Psalms 23:5; 45:7-8; 92:10; 133:2; Isaiah 21:5; 61:1, 3 and Daniel 10:3; and from the Greek New Testament: Matthew 6:17; Mark 6:17; 14:8; Luke 7:38, 46; 10:34; John 12:3; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 1:9; Jacob (“James”) 5:14-16; 1 John 2:27.**

This is not the place to go into all these passages, but we can say for sure that an-ointing with oil has played a very important role in both Jewish and Christian religion. It has to do with
(continued...)

16:10 וְאַלְבִּישֶׁךָ רִקְמָה

And I clothed you (with) embroidered cloth,⁵⁸⁵

וְאַנְעַלְךָ תַּחַשׁ

and I sandaled you (with) leather;⁵⁸⁶

וְאַחְבַּשְׁךָ בְּשֵׁשׁ

and I wrapped you with fine linen,⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁴(...continued)

healing of the sick, setting religious officials in action, and as here in **Ezekiel 16**, in making a woman's skin, in the hot, dusty weather such as characterizes Jerusalem, smooth and soft.

585

The Hebrew noun רִקְמָה, **riqmah**, occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at **Ezekiel 16:10** (here), **13, 18; 26:16; 27:7** (fine material used in making sails for ocean-going ships); **27:16, 24** (both of these, of merchandise sold by Tyre) and **Psalms 45:15** (the dress of a princess).

This exact phrase, בְּגָדֵי רִקְמָה “garments of **riqmah**, occurs here at **Ezekiel 16:18** (the unfaithful young woman used the clothing given to her by YHWH to clothe / cover her images of her male lovers); and then again at **Ezekiel 26:16** (fancy clothing worn by “princes of the sea”).

586

The Hebrew noun תַּחַשׁ, **tachash**, is the name of a kind of leather or skin, and perhaps the animal yielding it, probably the *dugong*, or as some claim, the badger. It is used here of the leather used for (woman's) sandals, **Ezekiel 16:10**; elsewhere it is used for the leather cover of the tabernacle **Numbers 4:6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 25** (in the singular), and in the plural at **Exodus 25:5; 26:14; 35:7, 23; 36:19, 34**. See “dugong” on the Internet, with numerous pictures and you-tube videos. Their leather would make fine sandals for this young woman's feet!

587

The Hebrew masculine noun שֵׁשׁ, **shesh**, has two different meanings: (1) the numeral six; and (2) *byssus*, fine Egyptian linen (בִּיץ is a later synonym), i.e. the linen thread (spun by women **Exodus 35:25**), and the material woven from it: used for the making of fine garments as here in **Ezekiel 16:10** and **13**; elsewhere for a material used in making sails for ocean-going ships, and a material used in the making of priestly vestments, as well as for hangings in the
(continued...)

וַאֲכַסְּךָ מִשִּׁי:

and covered you with silk.⁵⁸⁸

16:11 וַאֲעֲדֶךָ עֲדָי

And you were ornamented / adorned (with) ornament(s)--⁵⁸⁹

וַאֲתַנֵּה צְמִידִים עַל-יָדֶיךָ

I placed bracelets on your hands,

וְרֶבִיד עַל-גְּרוֹנְךָ:

and a chain-necklace upon your neck;

16:12 וַאֲתַן נֶזֶם עַל-אַפֶּךָ

And I placed a ring in your nose,

וְעִנִּילִים עַל-אָזְנוֹךָ

and rings in your ears,

⁵⁸⁷(...continued)

tabernacle. The young woman would be dressed in the very finest of clothes!

⁵⁸⁸

The Hebrew word translated “silk” here is מִשִּׁי, a masculine noun, a costly material for garments, according to the Rabbis, “silk.” Whether this is based on actual tradition is dubious. **Ezekiel 16:13** is its only occurrence in the **Hebrew Bible**, meaning it is very difficult to determine its meaning. The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is τρίχαινα, a fine hair-cloth. Yes, indeed—the very finest of clothes!

⁵⁸⁹

See the earlier use of “ornament” language in **verse 7**, עֲדָי עֲדָיִים, “ornaments of ornaments,” where we think it is referring to her natural ornaments of well-formed breasts and pubic hair; here the phrase וַאֲתַעֲדֶךָ, “and you were adorned,” refers to hand-made ornaments such as gold and silver bracelets, necklaces, ear and nose-rings, etc., even including a crown! All for this beautiful young woman!

וְעֹטֶרֶת תְּפָאֶרֶת בְּרֹאשׁוֹךְ:

and a crown of beauty on your head.⁵⁹⁰

16:13 וַתַּעֲדֵי זָהָב וְכֶסֶף

And you ornamented yourself (with) gold and silver;⁵⁹¹

וּמִלְבוּשֵׁיךָ (שִׁשִּׁי) [שִׁשִּׁי] וְרִקְמָה

and your clothing was fine linen,⁵⁹² and silk, and embroidered cloth.

סֶלֶת וְדָבֶשׁ וְשֶׁמֶן (אֲכַלְתִּי) [אֲכַלְתִּי]

You ate⁵⁹³ fine flour and honey and oil.⁵⁹⁴

590

All of these beautiful, expensive ornaments were gifts from YHWH, her loving / doting Husband! He was the King; and He had made her His queen!

Eichrodt comments on **verses 9-12** that “Her princely Benefactor further shows His regard for her by Himself preparing her for the wedding ceremony by bathing and anointing her, and loading her with rich clothing and costly jewels, among which the bridal crown, mentioned last of all, gives her all the appearance of a bride being led to her wedding.” (Pp. 205-06)

591

But even with all of these gifts, it was not enough for the young woman. She began to add to those gifts, piling up more and more of the expensive items she had been given—ornaments of gold and silver, more and more of the fine clothing and expensive materials.

592

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” שִׁשִּׁי; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” שִׁשִּׁי, both meaning byssus, fine linen; simply a matter of correct spelling.

593

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” אֲכַלְתִּי, “I ate”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” אֲכַלְתִּי, “you (feminine singular) ate.”

594

(continued...)

וְתִפִּי בְּמֵאֲדָר מְאֹד

And you became beautiful, more and more exceedingly!

וְתַצְלַחִי לְמְלוּכָה:

And you advanced into a queen / a woman exercising kingship.⁵⁹⁵

16:14 וַיֵּצֵא לְךָ שֵׁם בְּגוֹיִם בִּיפְיֶךָ

And it went out for you—a name / fame among the nations, for your beauty;

כִּי כָּלִיל הוּא

because it (was) complete / perfect,

בְּהִדְרִי אֲשֶׁר־שָׂמְתִי עָלֶיךָ

with My splendor, which I placed over you—

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁴(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Her food was of the richest kind.” He quotes Lofthouse as stating, “Ezekiel does not mention wine, nor does he include wine among articles of sacrifice. Hebrews, like other oriental peoples, were vegetarians, except on rare occasions.” (P. 87) Those rare occasions included the finest of fat meats and intoxicating drinks at their tithing-meals in the temple in Jerusalem (see **Deuteronomy 12, 14** and **26**; which don’t sound at all like instructions to vegetarians or tee-totalers!).

⁵⁹⁵

The phrase וְתַצְלַחִי לְמְלוּכָה is given varying translations:

King James, “and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.”

Tanakh, “and became fit for royalty.”

New Revised Standard, “fit to be a queen.”

New International, “and rose to be a queen.”

New Jerusalem, “and you rose to be queen.”

Rahfs, omits the phrase.

⁵⁹⁶

(continued...)

16:15⁵⁹⁷ וַתִּבְטַחַי בְּיָפְיִךְ

And you trusted in your beauty,⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁶(...continued)

Darr comments that “Ezekiel, who depicts Jerusalem as a royal bride, nonetheless says nothing of an (at least) initial period of ‘bridal devotion’ to her husband (unlike his predecessors, Hosea (2:14-15) and Jeremiah (2:2)). Indeed, the reader hears nothing about her personal attitude until **verse 15**, and nowhere in the entire chapter will we hear her speak. This is no oversight. When we engage the text listening not only for words, but also for silences, we are struck by the lengths to which Ezekiel goes utterly to wipe from his oracle any positive impression of Jerusalem, save for her youthful physical beauty.” (P. 124)

⁵⁹⁷

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 15-34** “Israel’s Infidelity.” We would change that to “YHWH’s Bride’s Infidelity.”

Eichrodt comments on these verses that “In mistaken reliance on the power of her beauty, seduced by the flattering attentions of the world around her, she who was so highly exalted forgets her past and her wonderful deliverance, and dishonors herself and her husband by surrendering as any harlot would to her adorers...Indeed, she sinks to being a common prostitute who serves the demands of the whole public. The parable thus changes into being an indictment against Israel for the cultic excesses of Canaanite nature-worship, and compares its high places, defiled as they were by cultic prostitution, to brothels set up at every street-corner.” (P. 207)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Despite the many favors and boundless mercy shown to the foundling, culminating in the honor of ‘marriage,’ she proved grossly unfaithful to her covenant.” (P. 87)

Reimer comments that “[YHWH’s] address switches now to focus on the actions of His bride in response to His life-giving gifts. The passage is marked by inversions [turning upside down / perversions], initially **verses 10-13**, which enhanced and beautified, successively become the means of Jerusalem diminishing and debasing herself. She thus alienates herself from her husband. Structurally, **verses 15-22** present the initial indictment, **verses 23-29** develop the political aspects of the metaphor, and **verses 30-34** summarize the inversions [perversions] of Jerusalem’s behavior.” (1519)

⁵⁹⁸

This was the big, the tragic mistake of this young woman, YHWH’s bride. Instead of trusting in YHWH, she trusted in herself, in her own beauty.

(continued...)

וַתִּזְנֶי עַל־שִׁמְךָ

and prostituted⁵⁹⁹ by your name / fame!

וַתִּשְׁפֹּךְ אֶת־תִּזְנוּתֶיךָ

And you poured out your prostitutions

עַל־כָּל־עוֹבֵר

upon everyone passing by--

לוֹיָהּ:

it was his!⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Aware of her loveliness and her renown as a beautiful woman, she felt that she need not be dependent upon her ‘Husband,’ since she would have many admirers who would lavish gifts upon her...Her lapses were not casual but persistent. She behaved like a harlot who solicited the passers-by (compare **Genesis 38:14-15**).” (Pp. 87-88)

⁵⁹⁹

Hilmer comments that “The accusation of prostitution [the verb זָנָה, **zanah**, the nouns זָנוּת, **zenuth** and תִּזְנוּת, **taznuth**], referred both to spiritual turning away from the Lord and to physical involvement with the fertility rites of Canaanite paganism [we would say, fertility religion].” He also observes that verb and noun forms of the Hebrew for prostitution occur 23 times in this chapter. (P. 1245)

See **Jeremiah 3:1-5** (unfaithful Israel has had many lovers—‘Look to the bare heights and see! Where have you not been laid with? By the waysides you sat waiting for lovers, like a nomad in the wilderness’); **Hosea 4:13-14** [the northern Israelites’ daughters are prostitutes, their daughters-in-law are adulteresses; their men go into sacred prostitutes]; **9:1** [northern Israel has ‘loved a prostitute’s pay on all threshing floors’].

⁶⁰⁰

Rabbi Fisch comments that the phrase “his it was” is “referring to her harlotry, i.e. she readily responded to any man who wanted her (Rashi)...

Kimchi explains the phrase to mean, her longing was for any man who came her way. The Hebrew is literally ‘to him let it be’; the phrase gives the woman’s actual words when she sees a man who arouses her desire.” (P. 88)

16:16 וַתִּקְחִי מִבְּגְדֶיךָ

And you took some of your clothes,

וַתַּעֲשֵׂי-לָךְ בָּמֹת טְלָאוֹת

and you made for yourself high-places with different fabrics,⁶⁰¹

וַתִּזְנֵי עֲלֵיהֶם

and you prostituted upon them,

לֹא בָאוֹת וְלֹא יְהִיָּה:

without income and without enduring!⁶⁰²

16:17 וַתִּקְחִי כָלִי תִפְאָרְתְּךָ

And you took your beautiful ornament(s),

601

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The garments given to her by her ‘Husband’ were used by the adulteress to lure her lovers. The reference is to garments of various colors which she piled up for her harlotries, and so suggestive of the *bamah* [‘high place’] used for idolatrous worship. In this allegory [our ‘vision-story’ / ‘theatrical vignette’] the prophet alludes to the numerous high places which Israel had built from materials bestowed upon him by God (Kimchi).” (P. 88)

602

The phrase **לֹא בָאוֹת וְלֹא יְהִיָּה** is literally “not coming in (feminine plural) and it will not be.” Translations vary:

King James, “*the like things* shall not come, neither shall it be *so*.”

Tanakh, “not in the future; not in time to come.”

New Revised Standard, “nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be.”

New International, “You went to him, and he possessed your beauty.” (?)

New Jerusalem omits the phrase.

Rahls, “καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃς οὐδὲ μὴ γένηται, “and you shall not enter, neither shall it happen.” We guess that it may mean “without income and without enduring / lasting!”

Rabbi Fisch states that “The Hebrew is difficult, being literally ‘they (feminine) are not coming and it (masculine) will not be.’ The words are evidently an expression of disgust: such lewdness is without parallel.” (P. 88)

מִזְהָבִי וּמִכֶּסֶּפֶי אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָךְ

from my gold and my silver, which I gave to you,

וַתַּעֲשֵׂי־לָךְ צִלְמֵי זָכָר

and you made for yourself male images,

וַתִּזְנֶינִי־בָּם:

and prostituted with them!⁶⁰³

16:18 וַתִּקְחִי אֶת־בְּגָדֶי רִקְמָתָךְ וַתִּכְסִּים

And you took your embroidered clothes and covered them,

וְשִׁמְנִי וְקִטְרֹתַי (נָתַתִּי) [נָתַתָּ] לְפָנֵיהֶם:

and My oil and My sweet-smelling smoke you gave / offered⁶⁰⁴ before them!

603

Hilmer comments that the reference here is to “phallic symbols or pictures of naked men.” (P. 1245)

Rabbi Fisch states, “Following the metaphor of the adulterous wife, the prophet speaks of the images she worships as *men*. It may be that they had human form.” (P. 88) See **Hosea 2:10**,

וְהִיא לֹא יָדְעָה כִּי אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָהּ

And she did not know that I, I gave to her

הַדָּגָן וְהַתִּירוֹשׁ וְהַיֵּצֶהָר

the grain and the new wine and the fresh oil;

וְכֶסֶף הִרְבִּיתִי לָהּ

and I multiplied silver for her,

וְזָהָב עָשׂוּ לְבַעַל:

and gold—they used (them) for the Baal!

604

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” נָתַתִּי, “I gave”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” נָתַתָּ, “you (feminine singular) gave,” correcting a grammatical mistake.

16:19 וְלַחְמִי אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לָךְ

And My food, which I gave to you--

סֶלֶת וְשֶׁמֶן וְדִבְשׁ הָאֲכַלְתִּיךָ

fine flour, and oil, and honey I had fed you--

וַנְתַּתִּיהוּ לְפָנֵיהֶם לְרִיחַ נִיחַח וַיְהִי

and you gave it before them, for a soothing smell, and it was--

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!⁶⁰⁵

16:20 וַתִּקַּחְי אֶת־בָּנֶיךָ וְאֶת־בָּנוֹתֶיךָ

And you took your sons and your daughters,

אֲשֶׁר יָלַדְתָּ לִּי

whom you bore for me,

וַתִּזְבַּחֵם לָהֶם לְאֹכֹל

and you sacrificed them to them to eat / devour!⁶⁰⁶

605

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phases, “thus it was; says the Lord God,” that “All this really happened and cannot be denied, since God testifies to its truth.” (P. 89)

606

Rabbi Fisch comments that “These children, who were to be reared as His loyal servants, were slaughtered and afterwards burned by their parents as sacrifices to Molech (Kimchi). The barbarous rite of child sacrifice seems to have been rife [widespread] among the Canaanites and other eastern peoples...In spite of repeated warnings against this practice, it was occasionally resorted to by Israelites.” (P. 89)

Reimer notes to compare the accusations made against king Manasseh in **2 Kings 21:6**, and also to compare **Jeremiah 7:31** (which locates the practice in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom);

(continued...)

הַמְעַט (מִתְזַנְתֶּיךָ) [מִתְזַנְתֶּיךָ]:

Was it the least of your prostitutions?⁶⁰⁷

16:21 וַתִּשְׁחַטֵי אֶת־בְּנֵי

And you slaughtered my children!⁶⁰⁸

וַתְּתַנִּים בְּהַעֲבִיר אוֹתָם לָהֶם:

And you gave them by causing them to pass through (fire) to them!

16:22 וְאֵת כָּל־תּוֹעֲבֹתֶיךָ וְתִזְנִיתֶיךָ

And with all your disgusting actions, and your prostitutions,

לֹא (זְכַרְתִּי) [זָכַרְתָּ] אֶת־יְמֵי נְעוּרֶיךָ

you did not remember⁶⁰⁹ your youth's days,

⁶⁰⁶(...continued)

See also **Ezekiel 20:26, 31; 2 Kings 23:10** (similar to **Jeremiah 7:31**); **Jeremiah 19:5** (the infant bodies are burned “to Baal”) and **32:35** (also similar to **Jeremiah 7:31**). Laws against this practice are found in **Leviticus 18:21; 20:2** (capital punishment decreed for offering children to “Molech”); **Deuteronomy 12:31** and **18:10**.

⁶⁰⁷

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” מִתְזַנְתֶּיךָ; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” מִתְזַנְתֶּיךָ, changing from the singular to the plural, “from your prostitutions.” It wasn’t just a “one-time” event!

⁶⁰⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Not satisfied with the evil of worshiping pagan Gods, Israel went to the extreme of child sacrifice.” (P. 89) We say, not Israel, but Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, the people who lived near and worshiped in the temple, got caught up in this terribly evil practice of child sacrifice—that’s who the young woman, YHWH’s bride, represents.

⁶⁰⁹

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” זְכַרְתִּי, “I remembered,” and the second, the *qere*, “to be read,” זָכַרְתָּ, “you (feminine singular) remembered.”

בְּהִיּוֹתְךָ עָרֹם וְעָרְיָה

when you were naked and bare,

מִתְבּוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמְךָ הַיֵּיתָ:

kicking out in your bloods!⁶¹⁰

16:23⁶¹¹ וַיְהִי אַחֲרַי כָּל־רָעָתְךָ

And it happened, after all your evil—

אָוִי אָוִי לָךְ

Woe! Woe to you!

610

Rabbi Fisch comments that “This was the cause of the behavior which is so strongly censured. Were Israel mindful of his origins [/ were this wayward wife / Jerusalem mindful of her origins] and the part God played therein, he [/ she] could not be guilty of his [/ her] infidelities.” (Pp. 89-90) Yes, the young woman forgot her past, forgot what YHWH had meant to her and done for her! That’s the root cause of her infidelity! If only she had remembered who she was, and where she came from!

And is that not the case with so many of us today? Do we not forget our origin, how we have been marvelously created by the design of YHWH? What about you? Do you think you were just an accident, that happened by chance? You are not an accident. You have been created by YHWH, by Almighty God. His fingerprint is written all over you—in your eyesight, in your hearing, in your heartbeat, etc. etc. etc. Let us never forget that. We come from YHWH our God. Yes, we have earthly mothers and fathers—but both we and they have a heavenly origin. And because we do, let us love and serve our Creator!

611

Matties notes that in **verses 23-34**, “Aggressive prostitution now becomes a metaphor for political alliances.” (P. 1176)

Reimer states that “Jerusalem’s ‘whorings’ included multiple partners, each involving a turn away from [YHWH]. The Egyptians (**verse 26**) had been involved in Judean politics (**2 Kings 23:31-35**) and proved a perennial temptation for illicit political alliance (compare Isaiah 31:1) as did the Assyrians (**Ezekiel 16:28**) at this point in Judah’s history (see **Jeremiah 2:18**).” (P. 1520)

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה:

–(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

16:24 וַתִּבְנֵי-לָךְ גִּב

And you built for yourself a mound,⁶¹²

וַתַּעֲשֵׂי-לָךְ רִמָּה בְּכָל-רְחֹב:

and you made for yourself a high-place in every city-square;⁶¹³

16:25 אֶל-כָּל-רֹאשׁ דָּרֶךְ בָּנִיתָ רִמָּתֶךָ

at the head of every street you built your high-place,⁶¹⁴

וַתַּחַעְבִּי אֶת-יְפֹתֶיךָ

and made your beauty disgusting,⁶¹⁵

612

With the translation “high couch,” Eichrodt comments that “Sculptural designs from Assyria now leave no room for doubt that they originally referred to structures consecrated to the service of the Goddess of love. They were high couches constructed of bricks, like the base of an altar, upon which the temple harlots who served the Goddess of love gave themselves up to ritual prostitution.” **Ezekiel**, p. 200.

613

Hilmer comments that “Cultic prostitution was moved from the high places (**verse 15**), which were outside the towns, into Jerusalem.” (P. 1246)

614

Compare **Ezekiel 6:3** with its footnote 159.

615

Oh yes—your beauty, given to you by YHWH, to make you attractive, irresistible to your husband, to enable you to be a beautiful wife, rejoicing the heart of your husband—you have used instead to go outside your home, to give your beauty and your love indiscriminately to others, to anyone coming your way! And look at what it has done to you, look at what you have become! You have destroyed your home, the trust of your husband, the love of your children. And now, as you have grown older, that youthful beauty is no longer there, and once again you are covered with blood! What a tragedy!

וּתְפַשְׂקִי אֶת־רַגְלֶיךָ לְכָל־עוֹבֵר

and opened wide your legs to everyone passing by,

וּתְרַבִּי אֶת־ (תְּזַנְתֶּךָ) [תְּזַנְוִיתֶיךָ]:

and multiplied your prostitutions.⁶¹⁶

16:26 וּתְזַנְוִי אֶל־בְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

And you prostituted with the sons of Egypt,

שְׂכֵנֶיךָ גְדֹלֵי בָשָׂר

your large of flesh (penis) neighbors,⁶¹⁷

וּתְרַבִּי אֶת תְּזַנְתֶּךָ לְהַכְעִיסַנִּי:

and multiplied your prostitution, to provoke Me!

616

The Masoretes again (compare footnote 110) offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” תְּזַנְתֶּךָ, “your prostitution”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” תְּזַנְוִיתֶיךָ, “your prostitutions.”

617

Hilmer notes that whereas **New International** (and other translations) translate גְדֹלֵי בָשָׂר, literally “great of flesh” by “lustful,” “the Hebrew is more graphic: ‘having over-sized organs.’ The language reflects both [YHWH’s] and Ezekiel’s disgust with Jerusalem’s apostasy.” (P. 1246) For this phrase, compare **Ezekiel 23:20**,

וּתַעֲגֹבָה עַל פְּלִגְשֵׁיהֶם

And she [Jerusalem] lusted after their concubines,

אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׂר־חֲמֹרִים בְּשָׂרָם

whose flesh / penis (was) flesh / penis of donkeys,

וְזִרְמַת סוּסִים זִרְמָתָם:

and their issue / orgasm, an issue / orgasm of horses!

16:27 וְהִנֵּה נְטִיתִי יָדִי עָלֶיךָ

And look: I stretched out My hand over you,⁶¹⁸

וְאַנְרַע חֲקֶיךָ

and I withdrew your allowance,⁶¹⁹

618

Rabbi Fisch comments that “I have stretched out My hand over you” means “to inflict punishment for the acts of infidelity.” (P. 91) Yes, when the beautiful young woman / wife breaks her relationship with YHWH, it doesn’t mean YHWH ceases His relationship with her—only now He visits her with punishment instead of blessing.

So it is with us. YHWH wants us to have an intimate, joyful relationship with Him. And when we reject that relationship, pretending we can find joy and meaning in some other relationship, it doesn’t mean we no longer have any relationship with Him. It only means that now our relationship becomes one of being punished for our infidelities, of having to learn through the consequences of our actions / choices. It certainly doesn’t mean that we no longer have any relationship with YHWH our God!

And the fact is, those visitations in punishment are like “calling cards,” summoning us to turn back, to come home to YHWH, our Creator, our Husband, our rightful Home! Whether we believe it or not, no matter if we certainly do not deserve it, He still love us, and will welcome us home, forgiving us. See the closing paragraph of **Ezekiel 16**.

619

The noun חֲקֶיךָ means “your statute,” or “your due,” perhaps here referring to a “prescribed portion” or “allowance” of food. **New International** takes it to mean “territory.” **King James** has “thine ordinary food”; **New Jerusalem** has “I have cut down on your food”; **New Living Translation** has “(I) reduced your boundaries”; **English Standard** has “(I) diminished your allotted portion.” **Ralhs** has τὰ νόμιμά σου, “your traditional standards.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “A betrayed husband punishes his wife by withdrawing or reducing her maintenance.” (P. 91) Compare **Hosea 2:11**^{Heb} / **9**^{Eng}

לִכְן אָשׁוּב

Therefore I will return,

וְלִקְחֹתִי דַגְנִי בְּעִתּוֹ

and I will take (away) My grain in its season,

(continued...)

וְאַתְּנֶךָ בְּנַפְשׁ שְׂנֵאוֹתֶיךָ

and I gave you to (the) desire of those who hate you--

בָּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים

daughters of the Philistines,

הַנִּכְלָמוֹת מִדְּרַכְךָ זָמָּה:

the ones made ashamed by your wickedness.⁶²⁰

16:28 וַתִּזְנֵי אֶל-בְּנֵי אַשּׁוּר

Then you prostituted with Assyria's sons,

⁶¹⁹(...continued)

וַתִּירוֹשֵׁי בְּמוֹעֲדוֹ

and my new wine in its appointed time;

וְהִצַּלְתִּי צִמְרִי וּפִשְׁתִּי לְכֶסֶת אֶת-עֲרוֹתָהּ:

and I will snatch away My wool and My linen (used) to cover her nakedness.

Rabbi Fisch states that “The language here is figurative of the loss of territory to the Philistines in the time of king Ahaz; compare **2 Chronicles 28:18** (Malbim).” (P. 91)

And Philistines made raids on cities of the lowland and the southern part of Judah.

And they captured Beth-Shemesh, and Ayalon, and the Gederoth;
and Soco and her daughter-cities, and Timnah and her daughter-cities;
and Gimzo and her daughter-cities; and they settled down there.

Cooke suggests that the reference may be “to what happened in 701 B.C.E., at the time of the Assyrian invasion, as Sennacherib records it: ‘his (Hezekiah’s) cities which I have plundered, I separated from his hand, and gave them to Mitinti, king of Ashdod, Padi, king of Ekron, and Silbel, king of Gaza, and diminished his land.’” (Quoted by Rabbi Fisch, p. 91)

⁶²⁰

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Philistines were the arch-enemies of the people of Israel and now satisfied their desire for revenge...The Targum translates ‘cities’ and it is so generally understood...Israel’s conduct was so disgraceful that even their enemies, the Philistines, were ashamed of them. The language is ironical.” (P. 91)

מבִּלְתִּי שְׂבַעְתָּךְ

since you were not satisfied / since your satisfaction was ;

וּתְזַנִּים

and you prostituted them,

וְגַם לֹא שְׂבַעְתָּ:

and even (so) you were not satisfied.

16:29 וַתְּרַבִּי אֶת־תְּזִנוּתְךָ אֶל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

And you multiplied your prostitution to the Land of Canaan,

כְּשַׂדִּימָה

(and) to Chaldea;

וְגַם־בְּזֹאת לֹא שְׂבַעְתָּ:

but / and even with this you were not satisfied!⁶²¹

16:30⁶²²

621

Note the three-fold mention of the adulteress wife's not being satisfied in **verses 28 and 29**. Yes, there may be temporary excitement, there may be “fun” in the play of adultery; but in the long run, there is no satisfaction there! Genuine satisfaction comes in long-term commitment to the marriage covenant, and the joyful play that instead of breaking up the home, helps to build and solidify the home. How much better the genuine, long-lasting satisfaction, than the temporary, fleeting satisfaction of adultery!

622

Reimer comments on **verses 30-34** that “The summary pointedly accuses Jerusalem of being uniquely (**verse 34**) promiscuous, drawing together the two preceding metaphors. The marriage metaphor relates to infidelity and adultery, offending against exclusive loyalty at the heart of the covenant relationship. The prostitution metaphor relates to the multiplicity of partners, secured by inverting [turning upside down] the client relationship. Both metaphors, then, represent reversals, with the second intensifying the second.” (P. 1520)

מָה אִמְלָה לְבַתְּךָ

How feeble is your heart!⁶²³

623

Rabbi Fisch comments that the phrase “how weak is your heart” means “how degenerate, morally weak. The feminine form of the noun for *heart* [לְבָהַר, **libbah**] which occurs nowhere else [in **the Hebrew Bible**], is used here to emphasize the woman’s debased character (Kimchi).” (P. 91)

Brown-Driver-Briggs suggests changing the text to read לְבַרְיִתְךָ, **libhrithek**, “your covenant.” Holladay thinks the noun means “rage.” We think the older view that this is a feminine form of the Hebrew word for “heart,” and that it is a very appropriate warning to the adulteress wife.

Compare **Proverbs 4:23**, a father’s wise counsel to his son, which we can apply here to a wayward daughter:

מִכָּל־מִשְׁמַר נִצֵּר לְבָבְךָ

Above everything kept, keep / guard your heart,

כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ תוֹצְאוֹת חַיִּים:

because from it (are) the out-goings of life / lives!

This verse from **Proverbs** lies at the very heart of Jesus' teaching, as is illustrated by **Mark 7:1-23**, where what comes from within, out of the heart, is described by Jesus as the source of all uncleanness. Here, the wise teacher insists that the heart must be guarded above all else, for it is the source of life!

"Our heart--our feelings of love and desire--dictates to a great extent how we live because we always find time to do what we enjoy. Solomon tells us to guard our heart above all else, making sure we concentrate on those desires that will keep us on the right path. Make sure your affections push you in the right direction. Put boundaries on your desires; don't go after everything you see. Look straight ahead, keep your eyes fixed on your goal, and don't get sidetracked on detours that lead to sin." (**NIV LAB** p. 1079)

What a change in this young woman’s life it would have made if she had kept this wise advice in mind!

נאם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

–(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH–

בַּעֲשׂוֹתֶיךָ אֶת-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים

in your doing all these things,

מַעֲשֵׂה אִשָּׁה-זֹנָה שְׁלֹמֹת:

(the) work of a domineering prostitute-woman!⁶²⁴

16:31⁶²⁵ בִּבְנוֹתֶיךָ גִבֹּךְ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל-דְּרָךְ

When you built your mound at the head of every way,

וְרִמַּתְךָ (עֲשִׂיתִי) [עֲשִׂיתִי] בְּכָל-רְחֹב

and you made⁶²⁶ your high place in every city-plaza–

624

This is the only place in the **Bible** where this particular phrase, "a domineering woman" is used. Such a description is never used to describe a Deborah, who served as Israel's "Judge," or a Miriam, who led Israel's public worship; but rather is used of a woman who is an adulteress, engaged in prostitution, and is unfaithful to her covenant of marriage. As Rabbi Fisch says, she is "unrestrained by any moral principle." (P. 92) Such a woman is not humble, loving, protective of her sexual mate—but rather takes charge of the relationship, demanding pay for her sexual favors, dropping the relationship and moving on to further conquests as soon as those favors are paid for.

Fertility religion, with its female priestesses who led in the rites of sacred prostitution, was prevalent in **New Testament** times in such cities as Corinth. Compare especially **1 Corinthians 11:1-16** with the Middle Assyrian Laws found on p. 183 (second column) of James B. Pritchard's **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, 3rd. edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969).

625

Yes, Ezekiel says, in this vision-story depicting Jerusalem as YHWH's unfaithful bride, you have been a domineering-prostitute woman. But, he adds, you have been unlike most prostitutes—they are active sexually in order to make money. But YHWH's adulterous, prostitute wife has not been interested in making money—she pays her male lovers to come to her! All she wants, as Rabbi Fisch says, is "unbridled lust." (P. 92)

626

(continued...)

וְלֹא־הָיִיתִי (הָיִיתִי) כְּזוֹנָה לְקַלֵּס אֶתְנֶן:

and you were not⁶²⁷ like the prostitute, to scorn (your) pay!⁶²⁸

16:32 הָאִשָּׁה הַמְּנַאֲפֶת

The woman, the adulteress,

תַּחַת אִישָׁהּ תִּקַּח אֶת־זָרִים:

who is instead of her husband will receive strangers;

16:33 לְכָל־זֹנוֹת יִתְנוּ־נָדָה

to every prostitute they will give a gift;⁶²⁹

⁶²⁶(...continued)

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” עָשִׂיתִי, “I (YHWH) made,” and the second, the *qere*, “to be read,” עָשִׂיתְּ, “you (feminine singular) made.” It should be noted that the original Hebrew text attributed some of the sexual-related actions to YHWH rather than to Jerusalem. How would you understand this? Was YHWH not only allowing Jerusalem’s prostitution, but even furthering her involvement in such sexual immorality?

⁶²⁷

Again the Masoretes offer two readings: the first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” הָיִיתִי, “I (YHWH) was”; and the second, the *qere*, “to be read,” הָיִיתְּ, “you (feminine singular) were.”

⁶²⁸

The last two words of **verse 31** in Hebrew are לְקַלֵּס אֶתְנֶן, literally “to mock wage / pay.” **King James** has “in that thou scornest hire”; **New International** has “because you scorned payment”; **New Jerusalem** has “because you disdain to take a fee”; **Tanakh** has “for you scorned fees.” **Rahlfs** has χαλκός, “copper / money / bronze.”

Rabbi Fisch thinks this means “the ordinary harlot scorns the payment offered to her and asks for more.” (P. 92)

⁶²⁹

(continued...)

וְאֵת נֹתֶתְךָ אֶת־נְדָנֶיךָ לְכָל־מְאֵהָבֶיךָ

but / and you, you gave your gifts to all your lovers,⁶³⁰

וַתְּשַׁחֲרֵי אוֹתָם לָבוֹא אֵלֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב

and you bribed them to come into you from all around

בְּתִזְנוּתֶיךָ:

with your prostitutions!

16:34 וַיְהִי־בְךָ הַפֶּךָ

And there was a difference in you

מִן־הַנָּשִׁים בְּתִזְנוּתֶיךָ

from the women in your prostitutions;

וְאַחֲרַיֶךָ לֹא זִוְנָה

and you afterwards--you were not prostituted--

וּבְתַתֶּךָ אֶתְנֹן וְאַתְנֹן לֹא נָתַן־לְךָ

and by your giving pay, and pay was not given to you--

וַתְּהִי לְהַפֶּךָ:

and you were for a difference!⁶³¹

⁶²⁹(...continued)

For an ancient Israelite story of how gifts were given to prostitutes, even “sacred prostitutes,” see the story of Judah and Tamar in **Genesis 38**, where the gift paid to the prostitute was a young goat.

⁶³⁰

The Hebrew word here, מְאֵהָבֶיךָ is the masculine plural piel participle from the root אָהַב, **jahebh**, “to love”—the verb that is commonly used in the **Hebrew Bible** for YHWH’s love for His people. It is not true that this verb is only used for Divine love, and not for human love—even the “false love” of the prostitute and her clients.

⁶³¹

(continued...)

16:35⁶³² לִכְן זִזְנָה

Therefore, prostitute,⁶³³

⁶³¹(...continued)

Notice the following four translations of **verse 34**:

King James, “And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.”

Tanakh, “You were the opposite of other women: you solicited instead of being solicited; you paid fees instead of being paid fees. Thus you were just the opposite!”

New Revised Standard, “So you were different from other women in your whorings: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; you were different.”

Rahfs, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν σοὶ διεστραμμένον παρὰ τὰς γυναῖκας ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ σου καὶ μετὰ σοῦ πεπορνεύκασιν ἐν τῷ προσδιδόναι σε μισθώματα καὶ σοὶ μισθώματα οὐκ ἐδόθη καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν σοὶ διεστραμμένα, “and it was in / with you distorted / perverted beside / compared to the women in your prostitution; and after you they have prostituted in the distributing of shares to yourself, payments—and to you payments were not given; and it became in you distorted / perverted.” (a difficult verse to translate)

⁶³²

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 35-43** “Punishment of the Unfaithful People.” We would change this to “Punishment of the Unfaithful Adulteress.”

Reimer states that “An important question for interpretation turns on how far the metaphors are carried into the punishments announced...”

“Adultery, along with other illicit sexual relationships, was one of a number of capital crimes in Israel’s law, and so the announcement of execution here is not surprising. Other aspects of the punishments listed do not fit Israelite law so simply. It is unclear how stripping the culprit (**verse 37**) relates to adultery law. It seems rather to be a case of ‘poetic justice,’ returning Jerusalem to the naked estate in which she was found (**verses 4, 7-8**). Nor does entrusting punishment to the illicit partners (**verses 39b-42**) or dismemberment (**verse 40**) appear in biblical law. Here Ezekiel crosses over into the language of city destruction, made explicit in the mention of houses in **verse 41**. In all this, the supreme element in view is the offense against [YHWH], Who remains responsible for judgment (**verses 37-39a, 43**).” (P. 1520)

⁶³³

(continued...)

שְׁמַעֵי דְבַר־יְהוָה:

hear YHWH's Word!⁶³⁴

16:36 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

יַעַן הַשֶּׁפַךְ נְחֹשֶׁתְךָ

Because of your copper⁶³⁵ being poured out,

וַתִּגְלֵה עֲרוֹתְךָ

and you uncovered your nakedness

בְּתִזְנוֹתֶיךָ עַל־מְאֵה־בָּיִדְךָ

in your prostitutions upon / for your lovers,

⁶³³(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch translates by “O harlot,” and quotes Lofthuose as saying that “All the scorn of the previous section is gathered up in the insulting appellative [giving of a name].” (P. 92)

⁶³⁴

Here, in Ezekiel’s “vision-story,” he plays the role of a prophet of doom, announcing the punishment that is coming from YHWH on His adulterous, prostitute wife.

⁶³⁵

The Hebrew word נְחֹשֶׁתְךָ is literally “your copper,” or “your bronze.” **New Revised Standard** translates by “your lust was poured out”; **King James** has “thy filthiness was poured out”; **New International** has “because you poured out your wealth”; **New Jerusalem** has “for having squandered your money.” **Brown Driver Briggs** holds that the context, where the noun is parallel to “nakedness” favors the meaning “lust,” or “harlotry.”

See **Exodus 25:3**, etc. etc. where **nechosheth** is one of the items to be offered for the building of the moveable sanctuary of Israel, listed just after gold and silver—obviously a semi-precious metal, used for manufacturing “clasps” for the curtains, and other items. We think the most probable meaning here in **Ezekiel** is “copper,” meaning “money,” which Jerusalem the prostitute paid her lovers for coming in to her.

וְעַל כָּל-גְּלוּלֵי תוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ

and upon / for all your disgusting images,⁶³⁶

וּכְדָמַי בְּנֵיךָ

and according to the bloods of your children

אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּ לָהֶם:

which you gave to them.

16:37⁶³⁷ לָכֵן הִנְנִי

Therefore, look at Me—

מִקְבֵּץ אֶת-כָּל-מְאַהֲבֶיךָ

gathering all your lovers,

אֲשֶׁר עָרַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם

over whom you were sweet,

וְאֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אָהַבְתָּ

and everyone you loved,⁶³⁸

636

For archaeological illustrations of what **Ezekiel** means, see James B. Pritchard, **The Ancient Near East in Pictures** 2nd. edition (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 160-191.

637

Matties comments on **verses 37-42** that “The divorce ritual in front of the lovers represents the Lord’s abandonment of Jerusalem to the mercy of imperial powers.” (P. 1176) We do not see how these verses contain a “divorce ritual.”

638

Note here that the verb used for the prostitute’s love-making is אָהַבְתָּ, **)ahabhte**, translated by the Greek (**Rahlfs**) ἡγάπησας, **egapesas**, both of which are the main verbs used in the **Hebrew Bible** and the **Greek New Testament** for YHWH’s / God’s love. This usage
(continued...)

עַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר שָׂנֵאת

above all whom you hated,⁶³⁹

וְקִבַצְתִּי אֹתָם עָלֶיךָ מִסָּבִיב׃

and I will gather them over you, from all around,

וְגִלִּיתִי עֶרְוַתְךָ אֲלֵהֶם

and I will uncover your nakedness to them,⁶⁴⁰

וְרָאוּ אֶת־כָּל־עֶרְוַתְךָ׃

and they will see all your nakedness!

16:38 וּשְׁפֹטְתֶיךָ מִשְׁפָּטֵי נְאֻפּוֹת

And I will judge you (with) the judicial decisions of adulteresses⁶⁴¹

⁶³⁸(...continued)

demonstrates how it is a mistake to claim that these words were only used for [YHWH's] love, not for human love.

⁶³⁹

Yes, says Ezekiel–Jerusalem, the prostitute / wife of YHWH, even prostituted with her hated enemies!

Rabbi Fisch comments that the ones the adulterous wife hated were “either Philistines and Edomites, with whom no alliances had been made, or as the expression implies, the lovers of whom Judah had become weary and had grown to loathe...[These very ones] will be used by God to bring national humiliation upon His sinful people.” (P. 93)

⁶⁴⁰

Hilmer states that this is “A reversal of the marriage covering (**verse 8**), and a return to the state described in **verse 7**.” (P. 1246)

⁶⁴¹

Hilmer comments that “The punishment was death (see **Leviticus 20:10** [If a man has sexual intercourse with the wife of his neighbor, both the man and the woman shall be put to death]; **Deuteronomy 22:22** [similar]) by stoning (see...**John 8:5-7** [where a woman accused of sexual immorality is brought to Jesus, and He forgives her, rather than consenting to her being
(continued...)

וְשִׁפְכֹת דָּם

and women shedding blood;

וְנָתַתִּיךָ דָּם חֶמָה וְקִנְיָאָה:

and I will give you blood, wrath, and bitter jealousy.

16:39 וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתְךָ בְּיָדָם

And I will place you in their hand;

וְהָרְסוּ גִבְךָ

and they will tear down your mound(s);

וְנָחְצוּ רְמֹתֶיךָ

and they will break down your high places;

וְהִפְשִׁיטוּ אוֹתְךָ בְּגָדֶיךָ

and they will strip off your clothes;

וְלָקְחוּ כָּלֵי תִפְאָרְתְּךָ

and they will take your beautiful ornaments;

וְהִנִּיחוּךָ עֵירָם וְעָרְיָה:

and they will leave you silent,⁶⁴² naked and bare.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹(...continued)

stoned to death]) or burning (**Genesis 38:24** [Judah's sentence on Tamar, his daughter-in-law]).” (P. 1246)

⁶⁴²

The hiphil verb וְהִנִּיחוּךָ, normally meant in a good sense, “and they will give rest to you,” here evidently means give rest to her busy activities of prostitution, causing her business to go silent.

⁶⁴³

Rabbi Fisch comments that the adulterous wife will find herself “in the same state as at the time when she was a foundling in the field.” (P. 94) All of her adulterous relationships have (continued...)

16:40 וְהָעָלוּ עָלֶיךָ קָהָל

And they will raise up an assembly against you;

וְרָגְמוּ אוֹתְךָ בְּאֶבֶן

and they will stone you with the stone(s);

וּבַתְּקוּף בְּחַרְבוֹתָם:

and they will cut you down with their swords;

16:41 וְשָׂרְפוּ בְּתֵיךָ בְּאֵשׁ

and they will burn down your houses with the fire,⁶⁴⁴

וְעָשׂוּ-בְךָ שְׁפָטִים

and they will execute judgments against you,

לְעֵינֵי נָשִׁים רַבּוֹת

in the eyes of many women,⁶⁴⁵

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ מִזֹּזְנָה

and I will make you stop from (being) a prostitute;

וְגַם-אֶתְנֶן לָא תַתְּנִי-עוֹד:

and also you will no longer give pay (to your lovers).

⁶⁴³(...continued)

gotten her nowhere, but have caused her to return to her original miserable condition.

⁶⁴⁴

A three-fold form of capital punishment for adultery is depicted here—death by the sword, by stoning, and by burning. Rabbi Fisch notes that “Kimchi remarks that to disgrace an adulteress, people used to throw stones at her in public, stab her and burn her house.” (P. 94)

⁶⁴⁵

Rabbi Fisch notes that “There seems to have been a practice of making other women witness the execution of the adulteress as a warning.” (P. 94)

16:42 וַהֲנַחֲתִי חֲמָתִי בְךָ

Then I will cause My wrath against you to rest;

וְסָרָה קִנְאָתִי מִמֶּנִּי

and My jealousy will turn away from you;

וְשָׁקֵטִי

and I will be quiet;

וְלֹא אֶכְעַס עוֹד:

and I will no longer be prodded to anger.⁶⁴⁶

646

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as stating that “Any judgment as to the seeming harshness of this ‘anthropopathism,’ whereby God is represented as ‘raging Himself out,’ should be modified by recollecting that we are not yet free of the allegory. The expression itself implies restoration and returning favor (compare **verse 60**).” (P. 94) Yes. Too many fail to read the 16th chap-

ter to its end, turned off by its crude but accurate language, and by its depiction of YHWH’s outburst of anger.

We have insisted that readers of the Hebrew Bible must constantly keep in mind Israel’s “creed-like” statement, in which YHWH is depicted as declaring Who He is in **Exodus 34:6-7**, where YHWH Himself declares His nature:

6 עָבַר יְהוָה | עַל-פָּנָיו

And YHWH crossed over before his face;

וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה

and YHWH cried out,

יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן

YHWH, a God compassionate and merciful,

אֱרֵךְ אַפַּיִם

long-suffering

וְרַב-חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת:

and great (in) steadfast love and true-faithfulness,

(continued...)

16:43 יֵעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא-זָכַרְתִּי (זָכַרְתִּי) [זָכַרְתִּי]

Because you did not remember⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴⁶(...continued)

7

נֹצֵר חֶסֶד לְאַלְפִים

Keeping steadfast love for the thousands;

נִשָּׂא עֵוֹן וּפְשָׁע וְחַטָּאָה

bearing / forgiving iniquity and transgressions and missing-of-the-mark;

וְנִקָּה לֹא יִנְקָה

and will certainly not acquit (the impenitent)

פִּקְדוֹן עֵוֹן אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים

—visiting iniquity of fathers upon sons,

וְעַל-בְּנֵי בָנִים

and upon sons of sons,

עַל-שְׁלִישִׁים וְעַל-רְבָעִים:

upon thirds and upon fourths!

Just think of this contrast. YHWH punishes iniquity upon sons and grandsons even to the fourth generation; yes. But His steadfast-love is for thousands of generations—that is, YHWH’s steadfast-love is at least 333 1/3 times greater than His punishment, and that is the least possibility, because “thousands” is in the plural. Yes, He punishes. We do not “get away” with our sins. But YHWH’s love for us is at least a 333 1/3 times greater than His punishment. He love to forgive every kind of sin. He is long-suffering, patient.

These statements of YHWH are repeated time and again (we think some specific 14 times at least in the **Hebrew Bible**). His love for us is far greater than His punishment which we deserve. Read **Ezekiel 16** to the end, and see if this isn’t the truth even in this chapter which depicts the Divine punishment so powerfully!

⁶⁴⁷

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” זָכַרְתִּי, “I remembered”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” זָכַרְתִּי, “you (feminine singular) remembered.”

Darr comments that “Fundamental to all of Jerusalem’s abominations has been her failure to remember (**verse 43** begins with the admonition ‘Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things’). Yahweh, by contrast, states most emphatically that after her punishment, ‘I will remember my covenant with you in the days of
(continued...)

אַתִּימִי נְעוּרַיִךְ

(the) days of your youth;⁶⁴⁸

וַתִּרְגַּזֵּנִי לִי

and you enraged / pained⁶⁴⁹ Me

בְּכָל-אֵלֶּה

in all these (things);

וְגַם-אֲנִי הֵא

and also I-behold!

⁶⁴⁷(...continued)

your youth.’ This act of remembering motivates God to (re)establish with her an eternal covenant. For the reader, versed in other biblical passages, including **Leviticus 26** [with its ‘blessings and curses’], the notion that God might ‘remember’ a covenant of old is not new: “But if they [the Israelites] confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their ancestors, in that they committed treachery against me and, moreover, that they continued hostile to me...then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; I will remember also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land...I will not spurn them, or abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them; for I am YHWH their God; but I will remember in their favor the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, to be their God: I am YHWH. (**Leviticus 26:40, 42, 44-45 NRSV**).” (P. 130) We add, see also **Deuteronomy 30**, following **chapter 28** with its blessings and curses. YHWH remembers His covenant of love for us, while we forget our covenant of love for Him!

In my years in Christian colleges, I heard constantly about the Divine curses that are going to come on Israel (and us), but do not recall ever hearing about this contrast with YHWH’s remembering and renewing His covenant of love for His people.

⁶⁴⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “All these calamities will befall them [we say ‘her’] because they [we say ‘she’] had been forgetful of, and ungrateful for, the kindnesses God had done for them [we say, ‘her’] in their national [we say ‘her’] infancy.” (P. 95)

⁶⁴⁹

Brown-Driver-Briggs suggests that the qal verb should be read as hiphil, “you caused Me to be enraged.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has the imperfect tense, καὶ ἐλύπεις με, “and you would pain Me.”

דְּרַכֶּיךָ | בְּרֹאשׁ נָתַתִּי

I have placed your way on (your) head!

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

–(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

וְלֹא (עָשִׂיתִי) [עָשִׂית] אֶת־הַזִּמָּה

and have you not done⁶⁵⁰ the wickedness

עַל כָּל־תּוֹעֲבֹתֶיךָ:

by all your disgusting actions?

הִנֵּה כָּל־הַמּוֹשֵׁל עֲלֶיךָ 16:44⁶⁵¹

Look—everyone who makes a proverb concerning you

יִמְשֵׁל לֵאמֹר

will make a proverb saying,

650

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” עָשִׂיתִי, “I made / did”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” עָשִׂית, “you (feminine singular) made / did.”

651

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 44-58** “Judea’s Guilt Exceeds That of Sodom and Samaria.” We would change it to “Jerusalem’s Guilt Exceeds That of Sodom and Samaria.”

Reimer entitles **verses 44-58** “Jerusalem and Her Sisters.” He comments that “The second major block in this chapter aligns Jerusalem’s crimes with those of two more cities. Jerusalem suffers in comparison with both ‘sisters.’ The structure parallels that of the preceding section, with metaphorical reminiscence (**verses 44-48**) giving way to analysis (**verses 49-52**) before Divinely imposed outcomes are announced (**verses 53-58**).” (P. 1521)

Matties comments on **verses 44-52** that “With a change in strategy, the indictment shames Jerusalem by comparing her with others who were considered, in Judah, the worst of sinners.” (P. 1176)

כְּאִמָּהּ בְּתָרָהּ:

Like her mother, her daughter!⁶⁵²

16:45 בַּת־אִמֶּךָ אַתְּ

You are the daughter of your mother,

נֹעֲלֶת אִשָּׁה וּבָנֶיהָ

one hating her husband and her children,⁶⁵³

וְאַחֹת אֶחָוֶתְךָ אַתְּ

and you are the sister of your sisters,

אֲשֶׁר גָּעְלוּ אֲנָשֵׁיהֶן וּבְנֵיהֶן

who hated their husbands and their children.⁶⁵⁴

אִמְּךָ חִתִּית

Your (plural) mother is a Hittite,

652

Rabbi Fisch comments that by the “mother” Ezekiel means “the Hittite (**Ezekiel 16:3**). The people of Judah [we say the adulterous wife, Jerusalem] are [is] as sinful as the original inhabitants of Canaan.” (P. 95)

653

We take this to mean that YHWH’s adulterous wife hated her Husband—since she did not remain faithful to Him, but offered herself sexually to other men, to as many as she could attract; and she hated her children, since, instead of building them a secure home and family, she willingly sacrificed them to the Canaanite Gods.

654

If this was true of YHWH’s adulterous wife, Jerusalem, it was also true of her “sister cities,” Samaria and Sodom. Rabbi Fisch states, “The sisters are Samaria and Sodom whom Jerusalem resembles in the pursuit of wickedness.” (P. 95) Of course, as the vision-story continues, Ezekiel depicts Jerusalem as not only resembling them in their pursuit of wickedness, but as far excelling them in wickedness!

וְאָבִיכֶן אַמֹּרִי:

and your father, an Amorite.⁶⁵⁵

16:46 וְאַחֹתְךָ הַגְּדוֹלָה

And your big sister—

שָׁמְרוֹן הִיא וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ

she is Samaria and her daughters--⁶⁵⁶

הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת עַל-שְׂמֹאלְךָ

she who lives upon your left;⁶⁵⁷

וְאַחֹתְךָ הַקְּטָנָה מִמֶּךָ

and your sister who is smaller than you,

655

For these last two lines of **verse 45**, compare **Ezekiel 16:3**, which these lines repeat, but with a difference:

16:3 אָבִיךָ הָאֹמֶרִי וְאִמְךָ חִתִּית

your (singular) father the Amorite and your (singular) mother Chittite

16:45 אִמְכֶן חִתִּית וְאָבִיכֶן אַמֹּרִי

your (plural) mother Chittite and your (plural) father Amorite

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Here the suffix is plural and seems to apply to the three sisters.” (P. 95)

656

Hilmer explains that “her daughters” means “suburbs or satellite cities.” (P. 1247)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Samaria, as the capital, stands for the northern kingdom and is described as elder [our ‘big’] because it was larger in size and more numerous in population than Judah.” (P. 95)

657

In ancient Israel, directions were given in terms of facing east; therefore on your left means “to your north.” In like manner on your right means “to your south.”

הַיּוֹשֶׁבֶת מִיְמִינֶךָ

who lives on your right–

סֹדֹם וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ:

Sodom and her daughters.⁶⁵⁸

16:47 וְלֹא הִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכֵיהֶן

And have you not walked in their ways,

וּבְתוֹעֲבוֹתֵיהֶן (עֲשִׂיתִי) [עֲשִׂיתִי]

and practiced⁶⁵⁹ their disgusting actions?

כְּמַעֲטֵי קָטָן

He was barely disgusted (with you),⁶⁶⁰

658

Matties comments on **verse 46**, “That the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel should be compared to Judah is not surprising, but for Sodom to be Jerusalem’s sibling stretches the bounds of propriety.” (P. 1177) But who are we to decide what is proper or improper, what is appropriate or inappropriate for the prophet / prophet of YHWH? And we add that Ezekiel’s language includes Sodom’s daughters—which would include a number of villages near Sodom, including Gomorrah.

We are reminded of the prophet / prophet Isaiah’s charges against Jerusalem in **Isaiah 1:9-10** (where Jerusalem is named both Sodom and Gomorrah), and Jeremiah’s similar charge in **Jeremiah 23:14** (Jerusalem’s inhabitants are like the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah).

659

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” עֲשִׂיתִי, “I practiced”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” עֲשִׂיתִי, “you (feminine singular) practiced.”

660

The Hebrew phrase כְּמַעֲטֵי קָטָן וַתִּשְׁחָתִי is literally “like a little / few feeling a loathing (an adjective) and you spoiled / ruined.” But translations vary:

Tanakh has “Why, you were almost more corrupt...”;

King James has “but, as *if that were* a very little *thing* thou wast corrupted...”;

New International has “but, as *if that were* a very little *thing*, thou wast corrupted...”;

(continued...)

וַתִּשְׁחָתִי מֵהֵן

and you have acted corruptly more than they, ⁶⁶¹

בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ:

in all your ways!⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰(...continued)

New Jerusalem has “and soon your behavior was more corrupt than theirs was...”;
New Revised Standard has “within a very little time you were more corrupt...”;
Rahlfs has ἐποίησας παρὰ μικρὸν, “you did beyond a little.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “...Only twenty-three years after Samaria’s fall did Israel remain faithful to God; soon after Hezekiah’s death, and the accession of Manasseh the corruption of Judah set in (Kimchi).” (P. 96

661

New International translates by “more depraved than they.” Hilmer comments that “The Bible frequently compares a city or people to Sodom (see **verse 46**) as the epitome of evil and degradation (see **Deuteronomy 29:23; 32:32; Isaiah 1:9-10; 3:9; Jeremiah 23:14; Lamentations 4:6; Matthew 10:15; 11:23-24; Jude 1:7**).” (P. 1247) But YHWH charges through Ezekiel that Jerusalem is more depraved than Sodom!

662

Translations of **verse 47** vary:

King James, “Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as *if that were* a very little *thing*, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.”

Tanakh, “Did you not walk in their ways and practice their abominations? Why, you were almost more corrupt than they in all your ways.”

New Revised Standard, “You not only followed their ways, and acted according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.”

New International, “You not only followed their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they.”

New Jerusalem, “You never failed to imitate their behaviour and copy their loathsome practices, and soon your behaviour was more corrupt than theirs was.”

Rahlfs, καὶ οὐδ’ ὡς ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν ἐπορεύθης οὐδὲ κατὰ τὰς ἀνομίας αὐτῶν ἐποίησας παρὰ μικρὸν καὶ ὑπέρκεισαι αὐτὰς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς σου, “and not even as in their ways did you walk, not even according to their lawlessness did you do beyond a little; and you went above them in all your ways!”

16:48 חַי־אֲנִי

As I live--⁶⁶³

נֹאם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

אִם־עָשְׂתָה

if she did not do / act,⁶⁶⁴

סָדֹם אַחֹתְךָ

Sodom your sister,

הִיא וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ

she and her daughters,

כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית

just like you did / acted,

אַתָּה וּבָנוֹתֶיךָ:

you and your daughters!

663

For this phrase “as I live” in the mouth of YHWH, see footnote 461. It is a Divine oath.

664

How to translate Hebrew sentences or phrases starting with **אִם**, “if,” is difficult. English translations commonly translate by “not.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) translates by “if”: εἰ πεποίηκεν Σοδομα ἡ ἀδελφή σου αὐτὴ καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες αὐτῆς ὁὐ τὸν τρόπον ἐποίησας σὺ καὶ αἱ θυγατέρες σου, “if Sodom, the sister of yours, and her daughters, has done / acted in the same way you did / acted, you and your daughters.”

The English translations imply that Sodom and her daughters have not acted as bad as have Jerusalem and her daughters. The Greek translation questions whether or not they have acted in the same way. We think that overall, the English translation is the best.

16:49⁶⁶⁵ הִנֵּה-זֶה הָיָה עֵינֹן סֹדֹם אַחֲוֹתֶיךָ

Look—this was Sodom, your sister’s iniquity:

גָּאוֹן שְׂבַעַת-לֶחֶם

exaltation / pride, plenty of bread,

וְשִׁלוֹת הַשְּׁקֵט הָיָה לָהּ

and there was quietness (with) ease for her

וְלִבְנוֹתֶיהָ

and for her daughters;

וְיַד-עֲנִי וְאֲבִיּוֹן

and (the) hand of (the) poor and needy

665

Reimer comments on **verses 49-52** that “Jerusalem’s crimes exceed those of her sisters, but these now fall into the category of social justice (**verse 49**), beyond that of idolatry.” (P. 1521)

We add, “and beyond that of sexual immorality.” What do you think? Is this Ezekiel’s unique contribution to the understanding of Sodom’s sinfulness? We think it is.

“exaltation / pride, plenty of bread,
and there was quietness (with) ease for her,
and for her daughters.

And (the) hand of (the) poor and needy
she did not take strong hold of!

And they became haughty,
and they did a disgusting thing before me.”

Perhaps that last line may involve Sodom’s homosexual rape of strangers; but the rest of the statement has to do with becoming proud in material prosperity, while failing to care for the poor and needy people in her midst. In YHWH’s eyes / the prophet Ezekiel’s preaching, is that the heart of Sodom’s sin?

לֹא הִחֲזִיקָה:

she did not take strong hold of!⁶⁶⁶

16:50 וַתִּגְבְּהֵינָה

And they became haughty,

וַתַּעֲשִׂינָה תוֹעֵבָה לְפָנַי

and they did a disgusting thing before me.

וָאֲסִיר אֶתְהֵן

And I removed them,⁶⁶⁷

כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי:

just as I saw.⁶⁶⁸

666

Rabbi Fisch comments that Sodom's "security and prosperity produced in her a sense of pride and egoism. These vices induced in the inhabitants heartlessness towards the poor and other acts which God abominated." (P. 96) Notice—not a word concerning Sodom's homosexuality.

We conclude that for Ezekiel, the litmus test for a society, is the strength with which it takes hold of the poor and needy in its midst, to help them. What do you think? Do you cynically call such a view "Communism," or "Socialism"? We call it "Biblical," and challenge you to show this is not the case.

Hilmer notes that "Here social injustice rather than sexual perversion...is highlighted." (P. 1247) Yes, but in practice, interpreters of the story of Sodom in **Genesis 19** have dealt mainly with the sin of "sodomy," homosexual intercourse, saying very little about the dangers of wealth and affluence, and treatment of the poor. What do you think?

667

Rabbi Fisch comments that "God destroyed the whole locality (**Genesis 19:25**)." (P. 95)

668

Compare **Genesis 18:21**, where YHWH is depicted as saying to Himself,

אֲרִדָּה נָא וְאֲרָאָה

I will do down now, and I will see

(continued...)

16:51 וְשָׁמְרוֹן

And Samaria--

כַּחֲצֵי חַטָּאתֶיךָ

like the half of your sin,

לֹא חָטְאָה

she did not sin!

וַתְּרַבֵּי אֶת־תּוֹעֵבוֹתֶיךָ

And you multiplied your disgusting actions

מִהֵנָּה

beyond them;

וַתְּצַדֵּקִי אֶת־[אַחֹתֶיךָ] [אַחֹתֶיךָ]

and you justified your sisters⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁸(...continued)

הַכְּצַעֲקָתָהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלַי

whether according to its outcry, the one coming to me,

עָשׂוּ כְּלֵה

they have made a complete end / destruction.

וְאִם־לֹא אֲדַע:

And if not, I will know.

669

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In comparison with Judea’s [we say, ‘Jerusalem’s’] guilt, Sodom and Samaria would appear almost righteous.” (P. 97) Compare **Jeremiah 3:11**,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי

And YHWH said to me,

צָדִיקָה נִפְשָׁה מִשְׁבֵּה יִשְׂרָאֵל

Back-turning Israel’s innermost-being is more righteous

(continued...)

בְּכָל־תּוֹעֵבוֹתַיִךְ אֲשֶׁר (עָשִׂיתִי) [עָשִׂיתָ]:

by all your disgusting actions which you did!

16:52 גַּם־אַתָּה | שְׂאֵי כָל־מַתְּךָ

You too, bear your disgrace

אֲשֶׁר פָּלַלְתָּ לְאֶחָיוֹתַי בְּחַטָּאתַיִךְ

by which you intervened for your sisters by your sins;⁶⁷⁰

אֲשֶׁר־הִתְעַבְתָּ מֵהֵן

because you did more abominably than they,

תִּצְדָּקְנָה מִמֶּנִּי

they will be justified more than you.

וְגַם־אַתָּה בּוֹשִׁי וְשְׂאֵי כָל־מַתְּךָ

And you too, be ashamed, and bear your disgrace,

בְּצַדִּיקְתָּךְ אֶחָיוֹתַיִךְ:

since you made your sisters appear righteous!⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹(...continued)

מִבְּגֵדָה יְהוּדָה:

than treacherous Judah!

⁶⁷⁰

This phrase is given varying translations: **New Revised Standard** has “for you have brought about for your sisters a more favorable judgment”; **New Jerusalem** has “(the shame) of which you have freed your sisters”; **Tanakh** has “(the disgrace) of serving as your sisters' advocate”; **New International** has “for you have furnished some justification for your sisters.”

⁶⁷¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The more grievous guilt of Judah [we say ‘Jerusalem’] has the effect of mitigating the severity of the punishment upon her erring *sisters*; what a disgrace!” (P. 97)

16:53⁶⁷² וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבִיתָהֶן

And I will return their captivity,⁶⁷³

אֶת־[שְׁבִית] סֶדֶם וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ

those taken captive⁶⁷⁴ (from) Sodom and her daughters,⁶⁷⁵

672

Matties comments on **verses 53-63**, that “An abrupt change of fortunes is in store for all three sisters (**verses 53-58**) as well as for Jerusalem (**verses 59-63**)...The Lord intends to restore all three to their former state of well-being.” (P. 1177)

Can you imagine this, that the notoriously sinful city of Sodom will one day be restored to her former “state of well-being”? Does that fit in with your theology of “Hell” and “eternal punishment”?

Reimer comments on **verses 53-58** that “Unlike the ‘outcome’ of **verses 35-43** (which detailed punishment), here judgment is presupposed and a future restoration envisaged. Neither here nor in the conclusion of **verses 59-63** does future hope exclude shame. Restoring each to their former state (**verse 55**) puts Jerusalem on the same level as her ‘sisters’ who have been similarly graced.” (P. 1521)

673

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “I will turn their captivity,” that “Besides the literal application, the phrase is also used in the more general sense of ‘restore their fortunes.’” (P. 97)

674

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” שְׁבִית, “captivity,” “captives”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” שְׁבִיט, with the same meaning—a matter of correct spelling.

675

There is nothing said in **Genesis 19** concerning captives being taken from Sodom and her daughter-cities / villages. Perhaps Ezekiel has reference to **Genesis 14**, where combined Near-Eastern forces invade Sodom and her daughters, taking prisoners, and Abram acts like a brave military leader in restoring at least some of those taken captive, including Lot and his family.

וְאֵת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּת] שְׁמֵרוֹן וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ

and those taken captive⁶⁷⁶ from Samaria and her daughters;

(וְשְׁבִית) [וְשְׁבוּת] שְׁבִיתֶיךָ בְּתוֹכָהֶנָּה:

and those taken captive, your captives,⁶⁷⁷ in their midst,⁶⁷⁸

16:54 לְמַעַן תִּשְׂאֵי כָל־מִתְךָ

so that you may bear your disgrace,

וְנִכְלַמְתָּ מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית

and may be humiliated on account of all you have done,

בְּנַחֲמֶיךָ אֹתָן:

when you have mercy on them.⁶⁷⁹

676

The Masoretes have the same phenomenon here as in footnote 148.

677

Again, the Masoretes have the same phenomenon here as in footnotes 148 and 150.

678

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Judah [we say, ‘Jerusalem’] is to be restored together with Sodom and Samaria.” (P. 97)

679

Translations of **verse 54** vary somewhat:

King James, “That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.”

Tanakh, “Thus you shall bear your disgrace and feel your disgrace for behaving in such a way that they could take comfort.”

New Revised Standard, “in order that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them.”

New International, “so that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all you have done in giving them comfort.”

(continued...)

16:55 וְאַחֹתֶיךָ סֹדֹם וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ

And your sisters, Sodom and her daughters

תִּשְׁבְּנָן לְקִדְמֹתָן

will return to their former state,^{680, 1}

⁶⁷⁹(...continued)

New Jerusalem, “so that you can bear your shame and disgrace for all you have done, and so console them.”

Rahfs, ὅπως κομίση τὴν βάσανόν σου καὶ ἀτιμωθήσῃ ἐκ πάντων ὧν ἐποίησας ἐν τῷ σε παροργίσει με, “so that you might receive your torment and might be dishonored out of all the things you have done, in your provoking Me.”

680

The phrase לְקִדְמֹתָן means “to their antiquity,” or “to their former estate.” Compare:

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 (after the curses of YHWH have fallen on Israel, and she has gone into captivity, when she returns to YHWH, He will “return your captivity,” translated by **New International** as “restore your fortunes,” making Israel even more prosperous than before);

Jeremiah 29:10-14 (after 70 years in captivity in Babylon, [YHWH] will bring Israel back to the land with prosperity, hope, and a future);

Jeremiah 33:1-26 (YHWH promise of restoration of devastated Judah and Israel to their prior condition);

Ezekiel 39:25-29 (Jacob and all the people of Israel will be returned from exile to live in the land in security, filled with the Divine Spirit).

But here, in **Ezekiel 16:53-63**, just such a ‘restoration to the former estate’ is promised not only to Jerusalem, but also to those sinful sister-cities, Samaria and Sodom—all three of whom had experienced YHWH’s fiery destruction in this life! Ezekiel’s vision-story must envision life beyond this life, resurrection from the dead and from the punishment that caused their death, to a renewal of their former condition in life. What do you think? See end-note for all of the passages in the **Hebrew Bible** that refer to YHWH’s returning captivities to their former estate.

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Jeremiah similarly prophesied the restoration of Israel’s neighbors.” (P. 97) See:

Jeremiah 12:14-15,

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

(continued...)

⁶⁸⁰(...continued)

In this way YHWH spoke,

עַל־כָּל־שְׁכֵנַי הָרָעִים

concerning all my neighbors, the evil ones—

הַנִּגְעִים בְּנַחֲלָה

who strike against the heritage

אֲשֶׁר־הֵנַחֲלֹתִי אֶת־עַמִּי אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל

which I gave as inheritance to My people Israel:

הִנְנִי נֹתֵשֵׁם מֵעַל אֲדָמָתָם

Look at Me, pulling them up from upon their land,

וְאֶת־בַּיִת יְהוּדָה אֶתּוֹשׁ מִתּוֹכָם:

and the house of Judah I will pull up from their midst.

12:15 וְהָיָה אַחֲרַי נֹתְשֵׁי אוֹתָם

And it will happen, after my pulling them up,

אָשׁוּב וְרַחֲמֹתַי

I will turn / repent and I will have compassion on them.

וְהֵשַׁבְתִּים אִישׁ לְנַחֲלָתוֹ

And I will return them, each one to his inheritance,

וְאִישׁ לְאֲרָצוֹ:

and each to his land.

Jeremiah 48:47,

וּשְׁבַתִּי שְׁבוּת־מוֹאָב

And I will return / restore Moab's captivity

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

in (the) end of the days!

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

(It is) a saying of YHWH.

עַד־הֵנָּה מִשְׁפַּט מוֹאָב:

As far as here, Moab's justice / judgment.

Jeremiah 49:6,

וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן

And afterwards I will cause to return Ammon's children's captivity.

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of YHWH.

Jeremiah 49:39,

(continued...)

וּשְׁמֵרוֹן וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ

and Samaria and her daughters

תָּשׁוּבָן לְקִדְמוֹתָן

will return to their former state;

וְאַתָּה וּבְנוֹתֶיךָ

and you, and your daughters,

תָּשׁוּבִינָה לְקִדְמוֹתֶיךָ:

will return to your former state!⁶⁸¹

16:56 וְלֹא הִיְתָה סְדֹם אֲחֹתְךָ

And did not Sodom your sister, become

לְשִׁמוּעָה בְּפִיךָ

the subject of your conversation in your mouth,

בְּיוֹם גְּאוֹנֶיךָ:

in a day of your pride,⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰(...continued)

וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

And it will happen in (the) latter part of the days--

(אָשׁוּב) [אָשׁוּב] אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבִית] עֵילָם

I will cause to return (the) captivity of Eylam--

נֵאמַר־יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of YHWH!

681

Reimer notes that “Restoring each [of the three ‘sister-cities’] to their former state... puts Jerusalem on the same level as her ‘sisters’ who have been similarly graced.” (P. 1521)

682

Translations of **verse 56** vary:

(continued...)

16:57 בְּטָרָם הִגְלָה רָעַתְךָ

before your wickedness was uncovered?⁶⁸³

כְּמוֹ עֵת חֲרַפְתַּת בְּנוֹת־אַרְם

Like (in) a time of reproach of Syria's daughters,

וְכָל־סְבִיבוֹתֶיהָ

and all those around her,

בְּנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים

(the) daughters of the Philistines,

הַשְּׂאֲטוֹת אוֹתְךָ מִסְּבִיב:

the ones treating you with despite from every side--

⁶⁸²(...continued)

King James, “For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride”;

Tanakh, “Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the days of your pride...”; **New**

Revised Standard, same;

New International, “You would not even mention your sister Sodom in the day of your pride...”;

New Jerusalem, “Did you not gloat over your sister Sodom when you were so proud...”;

Rahlfs, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἦν Σοδομα ἡ ἀδελφή σου εἰς ἀκοήν ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑπερηφανίας σου, “and if your sister Sodom was not for a news-report in your mouth in the days of your pride...”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The name of Sodom was not mentioned from contempt of its evil reputation; but this was an act of hypocrisy on the part of one who was of still worse character. Rashi and others render as a question: ‘was not your sister Sodom mentioned...? That is to say, since Judah in her heyday has realized that Sodom’s fall was due to selfish pride (**verse 49**), her own failings of similar nature and greater intensity were thus even more serious.” (P. 98)

683

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Disaster was, in ancient times, interpreted as God’s punishment of sin, a doctrine contested in the **Scroll of Job**. Before calamity overwhelmed Judah, she could profess a righteousness which she did not possess; but when the day of reckoning came, her true character was exposed.” (P. 98)

16:58 אֶת־זַמְתְּךָ וְאֶת־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיךָ

your wickedness, and your disgusting actions--⁶⁸⁴

אֶתְּ נִשְׂאתִים

you lifted them up (yourselves)!⁶⁸⁵

684

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Ezekiel is alluding to an occasion when the peoples mentioned had humiliated the kingdom of Judah, and the Jewish commentators quote what happened in the reign of Ahaz as recorded in **2 Chronicles 28:5, 18.**” (P. 98)

28:5 וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהָיו בְּיַד מֶלֶךְ אַרָם

And YHWH his God placed him [king Ahaz] in (the) hand of Aram’s / Syria’s king,
וַיִּכּוּ בוֹ

And they struck him;

וַיִּשְׁבּוּ מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂבִיָּה גְדוֹלָה

and they took captive from him a great group of captives;

וַיָּבִיאוּ דָרַמְשֶׁק

and they brought (them) to Damascus.

וְגַם בְּיַד־מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָתַן

And also, into (the) king of Israel’s hand he was placed,

וַיִּדְּכוּ בוֹ מַכָּה גְדוֹלָה:

and he struck him (with) a great blow.

28:18 וּפְלִשְׁתִּים פָּשְׁטוּ בְעָרֵי הַשְּׁפֵלָה וְהַגְּבֹל לַיהוּדָה

And Philistines made raids on cities of the lowland and the southern part of Judah.

וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־בֵּית־שֶׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת־אֵילֹן וְאֶת־הַגְּדֵרוֹת

And they captured Beth-Shemesh, and Ayalon, and the Gederoth;

וְאֶת־שׁוֹכּוֹ וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ וְאֶת־תַּמְנָה וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ

and Soco and her daughter-cities, and Timnah and her daughter-cities;

וְאֶת־גִּמְזוֹ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹתֶיהָ וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם:

and Gimzo and her daughter-cities; and they settled down there.

685

Rabbi Fisch comments concerning the line “you have borne your lewdness,” that it is “Either ‘you have suffered,’ or ‘you will suffer (prophetic perfect), punishment for you abominable sins; of ‘you can no longer disclaim guilt.’” (P. 98)

נֹאֵם יְהוָה:

–(It is) a saying of YHWH!

16:59⁶⁸⁶, ² כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

(וְעָשִׂיתִי) [וְעָשִׂיתִי] אוֹתָךְ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ

And I will do⁶⁸⁷ to you just as you did,

אֲשֶׁר-בִּזְוִיתָ אֱלֹהִים לְהַפְרֹת בְּרִית:

who despised an oath, to violate a covenant!⁶⁸⁸

686

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 59-63** “Restoration After the Expiation of Sin.” He comments that “The Hebrew prophets never left their people in despair. The most vehement denunciation and the direst threats are followed by words of hope. Judah has been unmindful of, and faithless to, the covenant with God and must suffer the consequences; but He will remember and renew it for ever. Whatever may be in store for the nation in the near future, He will not completely repudiate them.” (P. 98)

Reimer entitles **verses 59-63** “The Everlasting Covenant.” He comments that The final brief passage of **chapter 16** explicitly refers back both to the sections on the abandoned child (**verses 8 and 59, 22 and 60**) and the ‘sisters’ (**verses 45 and 61**), drawing them together in one conclusion. The malleability [able to be shaped or extended] of the metaphors can be seen in the sisters being given as daughters in **verse 61**...

“The everlasting covenant (Hebrew עוֹלָם בְּרִית, **beriyth (olam)** [‘a covenant, long-lasting’] of **verse 60** finds parallels elsewhere in the **Old Testament**, most significantly in **Ezekiel 37:26** (compare **Isaiah 61:8**); also within the context of bringing back together the old kingdoms of north and south (compare the hope expressed in **Jeremiah 32:40**.” (Pp. 1521-22)

687

The Masoretes offer two readings, first the *kethibh*, “what is written,” וְעָשִׂיתִי, “and you (feminine singular) will do”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” וְעָשִׂיתִי, “and I will do.”

688

(continued...)

16:60 וְזָכַרְתִּי אֲנִי

But / and I will remember, I (will)!—⁶⁸⁹

אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ בְּיָמַי נְעוּרֶיךָ

My covenant with you in (the) days of your youth,⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁸(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In Hebrew law a husband could not condone his wife’s adultery and he had to take action against her. In like manner, God must punish His people’s [we say, ‘His wife’s’] infidelity.” (P. 99)

Yes...but we have learned from the **Scroll of Job** that it is foolish for human beings to say what YHWH God must or must not do. YHWH is free; He is not under some law that stands above Him. He can do whatever He likes, whenever He likes! What do you think? See Rabbi Fisch’s next comment, where he acknowledges this fact.

⁶⁸⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that in the phrase “nevertheless I will remember My covenant,” “the pronoun I is emphatic in the Hebrew. God can do what man is unable to do. With the human being adultery renders the marriage covenant null; God, however will *remember* [His marriage covenant with His wife], and permit the nation’s sufferings to wipe out the guilty past.” (P. 99)

⁶⁹⁰

Jerusalem has forgotten the days of her youth (**verse 22**), but YHWH has not forgotten! And He intends to renew, revitalize the covenant made with Jerusalem in her youth—that means, He fully intends to remarry His fallen, prostitute wife! **Jeremiah 2:2** has similar language, as YHWH tells Jeremiah:

הֲלֹךְ וְקָרְאתָ בְּאָזְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם לְאָמֹר

(Get) going--and you will cry out in Jerusalem’s ears, saying,

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke:

זָכַרְתִּי לְךָ חֶסֶד נְעוּרֶיךָ

I remembered for you, (the) steadfast love of your youth,

אֲהַבַת כְּלוּלֹתֶיךָ

(the) love of your engagement period (to me),

(continued...)

וְהִקְמוֹתִי לָךְ בְּרִית עוֹלָם:

and I will cause to stand for you a long-lasting covenant!⁶⁹¹

⁶⁹⁰(...continued)

לְכַתֹּב אַחֲרַי בְּמִדְבָּר

your following after me in the wilderness,

בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה:

in a land not sown.

691

Reimer comments that “The everlasting covenant...of **verse 60** finds parallels else-where in the **Old Testament**, most significantly in **Ezekiel 37:26** [‘I will make a covenant of peace with them...a long-lasting covenant...’] (compare **Isaiah 61:8** [‘...I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make a long-lasting covenant with them’]); also within the context of bringing back together the old kingdoms of north and south (compare the hope expressed in **Jeremiah 32:40** [‘I will make a long-lasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them...’]).” (Pp. 1521-22)

See also **Isaiah 55:3**. “...I will make with you a long-lasting covenant, My steadfast, sure love for David” and **Jeremiah 31:31-34**^{Heb}

31 הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה

Look--days (are) coming--(it is) a saying of YHWH--

וְכָרַתִּי אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה:

and I will cut with Israel’s house and with Judah’s house a new covenant--

32 לֹא כַבְרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת־אֲבוֹתָם

not like the covenant which I cut with their fathers,

בְּיוֹם הַחֲזִיקִי בְיָדָם לְהוֹצִיאָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

in (the) day I took strong hold by their hand to bring them fort from Egypt-land,

אֲשֶׁר־הִמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי

which (covenant) they broke / frustrated--My covenant!

וְאֲנֹכִי בַעֲלָתִי בָם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

And I, I ruled as Husband over them--a saying of YHWH!

33 כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרַת אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרַי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם

Because this is the covenant which I will cut with Israel’s house after these days--

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

(continued...)

16:61⁶⁹² וּזְכַרְתָּ אֶת־דְרָכַיךָ⁶⁹²

And you will remember your ways,

וְנִכְלַמְתָּ

and you will be ashamed,

בְּקַחְתֶּךָ אֶת־אֲחוֹתֶיךָ הַגְּדֹלוֹת מִמֶּךָ

when you take your sisters who are bigger than you

אֶל־הַקְּטָנוֹת מִמֶּךָ

to the ones smaller than you,

⁶⁹¹(...continued)

נָתַתִּי אֶת־תּוֹרָתִי בְּקִרְבָּם

I gave / placed My *torah* / teaching in their midst,

וְעַל־לִבָּם אֶכְתָּבָנָהּ

and upon their heart I will write it.

וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָמָּה יְהִיוּ־לִי לְעָם:

And I will be to them for a God, and they will be to Me for a people!

34 וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו

And they will not again teach—each one his neighbor, and each one his brother,

לְאָמֹר דָּעוּ אֶת־יְהוָה

saying, Know YHWH!

כִּי־כֹלָם יֵדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד־גְּדֹלָם

Because all of them will know Me—to their least, and as far as their great one—

נֵאֻם־יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of YHWH--

כִּי אֶסְלַח לְעֹנָם וְלֹחַטָאֲתָם לֹא אֶזְכַּר־עוֹד:

Because I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will not again remember!

692

Matties comments that “The recovery will ignite Jerusalem’s memory, the two sisters will become daughters, and Jerusalem will be humbled and ashamed in the face of grace.” (P. 1177)

וְנָתַתִּי אֶתְהֶן לָךְ לְבָנוֹת

and I will give them to you for daughters,⁶⁹³

וְלֹא מִבְרִיתְךָ:

and not from your covenant.⁶⁹⁴

693

Notice this language. It is no longer about just three sisters. It involves additional “sisters,” “bigger” ones, and “smaller” ones. No, not just Sodom, and Samaria, and Jerusalem—but let us include all the other “sister cities” in the world. Let’s make it universal, for that’s how wide and all-encompassing YHWH’s steadfast-love is! Can you take this in? Is this not what Ezekiel means by this language in his vision-story? How else would you interpret it? And in this light, reread **Isaiah 40-66**, with its universal mission for servant-Israel, reaching out to the ends of the earth with the good news of YHWH.

694

What does this mean, “But not from your covenant”? We think it means, not from the new covenant which YHWH promises Jerusalem, but from a larger covenant which He will make with all cities, of all nations, and all peoples of the earth. YHWH’s steadfast-love for Israel, is wonderful. But it is not the end. Beyond that covenant is His determination to include all humanity in His family / home / life! What a promise!

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The magnanimity [generosity] of God in overlooking past sins, making a new covenant with the nation and even presenting them with Sodom and Samaria [we add, ‘and their sister-cities], will arouse in them a deep feeling of remorse.” (P. 99)

Noah Webster in his 1828 **An American Dictionary of the English Language** defined magnanimity as coming from the Latin, *magnanimitas*; *magnus*, great, and *animus*, mind, and meaning “Greatness of mind,” “that elevation or dignity of soul, which encounters danger and trouble with tranquility and firmness, which raises the possessor above revenge, and makes him delight in acts of benevolence, which makes him disdain injustice and meanness, and prompts him to sacrifice personal ease, interest and safety for the accomplishment of useful and noble objects.”

Yes, our God YHWH could have been petty, refusing to overlook the past, and demanding his pound of flesh—but no, not YHWH. His very nature is steadfast-love, and He loves to forgive—even when those who have sinned grievously against Him have not repented. So it is here, at the close of **Ezekiel 16**. YHWH punishes, punishes harshly. But that is not the end of the vision-story. In the end it is amazing grace, unbelievably astounding grace, to the least

(continued...)

16:62⁶⁹⁵ וְהִקְיֹמֹתִי אֶנִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אִתְּךָ

And I, I will cause My covenant with you to stand;

וְיָדַעַתְּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and you will know that I (am) YHWH;⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁴(...continued)

deserving. Why? Because that is His nature. “God is love”—a love that knows how to rebuke and punish, but that never quits loving, and that in the end, finally, wins. Do we dare to believe that?

Matties notes that “The end clause of **verse 61** has engendered several interpretations, two of which are most likely: Samaria and Sodom become Jerusalem’s sisters, benefitting from the Lord’s mercy even though they had not been covenantal partners with Jerusalem; or, they become Jerusalem’s sisters not apart from the Lord’s covenant with Jerusalem, hence one covenant will include Samaria and Sodom [and we add, and the smaller and bigger cities of the world].” (P. 1177)

⁶⁹⁵

Matties comments that “**Verse 62** summarizes the profound transformation that occurs: the consolidating of the covenant, the recognition of the Lord, the response of humble and truthful self-awareness, the end of finding fault with the Lord [we add, ‘the end of YHWH’s finding fault with His wayward daughters / sister-cities], and the Lord’s thorough purification of Jerusalem [we add, ‘them all’].” (P. 1177)

⁶⁹⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “What He now promises is a voluntary act on His part... Both in the impending punishment and the subsequent restoration they may learn the nature of [YHWH] God.” (P. 99) Oh yes! You will never learn the nature of YHWH God until you recognize his love that is thousands of times greater than His punishment. Don’t read **Genesis 19** and conclude that you know all about YHWH from learning the story of Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction in fire and brimstone. No, no. Keep on reading. In-clude this x-rated chapter, **Ezekiel 16**. Read it in the light of **Isaiah 40-66**. See it embodied in the self-giving ministry of Jesus Christ in Galilee of the nations—a ministry of healing, and teaching, and forgiveness that reaches out to all, even though it costs his life. God so loved / loves the world! Then claim that steadfast-love for yourself, and go, tell others!

16:63 לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרֵי וְבִשְׁתּוֹ

so that you will remember and be ashamed,

וְלֹא יִהְיֶה-לָּךְ עוֹד פֶּתַח־וּפִי

and there will not again be for you an opening of mouth,

מִפְּנֵי כְלִמְתֶּךָ

because of your insult / reproach,

בְּכַפְרֵי-לָּךְ לְכָל-אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂית

when I cover over for you all that you did—⁶⁹⁷

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

it is a saying of my Lord YHWH!⁶⁹⁸

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Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase “when I have forgiven you all that you have done,” literally “when I have covered over for you,” “concealed it from My sight,” that “The manifestation of [YHWH’s] grace after national apostasy will overwhelm them with shame of their disloyalty in the past. They will have no ‘opening of the mouth’...no plea for self-justification and complaint of His hard treatment of His people.”

Yes. Whenever we human beings begin to realize the greatness of YHWH’s love for us, and for all others, all our grounds for pride and dismissal of others as less worthy than ourselves will be ended. YHWH’s kingdom is a kingdom of grace, of forgiveness, of acceptance of the least deserving. We will be proud no more, forever!

Eichrodt comments that “The central object of the whole passage is to give emphasis to the way in which such incomprehensible mercy strikes us dumb and leaves us without a word to say. The writer here saw how to unmask the self-righteous pride which he knew for the the besetting sin of his own people.” (P. 217)

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And keep this in mind. This vision-story isn’t something Ezekiel made up. It is a vision given by YHWH. It is the Word of YHWH!

Eichrodt concludes his commentary on **chapter 16** by stating, “There is no need to detail the way in which this accusation against the chosen people impinges deeply upon the life of the covenant (continued...)”

⁶⁹⁸(...continued)

people of the **New Testament**, and reveals their faults. What the **Old Testament** prophet says of the criminal abuse of the Divine gift of love reveals how gravely guilty the Church is of the same sin...

“The letters to the churches in the **Scroll of Revelation**, many of whose phrases re-echo the language of this chapter (**Revelation 2:14; 20-23**), bear witness to how God acts in exactly the same way in judging His church. To go still further, we cannot but recollect the collective guilt of the nations of the West, who, in their ingratitude and blindness, have exchanged the Gospel entrusted to them for the gospel of self-deification, which, after seeming to promise them unlimited power to exploit life with all its riches, has finally left them at a standstill, not knowing what to do, at the point where they anxiously face their own self-annihilation...The prophet’s indictment at this point penetrates to the real nature of things, and discovers the reason for the hopeless plight to which the civilized nations of today have been reduced. It also points towards a creative solution for this plight, which is inaccessible to all human effort and to be effected by no other hand than that of the God Whom men have betrayed.” (Pp. 219-20)

Preaching on Ezekiel 16

Jerusalem "the golden" was the city that was Israel's very heart, the beloved "Mother-City," Zion, object of Israel's fondest memories, desires, and hopes:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy! (**Psalm 137:5-6**)

But the only ground upon which Jerusalem can stand before YHWH God is that of **unmerited** grace--only on the basis of free forgiveness, and unmerited love, undeserved grace, can the holy city Jerusalem come before God. Even Jerusalem "the golden," [YHWH's] chosen City, Zion, has, and can have, no grounds for pride, forever!

Jerusalem's racial and national pride was only an empty sham, built upon a lie, as is all such pride.

Jerusalem, like so many other cities before her, and since, had much in her history to justify her pride. Had she not been selected to be the site of the set-apart temple, where the "Holy of Holies," with the golden chest, with its two tables of stone inside, embodying the *Torah* / Law of the eternal God--the **Ten Commandments**, written by the finger of [YHWH]--and with the presence of YHWH above it, was located? Was Jerusalem not the center of Israel,⁶⁹⁹ YHWH God's Own people? Was she not the central focusing point of Israel's worship, the beloved goal of every Jewish pilgrimage? Had not Abraham, the father of the faithful, offered up sacrifice there, on Mount Moriah? Had not King David made her the capital of all Israel? Had not Israel's kings ruled there, and priests and prophets--prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel made it the center of their ministry? Why deny all of this, in false humility? Why not be proud of all this honor and glory? If any other city in all the earth had reason for pride, certainly Jerusalem did!

But it was also the truth that Jerusalem shared a common origin with the very people she belittled and despised: the Amorites and the Chittites, over whom she vaunted herself in pride. "Your origins, and your birth, are out of the land of the Canaanite--your father, the Amorite; and your mother, Hittite." Yes, Jerusalem herself had once been a Canaanite city, and the people of Jerusalem, if they were honest, would have to confess that their ancestors were from the same family tree, the same racial stock as those whom they hated and looked down upon in pride.

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See **Mishnah Kelim 1:6-9**, "The land of Israel is holier than any other land... within the wall (of Jerusalem) is still more holy..."

Few of us realize it today, but the greatness of the opening eleven chapters of the **Jewish Bible (Genesis)** can be seen in the fact that there is not a Jew, not one "Israelite" in those eleven chapters! Israel's ancestors are the common ancestors of every people, every human "race"! Israel's family tree is humanity's family tree. There is no superior race by birth, and there is no people of higher origin than any other—and therefore, there is no “inferior” race or people. All humanity is ultimately descended from the same father, and the same mother. Therefore the entire human race is one--and any and every attempt to exalt one group above another, every racial or national claim to superiority, every form of ethnocentrism, is built upon a lie, upon an empty sham—including “America the Great!”

And so [YHWH] speaks to Israel, to Jerusalem, and through that word to all of us: You have nothing racially, or nationally, but what is the common possession of all mankind! The very people you look down upon and despise, thinking they are somehow “beneath” you, are none other than your own brothers and sisters, children of the same mother and father as yourselves! Niggers and Mexicans, Wops and Pollacks, Nazis and Hippies, Yankees and Red-Necks, Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals, Cubans and Yankees--we are all one family!

And whatever there was in her life, her history, to which Jerusalem could point with pride, was not her own doing, but the free gift of [YHWH].

This vision-story that Ezekiel tells (a mighty long vignette!) could well be entitled "The Prodigal Daughter" (or Wife) of the **Jewish Bible**. And though it is a story that is sexually explicit and embarrassingly crude in its language,⁷⁰⁰ it says in a most effective way that whatever

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There is a striking contrast between the language of **Ezekiel one** and the language of **Ezekiel sixteen**. In **chapter one**, the prophet meticulously avoids ascribing any human form to [YHWH], and strains his language to the breaking point in guarding the Divine vision from any "anthropomorphism." But here, in **chapter sixteen**, he speaks readily and without apology of [YHWH], in deeply human terms, using sexual intercourse—indeed incest!--as a description of [YHWH's] relationship with His people.

There is, however, no contradiction here. We limited human beings cannot speak directly and without symbols concerning God; He is far greater and truer than any of our symbols can ever convey. But speak of Him we must, for He is the Source of our life, and our Hope for the future. And the best symbols that we can use are human symbols. Ezekiel's vision-story must not be taken crudely and literally; but it must be taken seriously! And we add that in the **New Testament**, and especially in the letters of Paul to the churches, there is a much different way of speaking about God and His ways. Paul takes up symbolism from his Roman environment, and from Greek philosophy, to describe God in terms taken from first century monetary / banking
(continued...)

there was in Jerusalem's life to which she could point with pride, it was not her own doing, but the free gift of her God, YHWH.

The little baby girl, born of an Amorite father and Hittite mother, had been an unwanted child. She had been cast off into an open field, and left to die. "On the day you were given birth, no one cut your umbilical cord, nor were you washed with water...You were not rubbed with salt...not diapered at all. Not an eye looked upon you with care, to do one of these things for you, to show mercy to you. And you were cast out upon the open field in disgust for your innermost being..." Yes, her mother and father had given her birth, but they hadn't wanted her, from the moment of her birth. Her very life--being alive--was disgusting, loathsome--to them. They wished she hadn't been born; they wished her dead. So they exposed her, left her there, in an open field to die.⁷⁰¹

But YHWH God had passed by, and had seen the baby girl, "kicking blindly, all bloody." And he had said to her, all bloody, "Live!" The prophet repeats that statement for emphasis: "And [YHWH] said to you, all bloody, Live!" If it hadn't been for YHWH's kindness, the baby girl would have died. Her very life, her existence, had been the gift of YHWH's compassionate care. When she could do nothing for herself, YHWH had given her life and a future. Her growth

⁷⁰⁰(...continued)

practices, or using highly charged philosophical terms. But while he does so, he acknowledges that his knowledge is only partial, never fully adequate--see his confession at the end of **Romans, 11:33-36**.

Christian interpreters of Paul, taking his language as if it is the final answer, the ultimate truth about God, have been led into disastrous theological conclusions concerning God's paying off the devil through the death of Jesus on the cross, etc. etc. Biblical students should beware of taking **Ezekiel 16** literally, in its use of sexual imagery in the depiction of YHWH; they should also beware of taking Paul's commercial and philosophical imagery literally, as if it is not symbolical in a similar way to **Ezekiel 16**! The fourth century Church, under the dictatorial demands of Constantine the Great, made the philosophical language rooted in Paul, and developed by Athanasius of Alexandria, into rigid creedal propositions; and taking the sword in hand, marched through Syria, Palestine and Egypt putting monophysite Christians to death. Christians throughout the centuries have all too often fallen in line with that way of interpreting the **New Testament**, leading to on-going religious wars and crusades and persecutions. What a tragic way to follow Jesus the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the Suffering Servant!

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This was a well known ancient form of birth control. Today, we have greatly civilized and modernized the procedure with our clinical efficiency. Now we drown the unborn baby with saline solution in its mother's womb, and then place the infant body in a plastic lined garbage can. But even so, the same disgust and loathing for the baby's life is ours!

into womanhood, her physical body, and her beauty, all rested back ultimately upon YHWH's gift of life to her, upon His care for her, upon His word, that had given her life.

And the profound fact of life is just this: what was true of Jerusalem is true of every one of us! There just is no basis for pride in our own accomplishments! There are only grounds for pride in YHWH—for everything we have and are have come to us by YHWH's gift!

And then, when the little girl had grown up into full womanhood--when her pubic hair had grown, and her breasts had become firm--again YHWH had come near to her, and had taken her as His Own bride. YHWH had chosen her. It was not her idea, but His! Her God had entered into covenant with her, making her His bride, this unkept, naked, penniless young woman, who had nothing, who belonged to no one. He himself had cleansed her, and beautified her, and massaged her, and dressed her beautifully. He had given her all her jewelry, and had provided for her like a queen. Her beauty, and her fame, had all been the direct gifts from her Husband, from YHWH. That's how Jerusalem had come into her beauty and greatness. It was all YHWH's free gift to her! She was not "self-made," she was "YHWH-made." Without YHWH's free gifts, Jerusalem would have still been naked, penniless, covered with blood.

And so, whatever there was in her history to which she could point with pride, it was not her own doing, but the free gift of her God.

And surely, if this was true for Jerusalem of old, how much more so is it true of us today, who claim to be the new People of God, the "Bride of Christ"! For is not this story of Jerusalem also the story of the Church, King Jesus' "Bride"? The Apostle Paul writes, "...Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for her, in order that He might set her apart, having cleansed (her) with the washing of water with a word, in order that He might present her to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any of these things." (**Ephesians 5:25-27**)

The Church is not made up of perfect people, of those who are able to save and cleanse themselves. No, the miracle of the Church is that it is made up of sinners--the unwanted, the unclean, the "no-bodies," to whom Christ Jesus came and died, and whom He has cleansed and purified for Himself, making them into his "Bride." We, like Jerusalem of old, are not "self-made," we are "God-made." Our life in Jesus Christ is [YHWH's] gift. Whatever we have done, whatever we have achieved as followers of Jesus, whatever beautiful there may be in our lives, it all rests back ultimately upon YHWH's good gifts to us. Whatever there may be in our history, to which we are able to point with pride, is not our own doing, but the free gift of YHWH!

If only we American Christians could deeply realize this fact of our life, we would get rid of our foolish pride, our superiority attitudes towards other nations and races and peoples, that have so marred our Christian witness! Once Jerusalem--whether the old Jerusalem, or the new--

realizes who she is, and where she came from, she will be proud no more forever!⁷⁰² Whatever pride she has, will be pride in YHWH, Who has done so much for her!

But there was much in Jerusalem's life, and in her history, to which she could not point with pride. She had been guilty of the most disgusting acts imaginable—the sacred prostitution of fertility religion, and the killing of her own children in fertility worship to phallic images!

The tragedy that marred Jerusalem's history is pointed to in those cutting words of YHWH through Ezekiel: "And you trusted in your beauty,⁷⁰³ and used your fame to become a prostitute...and you took your sons and your daughters, which you had borne for Me, and you sacrificed them to (those male images) to eat!...And with all your disgusting actions, and your prostitutions, you did not remember the days of your youth...!"

No, Jerusalem forgot. She did not remember the days of her youth. She forgot YHWH's grace and kindness; she put out of her mind what He had done for her; she forgot her wedding vows, and Who her Husband was! She forgot where her rich gifts had come from. Instead of turning to YHWH, her rightful and beloved Husband, in whole-hearted thankfulness and loyalty and devotion, and trusting obedience, because of all He had done for her, and because of Who He was, Jerusalem had "trusted in her own beauty," and had prostituted herself by giving her love to strangers, to others than her true Husband, YHWH!

I believe that this could well be the biting indictment which Almighty God is raising against His people, His "bride," the Church in our own day. Our Husband, Jesus Christ, has gone out into our world on a life-giving, "suffering-servant" mission of seeking, dying love for the poor, the oppressed, the sinful, lost people of our earth. He has called us to go out on that mission with Him, and He has richly endowed us with gifts of all sorts to enable us to go with Him on that life-giving mission. But we, His bride, have all too often refused to go with Him, and have stayed at home to enjoy the gifts He has given us in our own way, and we have gotten into bed with strangers—with the Gods of Materialism, and Power, and Pleasure!

Now this passage, **Ezekiel 16**, is so terrible, so harsh, that one of Israel's great Rabbis, Rabbi Eliezer (A.D. / C.E. 80-120), advised that it should never be read in the synagogue

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With apologies for the language used to Chief Joseph, the great American Nez Perce Indian chief, who said, "I will make war no more forever!"

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"The root of the sins of the woman so richly endowed by YHWH lies in the false trust in her own beauty and in the fame won through it. The gift crowds out the Giver." Walther Zimmerli, Ezekiel, **Biblischer Kommentar** XIII 1-7, p. 354 (my translation.)

(Mishnah Megillah 4:10).⁷⁰⁴ As you read this chapter, you can easily understand why he would give such advice! No one, but no one would do the kind of absurd things described in this chapter—building sacred brothels at the head of every street, seeking to worship God through sacred prostitution, then offering up the first-born sons and daughters of those illicit unions as bloody sacrifices, burning their own children's bodies as offerings, in order to insure the fertility of their fields and herds--impossible! No one would ever be guilty of such a thing!

But the hard fact of Jerusalem's history is that she had been guilty of just this. For, you see, Israel was surrounded by fertility worship--that's the kind of religion against which the prophets (especially Hosea!) of Israel constantly battled. In fact, historically, it's the most popular kind of religion that has characterized humanity throughout history--in Egypt, in Babylon, in Canaan, in India, and in the Americas.⁷⁰⁵

Among the Aztec Indians of Mexico, it has been estimated that in their fertility rites, some twenty to fifty thousand young boys were sacrificed annually--their hearts cut out of their living bodies, and offered to the Gods!

And the people of Jerusalem themselves, rather than keeping themselves free from such religious practices, had joined in that kind of fertility religion, with all its sexual immorality and the murder of innocent children! Jerusalem "forgot the days of her youth," she forgot Who her true Husband was. And as a result she became guilty of adultery, and the murder of her own children.

But, we say, at least there's nothing that bad, nothing like that in our history! Sure, we haven't always been exactly what we ought to be, we've not always been as committed to God as we ought to have been, but we've never gone to the extremes that Jerusalem went! Is this self-defense valid?

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In some 60 years of Christian experience, the author never remembers hearing this chapter read or discussed in the church or classroom, by any minister other than himself, and when he went into it in detail in a seminary class in Miami, Florida, some of the students met with the dean of the Seminary and the Seminary president, requesting his dismissal!

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For an in-depth introduction to fertility religions, and the worship of "Mother Nature," see Erich Neumann, **The Great Mother** (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963). See also Alan Watts and Eliot Elisofon, **Erotic Spirituality: the Vision of Konarak** (New York: Collier Books, 1971), and James B. Pritchard, **The Ancient Near East in Pictures**, 2nd. edition (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 160ff.

Jerusalem, instead of seriously walking hand in hand with YHWH, instead of making His mission in the world her mission (see **Isaiah 40-55**, and **Jonah**), had allowed herself to become caught up in the prevailing religion of her surrounding culture. And that was fertility religion, with its sacred prostitution and the offering up of child sacrifices--for that was the popular religious practice of the day. Everyone was doing it! And the promise that enticed and seduced Israel was that such religious practices, such "fertility religion," would ensure Israel's financial security. Her crops would be better, her animals would be healthier, and multiply more quickly, if she would only join in these fertility rites. That's why a king of Judah (Menashsheh) would be willing to offer up the blood of his first-born son to one of the fertility Deities. He did so, not out of hatred for his child, but out of love for his country and its prosperity. He believed that the child's blood, poured out, would result in better harvests, and a larger gross national product for his people!

And, we may seriously ask, have not we, in the Church of Jesus Christ, often allowed ourselves to become just as caught up in the prevailing religion of our American culture? Is not the real religion of America found not so much in what we say on Sunday mornings in sanctuaries about God, and Jesus, and the cross, but rather in what we do on Monday through Saturday, in the way we struggle for money, for pleasure, and for security? Isn't that what we live for, and struggle for, and die for? Isn't that what really counts? It's quite true that we have our churches, and that at least in some periods of our national life, we have joined those churches in record numbers. But that's largely for social and personal reasons, and it's not really what makes us tick! What really makes us tick is personal and corporate wealth, enjoyable, "happy" lives (what we identify as "the good life"), financial security, and the cult of either continual sexual orgasm or divorce! Even the organized churches themselves become caught up in the same cultural syndrome!

A so-called "Christian" person, would quickly have second thoughts and deep misgivings if asked to share sacrificially in some mission for Jesus Christ, or especially if called upon to die for his or her Christian faith. But that same person will unhesitatingly risk life and limb to protect his or her new Lexus from theft, or to keep their nation's security from being threatened by the "enemy"!

Indeed, many of us have easily justified the committing of atrocities in Viet-Nam, or in Iraq or Afghanistan, claiming that in so doing we were contributing to "stopping Communism," or getting rid of Al Qaeda or the Taliban! We in "Christian America" were quite willing to give our finest young men and women's blood to "stop Communism" and protect our GNP, while we considered those same young men and women foolish "dreamers" and "idealists" if they wanted to commit their lives as missionaries for Jesus Christ in the ghettos of America, or to the ignorant and backward peoples of underdeveloped countries! Isn't this true?

And so we, claiming to belong to (to be married to) Jesus Christ, claiming to be the "bride" of Him Who died upon the cross in order to welcome us into YHWH's presence, and in order to bring all the nations of the world to YHWH, we who claim to worship and follow Him,

have seen to it that our churches are the most segregated institutions in all America, centered, not in YHWH, or the Divine world mission, but in our own "happiness"! And while we worry about how to diet and lose weight, and how to secure maximum sexual gratification, pumping our bodies full of testosterone, millions of people throughout the world are starving to death both physically and spiritually, and we care little or nothing for it, and intend to do next to nothing about it!

Is this not a new, modern form of "fertility worship"? Will we not sacrifice, and work ourselves into a heart attack, for our financial welfare, and our personal security? Will we not gladly build sanctuaries ("Crystal Cathedrals") which cater to and enshrine our personal and national values? Which is worse, do you think, in [YHWH's] eyes: to cut out our own child's heart with a knife, and burn its body slowly upon an altar, to ensure our material prosperity; or to let others' children slowly starve to death in the streets of Bombay, or in Bangladesh, or in Darfur, or in Rwanda, or in the city-dump of Guatemala City, or in the streets of Latin American cities, or in our great American cities like Chicago and Los Angeles and Dallas--and not be willing to lift our finger to do anything about it, lest our financial security and our personal pleasures be somehow disturbed?

Yes, there were "skeletons in Jerusalem's closet," just as there are skeletons in our own closets. There was much in her life, and history, and there is much in our lives and in our history, to which we cannot point with pride. We too have been guilty and are guilty, if only we will face the truth about ourselves!

And so, what Jerusalem truly deserved was not fame and honor, but disgrace, and shame, and destruction.

In the latter half of **Ezekiel 16**, YHWH speaks to Jerusalem and tells how she deserves to be executed because of her many sins--sins far worse than her neighbors' whom she so easily despised and denounced and gossiped about! She should be stoned to death, hacked to pieces, and burned, as her Law demanded for the adulteress and the adulterer, and for the murderer! She had committed far worse crimes than Samaria and Sodom!

Yes, Sodom--Jerusalem, [YHWH's] "Bride," is worse than **Sodom! Sodom**, the most notorious, the most vice-filled, the most corrupt city in the **Jewish Bible!** Not Sodom, Ezekiel! Yes, Ezekiel says, Sodom. Jerusalem is worse than Sodom!

Do you know what Sodom's missing of the mark was? Why, of course we do. It was sodomy--sexual intercourse in unnatural ways--sexual intercourse between man and man, between woman and woman, sexual intercourse between humans and animals. People in Jerusalem liked to talk about Sodom, about how bad, how evil, how disgustingly corrupt Sodom had been, and how YHWH had rained down fire and brimstone on her. See **Genesis 18-19**. We all know that story; and we have oftentimes been taught that Sodom fell simply because of

homosexuality. But YHWH doesn't let Ezekiel believe that. He gives Ezekiel and Jerusalem quite a different understanding of the matter:

“Look! This was the guilt of Sodom, your sister: pride, plenty of food, an easy life with security was hers and her daughters--but she did not strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy. And they became haughty, and did a disgusting thing before me. So I removed them, as you have seen.” (**Ezekiel 16:49-50**)

That's quite a different interpretation, isn't it? That makes Jerusalem, and us, the Church, guilty of "Sodomy"! The "cry" which went up to the Lord from Sodom was the cry of the poor, of the weak, of helpless strangers. Sodom could have cared for them--she had plenty of food, she was wealthy enough--but when strangers came within her gates, they were quickly raped and abused sexually. Sodom refused to care for such people--she refused to "strengthen their hand." Instead, in her self-centered pride, and luxury-oriented self-confidence, Sodom catered to her own sexual gratifications, and became involved in disgusting sexual practices, in order to sustain and enlarge her own prosperity. And that's why YHWH destroyed Sodom.

“Well,” says YHWH through Ezekiel, “You, my people, Jerusalem, have done far worse than Sodom!”

What is YHWH saying to us, to "Christian America" in our day through this word? America is the wealthiest, the most secure nation on earth--America and her allies, surrounded by the "Third World," with great multitudes of our brothers and sisters poverty-stricken, hungry, naked, starving from malnutrition, riddled with ignorance. Pride, plenty of food, an easy life with security, are ours. We are engrossed with the cult of sexual pleasure, with insuring that our own appetites are fully satisfied and constantly whetted.

But how much thought do we take for the young women selling their bodies in our late night places of entertainment, such as in Las Vegas, or Miami, or New Orleans, or Dallas? How concerned are we for the girls and women (especially from other races) who sell their bodies for money to spend on their drug habits? How willing are we to reach out to the Third World, to share our wealth, and our technical know-how, and our economic advantages, in order to strengthen the hand of the poor and the needy of South America, of Central Africa, and of Asia?

Do we not, in proud, haughty self-dependency, turn our backs on them, refusing to hear or respond to their cry of anguish, just as we refused to hear the cry of African American slaves? Do we not continue to build our magnificent cathedrals and football stadiums, calling upon our National God to defend our privileged status, to bolster our economy, centering our concerns on our own personal enjoyment and success, on finding the "good life"? Are we not willing to sacrifice the messengers of God who point out our missing-of-the-mark, silencing their voices, while at the same time going to untold lengths to guarantee our national and personal security? How far are we in reality from this nauseating picture drawn by **Ezekiel 16**?

And if Ezekiel's message is true--as we piously claim it is (it is, you know, part of the inerrant, infallible "Word of God"!)--are we not destroying ourselves, calling down nuclear fire and brimstone on our own heads, and upon the heads of our children because of our selfish worship of materialism, rather than acknowledging our true Husband and Father YHWH?

O YHWH, help us to listen to, and understand Ezekiel's message! If Sodom deserved such punishment, how much more Jerusalem! For she, YHWH's chosen "bride," she who had come to know YHWH and His will so well, had become an adulteress, and a prostitute who paid her lovers, and murdered her own children. Therefore, the verdict is justified--let her be stoned let her be hacked into pieces by the sword! This is what justice demands, and what Jerusalem deserves!

So, let Jerusalem, and let us also, inscribe this verdict deeply upon our hearts. For we, who call ourselves the "People of God," are just as guilty, indeed, more guilty, than any others--more guilty than those whom we remember as "reprobates" and "hopeless." Whenever we begin to exalt ourselves in pride, whenever we begin to point out the mistakes and sins of others, let us remember this fact that cannot be erased from the **Bible**: if justice be done, what the People of God deserve is not fame and honor, but disgrace, and shame, and destruction. In the light of this fact, all pride and boasting quickly die away. In its light, we can truly say in penitence, "I will be proud no more, forever!"

And yet, Almighty God, YHWH still loves Jerusalem, even in the glaring light of her sinfulness--and instead of destroying her forever which she deserves, He promises to forgive her fully, and to restore her to her former prosperity and queenship as His wife!

Now the greatness of this chapter, **Ezekiel sixteen**, is not to be found in its condemnation of Jerusalem, or in its stark depiction of fertility-worship. Its greatness is to be found in its **hope**--in its message of YHWH's steadfast-love for His sinful people who justly deserve to be put to death.

Sodom had been swept away in judgment; Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, had been destroyed, and taken into Assyrian captivity. Jerusalem the golden was in the process at the very time of Ezekiel's speaking, of being destroyed and taken into captivity by Babylon. Ezekiel, along with Jeremiah, could certainly see it coming. But, YHWH says through Ezekiel, this did not mean that He had stopped loving her, or that he had given up on her forever. YHWH still loves her, and wants her; the Divine saving purpose still includes her. YHWH tells Jerusalem that He is going to restore the fortunes of both Sodom and Samaria, including all their larger and smaller sister-cities! And in addition, He fully intends to bring the people of Judah and Jerusalem back from captivity, to once again enjoy His blessings of prosperity. He intends to form a new marriage covenant with His wayward daughter and bride! YHWH's grace and steadfast-love continue on, unceasingly, in spite of the necessity for wrath and punishment. When YHWH punishes, it is not because He has ceased to love and care for His people. No, He punishes because He cares for us so much!

Oh yes, Jerusalem has played the prostitute, she has been the adulterous wife, she has richly deserved capital punishment. But YHWH, her Husband, Who gave the law concerning capital punishment for sexual immorality, still loves her, and wants to forgive her, and bring her back to Himself, and enter into a new covenant with her!

That's **grace**--pure grace--unmerited, undeserved, merciful love! YHWH still loves Jerusalem. In spite of all she has done, YHWH still loves her and wants her! And though she has forgotten her youth, and her marriage vows to YHWH, He has not forgotten. He still remembers her as His chosen wife, as His beloved. He longs, not for her destruction, but for her return. He punishes her, not to destroy her, but to bring her back to Himself, so that she can once again be His wife, His queen! The law, and pure justice say, Jerusalem must die! She must be cast off forever!

But YHWH, the Lawgiver, and the Fountain of justice, says to Jerusalem, "Live!" Just as YHWH had once given the forsaken little baby life in the first place, so now YHWH, her forsaken Husband, turns aside the verdict of death against her, and says instead, "Live!" Not what she deserves, but what YHWH freely gives! And so, because YHWH so loves her, and forgives her, she will know well how to reach out to others in mercy and in love. The covenant of Almighty God with his people is grounded, not on their record, not on their goodness, but on His forgiveness and grace!

And those who are concerned for the Church's "evangelism" should take clear note of this fact. If YHWH's people are sent by Him to reach out to others in seeking love it can never be done in pride. It can only be done in love, because of [YHWH's] great, forgiving love for us and for them as well. The Church must never proclaim **herself**--she must never stand in pride, proclaiming **who** she is, and what she has done. Her only hope is YHWH's grace, His undeserved, forgiving mercy for those who have sinned grievously, who have "missed the mark." She has no right to condemn, no right to look down upon others. She can only reach out to others in tender mercy, to share with them the loving forgiveness and grace with which God has given her life! If there is any pride, it must be pride in YHWH, not in herself!

And if YHWH can forgive prostitute Jerusalem, and her sister-prostitutes, Samaria and Sodom--and if He promises to restore the fortunes of those cities that suffered fiery destruction, can we not confidently affirm that YHWH's grace far outweighs His wrath, and that there is Divine hope beyond the grave of Divine destruction?⁷⁰⁶

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British theologians have commonly spoken concerning "the greater hope," based on **1 Peter 3:18-20** and **4:6** as teaching that Jesus, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit / by the Spirit, went and preached / proclaimed to the "spirits in prison" who were disobedient in the days of Noah (**4:6** says the good news was preached to the dead). See
(continued...)

We leave this great chapter of the **Bible** with the words ringing in our hearts, "never again will we open our mouth (in pride)"--"We will be proud no more forever!" For all our pride is only an empty sham, built upon lies. Everything we have, and are, to which we can point with pride, is not our own doing at all, but the free gift of YHWH our God, Who loves us, and has given us life. And there is so much in our lives, and in our records, that we cannot point to with pride--that in strict truth and justice, can only condemn us.

But the fact that stands out in this great chapter above all others, is the fact that YHWH, our God, never quits loving His children. As Christians, we believe that He has come to us, He has claimed us as His Own, He has made a new covenant with us, a covenant whereby all our sins, all our missings of the mark are fully washed away, never to be remembered again. He still wants us, wants us as His beloved people, despite our past record of failure.

Therefore, "We will be proud no more, forever!" No, we will take pride only in YHWH our God, and in His rich grace and forgiveness, that reaches out to us, and to all His children, to every person on earth, and even to those who have suffered His Divine destruction in this life. He loves His children, including those who have most disappointed Him. If the "prodigal son" can come home to a loving father's embrace, so can the "prodigal daughter and wife," to enter into a new covenant with her great Husband! And so can all her sister-cities--in spite of the fact that they have suffered His fiery destruction! Surely we can serve a God like that!⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

Reimer footnotes on these two passages for an attempt to get around this "greater hope." But also see **New Jerusalem Bible** for a very different interpretation, including the view that Peter is describing the patience of God, reaching out with good news to those who have sinned and been destroyed in this present life.

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We hear it said oftentimes, "The **Bible** says it, I believe it, that settles it!" And we wonder, do those making such a claim seriously think that YHWH fell in love with his adopted daughter, and took her for his wife--a case of Divine incest?!

Such reasoning shows how weak a literalistic reading of the biblical materials is. This chapter is very much a "parable"--a vision-story, which not only never happened in a literal, historical way, but one which is impossible to have ever occurred!

Nonetheless, it is a powerful, meaningful theological story, that Jerusalem needed desperately to hear. To take it woodenly and literally would only be to mistake it; but to take it symbolically, and spiritually, and seriously, would mean for Jerusalem to understand who she was, and what was happening to her; it would enable Jerusalem to hear the good news of the Divine love that was still reaching out to her, even in the midst of her fully-deserved punishment, if Jerusalem would only listen for the Divine word contained in this extended vision-story / metaphor!

1.

YHWH, the Returner of Captivities and Restorer of Fortunes

For the exact phrase, אֲשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת, “I (YHWH) will return (the) captivity,” see:

Jeremiah 33:11b, speaking of Judah and Jerusalem:

כִּי־אֲשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוּת־הָאָרֶץ כְּבְרֵאשׁוֹנָה

Because I will return / restore the land’s captivity / fortune like at the first,

אָמַר יְהוָה:

said YHWH!

Joel 4:1,

כִּי הִנֵּה בַיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה וּבַעֲת הַהִיא

Because look—in these days, and at that time,

אֲשֶׁר (אָשׁוּב) [אֲשִׁיב] אֶת־שְׁבוּת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם:

when I restore Judah and Jerusalem’s captivity / fortunes...

For similar statements made concerning Israel or Judah, see:

Hosea 6:11,

גַּם־יְהוּדָה שֶׁת קָצִיר לָךְ

Also Judah—a harvest was set for you,

בְּשׁוּבִי שְׁבוּת עַמִּי:

in My returning My people’s captivity!

Zephaniah 2:7b, concerning the remnant of the House of Judah:

כִּי יִפְקְדֶם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם

Because YHWH their God will visit them (with blessing),

וְשָׁב (שְׁבוּתָם) [שְׁבִיתָם]:

and He will return their captivity!

Zephaniah 3:20, concerning Jerusalem / Zion:

בְּעֵת הַהִיא אָבִיא אֲתֶכֶם

At that time I will bring you people,

וּבְעֵת קִבְצִי אֲתֶכֶם

and at that time of My gathering you—

כִּי־אֶתֶן אֲתֶכֶם לְשֵׁם וּלְתִהְיֶה בְּכָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ

because I will make you for a name and for praise among all peoples of the land / earth,

בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם
when I return your captivity (before) your eyes–

אָמַר יְהוָה:
said YHWH!

Deuteronomy 30:3, concerning all Israel:

וְשָׁב יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת־שְׁבוּתְךָ
'and YHWH your God will return your captivity / restore your fortune,

וְרַחֲמֶךָ
and He will have compassion on you;

וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצֶךָ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים
and He will return and will gather you from (among) all the peoples

אֲשֶׁר הִפְיִצְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה:
where YHWH your God scattered you.

Jeremiah 29:14, concerning the exiles in Babylonian captivity:

וְנִמְצָאתִי לָכֶם
And I will be found by you!

נְאֻם־יְהוָה
–(it is) a saying of YHWH--

וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־(שְׁבִיתְכֶם) [שְׁבוּתְכֶם]
And I will return your captivity;

וְקִבְּצֶתִי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
and I will gather you from all the nations

וּמִכָּל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדַּחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם שָׁם
and from all the places where I have banished you!

נְאֻם־יְהוָה
--(It is) a saying of YHWH--

וְהִשְׁבֹּתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הַמְּקוֹם
And I will return you to the place

אֲשֶׁר־הִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִשָּׁם:
from which I have removed you!

Jeremiah 30:3, concerning Israel and Judah:

כִּי הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה
Because look–days (are) coming–(it is) a saying of YHWH–

וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהוּדָה אָמַר יְהוָה
and I will return My people Israel's and Judah's captivity, said YHWH;

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּים אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נָתַתִּי לְאֲבוֹתָם

and I will cause them to return to the land which I gave to their fathers,

וְיָרְשׁוּהָ:

and they will possess it!

Jeremiah 30:18, concerning the “tents of Jacob”:

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke—

הֲנִי-שָׁב שְׁבוֹת אֱהִי יַעֲקֹב

Look at Me, returning (the) captivity of Jacob’s tents!

וּמִשְׁכְּנֵי אֲרָחָם

And I will have compassion (on) his dwelling-places!

וְנִבְנְתָה עִיר עַל-תְּלָהּ:

And a city will be rebuilt upon its tel / mound / ruined heap.

Jeremiah 31:23, concerning the land of Judah and its cities:

כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

In this way YHWH of Armies spoke, God of Israel:

עוֹד יֹאמְרוּ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה וּבְעָרָיו

They will again still speak this word in (the) land of Judah and in its cities,

בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת-שְׁבוֹתָם

when I return their captivity / fortune:

יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה נוֹה-צֶדֶק הַר הַקִּדְשׁ:

May YHWH bless you, habitation of righteousness, set-apart mountain!

Jeremiah 32:44, concerning the Jews who have been taken captive to Babylon:

שָׂדוֹת בַּכֶּסֶף יִקְנוּ

Fields will be purchased for the silver / money,

וְכָתוּב בַּסֵּפֶר וְחָתוּם וְהָעֵד עֵדִים

and written in the document, and a seal, and summoning of witnesses,

בְּאֶרֶץ בְּנֵימִן וּבְסָבִיבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וּבְעָרֵי יְהוּדָה

in (the) land of Benjamin and in Jerusalem’s surroundings, and in Judah’s cities;

וּבְעָרֵי הַהָר וּבְעָרֵי הַשְּׁפֵלָה

and in cities of the mountain, and in cities of the low-land,

וּבְעָרֵי הַנֶּגֶב

and in cities of the Negebh / south-land.

כִּי-אָשִׁיב אֶת-שְׁבוֹתָם

Because I will return their captivity

נאִם־יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of YHWH!

Jeremiah 33:7, concerning Judah and Israel:

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוֹת יְהוּדָה וְאֶת שְׁבוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל

And I will bring back / restore Judah's captivity, and Israel's captivity!

וּבְנִיתִים כְּבְרֵאשֶׁנָּה:

And I will rebuild them like at the first!

Jeremiah 33:11, concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

קוֹל שִׁשׂוֹן וְקוֹל שִׂמְחָה

a voice of rejoicing and a voice of gladness,

קוֹל חַתָּן וְקוֹל כַּלָּה

a voice of a bride-groom and a voice of a bride,

קוֹל אֹמְרִים הוֹדוּ אֶת־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

a voice of ones saying Give thanks to YHWH of Armies,

כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה

because YHWH (is) good,

כִּי־לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ

because His steadfast-love is to long-lasting time!

מִבָּאִים תּוֹדָה בַּיִת יְהוָה

(The voice of) ones bringing a thank-offering (to) YHWH's house.

כִּי־אָשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוֹת־הָאָרֶץ כְּבְרֵאשֶׁנָּה

Because I will return / restore the land's captivity / fortune like at the first,

אָמַר יְהוָה:

said YHWH!

Jeremiah 33:26, concerning the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:

גַּם־זַרְעֵ יַעֲקֹב וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי אֶמְאָס

then also Jacob's seed / descendant(s) and David My servant I will reject,

מִקְּחַת מְזִרְעוֹ מִשְׁלִים

from taking from his descendant(s) kings

אֶל־זַרְעֵ אַבְרָהָם יִשְׁחָק וְיַעֲקֹב

over (the) descendant(s) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;

כִּי־[אָשִׁיב] אֶת־שְׁבוֹתָם

Because I will bring back their captivity,

וְרַחַמְתִּים:

and I will have compassion on them!

Lamentations 2:14, concerning Jerusalem:

נ 2:14 נְבִיאֵיךָ חָזוּ לְךָ שׁוּא וְתַפֵּל

Your prophets envisioned emptiness and white-wash for you,

וְלֹא־גִלּוּ עַל־עוֹנֶךָ

and they did not uncover your iniquity,

לְהָשִׁיב (שְׁבִיתֶךָ) [שְׁבוּתֶךָ]

to cause your captivity to return!

וַיַּחְזוּ לְךָ

And they envisioned for you

מִשְׁאוֹת שׁוּא וּמְדוּחִים:

oracles / burdens of emptiness and enticement!

Ezekiel 39:25, concerning Jacob / Israel”

לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

עַתָּה אֲשִׁיב אֶת־(שְׁבִית) [שְׁבוּת] יַעֲקֹב

Now I will return Jacob’s captivity;

וְרַחֲמֹתַי כָּל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

and I will have compassion upon Israel’s house;

וְקִנְיָתִי לְשֵׁם קָדְשִׁי:

and I will be zealous / jealous for My set-apart name!

Amos 9:14, concerning northern Israel:

וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּת עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And I will return the captives of My people Israel!

וּבְנֹו עָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת וַיִּשְׁבוּ

And they will build (the) devastated cities, and they will settle down,

וְשָׁתוּ אֶת־יַיִנָם כְּרָמִים W[aj.n" w>

and they will plant vineyards, and they will drink their wine;

וְעָשׂוּ גִנּוֹת וְאָכְלוּ אֶת־פְּרִיהֶם:

and they will make gardens, and they will eat their fruits!

Psalms 14:7, concerning Jacob / Israel:

מִי יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל

O that Israel’s salvation / deliverance would come, from / out of Zion–

בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה שְׁבוּת עַמּוֹ

when YHWH returns (the) captivity / fortune of His people!

יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Jacob would rejoice; Israel would be glad!

Psalm 53:7^{Heb} / 6^{Eng} concerning Jacob / Israel:

מִי יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Who will give / O that salvations / deliverances of Israel (might come) from Zion,

בְּשׁוּב אֱלֹהִים שְׁבוֹת עַמּוֹ

with God returning (the) captivity of His people!

יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Jacob would rejoice (with) Israel's joy!

Psalm 85:2^{Heb} / 1^{Eng} concerning Jacob:

רָצִיתָ יְהוָה אֶרְצֶךָ

You were pleased, O YHWH, (with) Your land;

שָׁבַתָּ (שְׁבוֹת) יַעֲקֹב:

You returned Jacob's captivity.

Psalm 126:1, concerning Zion:

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת

A Song of the Ascents

בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁבְתָּ צִיּוֹן

When YHWH returned Zion's captivity

הָיִינוּ כְּחֹלְמִים:

we were like those dreaming.

Psalm 126:4, concerning Israel:

שׁוּבָה יְהוָה אֶת־ (שְׁבוֹתֵנוּ) [שְׁבִיתָנוּ]

Return, O YHWH our captivity—

כַּאֲפִיקִים בְּנֶגֶב:

like the water-channels in the Negebh / Southland!

For similar statements made concerning other nations, see:

Jeremiah 48:47, concerning Moab:

וְשָׁבַתִּי שְׁבוֹת־מוֹאָב

And I will return / restore Moab's captivity

בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

in / at (the) end of the days!

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

(It is) a saying of YHWH.

עַד־הֵנָּה מִשְׁפַּט מוֹאָב:

As far as here, Moab's justice / judgment.

Jeremiah 49:6, concerning Ammon:

וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן אֶשְׁיב אֶת־שְׁבוֹת בְּנֵי־עַמּוֹן

And afterwards I will cause to return Ammon's children's captivity.

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of YHWH.

Jeremiah 49:39, concerning Elam:

וְהָיָה | בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

And it will happen in (the) after-part / end of the days,

(אָשׁוּב) [אֶשְׁיב] אֶת־[שְׁבִית] [שְׁבוֹת] עֵלָם

I will cause to return (the) captivity / fortune of Elam–

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of YHWH.

Ezekiel 16:53, concerning Sodom and Samaria and Jerusalem:

וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבִיתָהֶן

And I will return them from captivity,

אֶת־[שְׁבִית] [שְׁבוֹת] סֹדֶם וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ

those taken captive (from) Sodom and her daughters,

וְאֶת־[שְׁבִית] [שְׁבוֹת] שְׁמֶרֶן וּבָנוֹתֶיהָ

and those taken captive from Samaria and her daughters;

[וּשְׁבִית] [וּשְׁבוֹת] שְׁבִיתֶיךָ בְּתוֹכָהֶנָּה:

and those taken captive, your captives, in their midst,

Ezekiel 29:14, concerning Egypt:

וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוֹת מִצְרַיִם

And I will return Egypt's captivity;

וְהֵשִׁבְתִּי אֹתָם אֶרֶץ פַּתְרוֹס

and I will return them (to) Pathros-land,

עַל־אֶרֶץ מְכוֹרְתָם

upon (the) land of their origin.

וְהָיוּ שָׁם מְמַלְכָּה שְׁפֵלָה:

And they will be there, a lowly kingdom.

And for the restoration of the fortunes of an individual, see **Job 42:10**,

וַיְהִי שָׁב אֶת־[שְׁבִית] [שְׁבוֹת] אִיּוֹב

And YHWH returned Job's captivity / fortune,

בְּהִתְפַּלֵּלֹוּ בְעַד רֵעֵהוּ

when he prayed on behalf of his friends;

וַיִּסַּף יְהוָה אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְאִיּוֹב לְמִשְׁנָה:

and YHWH added everything to Job, doubled.

We say, according to the **Hebrew Bible**, YHWH is in the business of restoring people from captivity, and also in the business of restoring lost fortunes—it is a universal activity, including restoring the land and possessions of the “most lost”! What do you think?

**The Future Verb, “He Shall / Shall Not Live,” יִחְיֶה, yichyeh in the Hebrew Bible
and Also the Future Phrase וַיָּחִי, “and He Shall Live”**

Genesis 17:18,

וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים

And Abraham spoke to the God,

לֹא יִשְׁמַעֲלֵךְ יִחְיֶה לְפָנֶיךָ:

If only Ishmael might live before you!

Genesis 31:32, where Jacob speaks to Laban:

עִם אֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא אֶת־אֱלֹהֶיךָ

With whomever you may find your Gods,

לֹא יִחְיֶה

he will not live.

נֶגְדַי אֶחָיו

In the sight of our brothers

הִפְרֵדֶךָ מִזֶּה עַמִּי

see for yourself what is with me,

וְקַח־לְךָ

and take for yourself.

וְלֹא־יָדַע יַעֲקֹב כִּי רָחֵל גָּנְבָתֶם:

And Jacob did not know that Rachel stole them.

Exodus 19:13,

לֹא־תִגַּע בּוֹ יָד

A hand will not touch it,

אִם־בְּהֵמָה אִם־אִישׁ

because whether animal or person,

לֹא יִחְיֶה

it will not live—

סָקוּל יִסָּקֵל

it will surely be stoned,

או־יִרְהַ יִירָה

or surely be shot (with an arrow).

כִּי־בְמִשְׁךְ הַיָּבֵל הַזֶּה

because when the ram's horn sounds,

יֵעָלוּ בְהָרִ:י

they will go up on the mountain.

Numbers 24:23, speaking of Balaam, YHWH's prophet from a foreign country:

וַיִּשָּׂא מִשְׁלוֹ

And he lifted up his proverbial saying

וַיֹּאמֶר

and he said:

אֹי מִי יִחִיָּה

Woe! Who shall live / survive

מִשְׁמוֹ אֵל:

from Supreme God's placement of him?

Deuteronomy 8:3, speaking of a higher form of life than simply physical life:

וַיַּעַנְךָ וַיִּרְעֵבֶךָ

And He humbled you (singular), and He caused you to hunger;

וַיִּאֲכַלְךָ אֶת־הַמָּן

and He fed you with the manna,

אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעְתָּ

which you did not know,

וְלֹא יָדְעוּן אֲבֹתֶיךָ

and your fathers did not know,

לְמַעַן הוֹדִיעֶךָ

in order to make it known to you that

כִּי לֹא עַל־הַלֶּחֶם לְבַדּוֹ יִחִיָּה הָאָדָם

not upon the bread by itself will the human live,

כִּי עַל־כָּל־מוֹצֵא פִי־יְהוָה

but upon everything that goes forth (from) YHWH's mouth,

יִחִיָּה הָאָדָם:

the human shall live.

2 Samuel 1:10a, An Amaleqite tells David concerning Saul's death,

וַאֲעֹמַד עָלָיו

And I stood over him,

וַאֲמַתְתִּיהוּ

and I killed him--

כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי לֹא יִחִיָּה

because I knew that he would not live

אַחֲרֵי נִפְלוֹ

after his falling.

1 Kings 20:31, where Ben Hadad's servants tell him to throw himself on the steadfast-love of Israel's kings, who will "let him live."

2 Kings 10:19, where Jehu tells the servants of Baal that anyone of them who does not gather together at his call "will not live."

Nehemiah 2:3, where Nehemiah expresses the wish that the Persian king will live to long-lasting time.

Psalms 89:49^{Heb} / 48^{Eng}, where the psalmist asks:

מִי גִבֹר יַחִיָּה

What strong man will live,

וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מָוֶת

and will not see death?--

יִמְלֹט נַפְשׁוֹ מִיַּד־שְׁאוֹל סֶלָה:

he will deliver his innermost-being from (the) hand of sheol / (the) grave? Selah

Proverbs 15:27,

עֹכֵר בֵּיתוֹ בּוֹצֵעַ בְּצַעַ

One troubling his house / household—one making profit by violence;

וְשׂוֹנֵא מִתְּנַת יַחִיָּה:

and / but one hating gifts will live.

Ecclesiastes 6:3,

אִם־יֹלִיד אִישׁ מֵאָה

If a man should give birth to a hundred (children),

וְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת יַחִיָּה

and should live many years,

וְרַב שִׁיְהִיו יְמֵי־שָׁנָיו

and they should be many--days of his years;

וְנַפְשׁוֹ לֹא־תִשְׂבַּע מִן־הַטּוֹבָה

and his innermost-being should not be satisfied from the good,

וְגַם־קְבוּרָה לֹא־הָיְתָה לוֹ

and also there was no burial for him;

אֲמַרְתִּי טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ הַנֶּפֶל:

I say, better than him, the aborted fetus!

Ecclesiastes 11:8,

כִּי אִם־שָׁנִים הַרְּבֵה יַחִיָּה הָאָדָם

Even if the human shall live years *many* (הַרְּבֵה),

בְּכֻלָּם יִשְׂמַח

in all of them let him rejoice.

וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יְמֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ

And let him remember the days of darkness,

כִּי־הָרְבָה יְהִיוּ

because they will be *many* (הָרְבָה).

כָּל־שָׂבָא הַבָּל:

All that comes—a vapor / breath!

Jeremiah 21:9,

הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת

The one dwelling in this city will die,

בַּחֶרֶב וּבָרָעַב וּבַדָּבָר

by the sword and by the famine and by the pestilence!

וְהַיֹּצֵא וְנָפַל עַל־הַכַּשְׂדִּים

And the one going forth, and he will fall upon / by the Chaldeans,

הַצָּרִים עֲלֵיכֶם

the ones besieging upon you people,

וְחַיָּה [וְחַיָּה] וְהִיתָ־לּוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל:

and he will live, and his innermost-being will become for him a spoil (of battle)!

Jeremiah 38:2, same.

Ezekiel 3:21,

וְאַתָּה כִּי הִזְהַרְתָּו

And you, because you warned him,

צַדִּיק לְבַלְתִּי חָטָא

a righteous one, so as not to sin—

צַדִּיק וְהוּא לֹא־חָטָא

a righteous one, and he, he did not sin—

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה כִּי נִזְהַר

he will surely live, because he was warned;

וְאַתָּה אֶת־נַפְשְׁךָ הִצַּלְתָּ:

and you, you delivered your innermost-being!

Ezekiel 18:9,

בְּחֻקוֹתַי יֵהַלֵּךְ

In / by My statutes he walks,

וּמִשְׁפָּטַי שָׁמַר

and My legal decisions he kept,

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֱמֶת

to do / practice true-faithfulness

צַדִּיק הוּא חַיָּה יְחִיָּה

Righteous (is) he! He shall surely live!

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

Ezekiel 18:13,

בְּנִשְׁךָ נָתַן וּתְרִבִּית לָקַח

With / at the interest he gave / loaned, and increase he received;

וְחַי

and shall he live?

לֹא יְחִיָּה

he shall surely not live!

אֵת כָּל-הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה

All of these abominations he did—

מִוֹת יוּמָת

he shall surely be put to death!

דָּמָיו בּוֹ יִהְיֶה:

His blood will be upon him!

Ezekiel 18:17,

מֵעֲנִי הִשִּׁיב יָדוֹ

From an afflicted poor person he withdrew his hand;

נִשְׁךָ וְתְרִבִּית לֹא לָקַח

interest and increase he did not take.

מִשְׁפָּטֵי עֲשָׂה בְּחֻקֹּתַי הֵלֵךְ

My judicial decisions he did; in / by My statutes he walked.

הוּא לֹא יָמוּת בְּעֵוֹן אָבִיו

He will not die in / for the iniquity of his father.

חַיָּה יְחִיָּה:

He shall surely live!

Ezekiel 18:19,

וְאָמַרְתֶּם מִדָּע לֹא-נִשְׂא הַבֶּן בְּעֵוֹן הָאָב

And you (plural) say, For what reason shall not the son bear the iniquity of the father?

וְהַבֶּן מִשְׁפָּט וְצַדִּיקָה עָשָׂה

And the son—justice and righteousness he did;

את כל-חקותי שמר ויעשה אתם
all My statutes he observed, and he did them--
חיה יחיה:
he shall surely live!

Ezekiel 18:21,

והרשע כי ישוב מכל-(חטאתו) [חטאתיו] אשר עשה
And the wicked person that turns around / repents from all his sins which he did,
ושמר את-כל-חקותי ועשה משפט וצדקה
and observes all My statutes, and does justice and righteousness,
חיה יחיה לא ימות:
he shall surely live—he will not die!

Ezekiel 18:22,

כל-פשעיו אשר עשה לא יזכרו לו
All his transgressions which he did will not be remembered to / for him;
בצדקתו אשר-עשה יחיה:
in / by his righteousness which he did, he shall live!

Ezekiel 18:28,

ויראה (וישוב) [וישב] מכל-פשעיו אשר עשה
And he feared, and he repented from all his transgressions which he did--
חיו יחיה לא ימות:
he shall surely live, he will not die!

Ezekiel 33:13,

באמרי לצדיק חיה יחיה
When I say to the righteous, He shall surely live--
והוא בטח על-צדקתו ועשה עול
and he trusted in his righteousness, and did injustice,
כל-(צדקתו) [צדקתיו] לא תזכרנה
all his righteousness will not be remembered,
ובעולו אשר-עשה
and in his injustice which he did,
בו ימות:
in / by it he will die!

Ezekiel 33:15,

חבל ישיב רשע
a wicked person shall return a pledge;

וְזָלַח יְשׁוּלָם

he shall restore anything stolen;

בְּחֻקֹּת הַחַיִּים הָלַךְ

by statutes of the life he walked

לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת עוֹל

in order to not do injustice;

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה

he shall surely live;

לֹא יָמוּת:

he shall not die!

Ezekiel 33:16,

כָּל- (חַטָּאתוֹ) [חַטָּאתָיו] אֲשֶׁר חָטָא

All his sins which he sinned

לֹא תִזְכָּרְנָה לוֹ

will not be remembered against him;

מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה עָשָׂה

justice and righteousness he did--

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה:

He shall surely live!

Ezekiel 33:19,

וּבִשְׁוֹב רָשָׁע מִרְשָׁעוֹ

and when a wicked person turns from his wickedness,

וַעֲשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה

and does justice and righteousness,

עֲלֵיהֶם הוּא יִחְיֶה:

because of them he shall live.

Ezekiel 47:9,

וְהָיָה

And it will happen--

כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה | אֲשֶׁר-יִשְׂרָץ

every living creature that swarms--

אֶל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יָבֹוא שָׁם נְחָלִים יִחְיֶה

to all--wherever its two wadis / torrent-valleys come--it will live!

וְהָיָה הַדָּגָה רַבָּה מְאֹד

And it will happen--the fish--exceedingly many!

כִּי בָּאוּ שָׁמָּה הַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה

Because they came there—these waters,

וַיִּרְפְּאוּ

and they were healed,

וְחַי כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יָבוֹא שָׁמָּה הַנַּחֲלָה:

and it will live—everything wherever the wadi / torrent-valley will come!

Habakkuk 2:4,

הִנֵּה עֲפֹלָה

Look—he is heedless / presumptuous—

לֹא-יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ

his innermost being was not right within him.

וְצַדִּיק בְּאֱמוּנָתוֹ יַחִיה:

And a righteous person will live by his / His true-faithfulness.

For the Future Phrase, וְחַי, “and He Will Live,” see:

Genesis 3:22,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים

And YHWH God said,

הֲנִי הָאָדָם הַזֶּה כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ

Look—the human being became like one of Us,

לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע

to know good and evil;

וְעַתָּה פֶּן-יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ

and now, lest / in order that he will not stretch out his hand

וְלָקַח גַּם מֵעֵץ הַחַיִּים

and will also take from (the) tree of the life / lives—

וְאָכַל

and he will eat,

וְחַי לְעֹלָם:

and he will live to long-lasting time...

Exodus 33:20,

וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פָּנַי

And He said, You will not be able to see My Face / Faces

כִּי לֹא-יִרְאֵנִי הָאָדָם וְחַי:

because the human being will not see Me and live!

Leviticus 18:5,

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי וְאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי

And you shall keep My statutes, and My judicial-decisions—

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אִתְּם הָאָדָם

which, the human being who will do them—

וַחַי בָּהֶם

and he will live by them!

Leviticus 25:35,

וְכִי-יִמְוֶךָ אָחִיךָ

And if your brother grows poor

וּמָטָה יָדוֹ עִמָּךָ

and his hand shakes with you;

וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בּוֹ

and you shall take firm hold on him—

גֵּר וְתוֹשֵׁב

a temporary resident and stranger;

וַחַי עִמָּךָ:

and he shall live with you.

Leviticus 25:36,

אַל-תִּקַּח מֵאִתּוֹ נֶשֶׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית

You (singular) shall not take from him interest and profit;

וַיִּרְאַתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ

and you shall tremble in awe from (before) your God;

וַחַי אָחִיךָ עִמָּךָ:

And your brother shall live with you.

Numbers 21:8,

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה

And YHWH said to Moses,

עֲשֵׂה לָךְ שֶׁרֶף

Make for yourself a flying serpent

וְשִׂים אֹתוֹ עַל-נֹס

and set it on a pole,

וְהָיָה כָּל-הַנִּשּׁוּף

and it will happen, everyone who is bitten,

וַרְאָה אֹתוֹ וַחַי:

and he will see it, and he shall live.

Numbers 21:9,

וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה נָחָשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת

So Moses made a bronze serpent

וַיִּשְׂמְהוּ עַל-הַנֵּס

and set it on a pole.

וְהָיָה אִם-נָשַׁךְ הַנָּחָשׁ אֶת-אִישׁ

And it would happen, if the serpent bit a man--

וְהִבִּיט אֶל-נָחָשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת

And he would look at the bronze serpent

וַיְחִי:

and he would live.

Deuteronomy 4:42,

לָנֶס שָׁמָּה רוֹצֵחַ

to flee there [to a city of refuge], one murdering

אֲשֶׁר יִרְצַח אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ בְּבִלְי־דַעַת

who murders his neighbor without knowing,

וְהוּא לֹא-שָׂנֵא לוֹ מִתְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם

and he was not hating him previously,

וְנָס אֶל-אַחַת מִן-הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

and he will flee to one of these cities,

וַיְחִי:

and he will live!

Deuteronomy 5:24,

וַתֹּאמְרוּ הֵן הִרְאָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

And you people said, Look—YHWH our God caused us to see

אֶת-כְּבוֹדוֹ וְאֶת-גְּדֻלּוֹ

His glorious radiance, and His greatness,

וְאֶת-קוֹל שְׁמַעֲנוּ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ

and we heard His voice from the fire's midst;

הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה רָאִינוּ

this very day we saw

כִּי-יְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם

that God will speak with the human,

וַיְחִי:

and he will live!

Deuteronomy 19:4-5,

- 4 וְזֶה דְבַר הַרְצַח אֲשֶׁר-יָנוּס שָׁמָּה וְחָיָה
And this (is the) word (for) the murderer who shall flee there and will live—
אֲשֶׁר יִכֶּה אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ בְּבַל־יָדָעַת
who (fatally) struck his neighbor without knowing,
וְהוּא לֹא-שָׂנֵא לוֹ מִתְּמֹל שְׁלֹשִׁים:
and he was not hating him, in the past;
- 5 וְאֲשֶׁר יֵבֵא אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ בִיעָר לַחֲטֹב עֵצִים
and one who will go with his neighbor into the forest to chop / cut down trees;
וְנִדְחָה יָדוֹ בַגִּרְזֹן לְכַרֵּת הָעֵץ
and his hand slips on the ax, (aimed) to cut down the tree,
וְנָשַׁל הַבְּרָזֶל מִן-הָעֵץ
and the iron (axe-head) slips off from the tree / wood (handle),
וּמָצָא אֶת-רֵעֵהוּ וּמָת
and finds his neighbor he dies—
הוּא יָנוּס אֶל-אַחַת הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
he shall flee to one of these cities,
וְחָיָה
and he shall live...

Nehemiah 6:11,

- וְאָמַרְהָ הָאִישׁ כְּמוֹנִי יִבָּרַח
And I said, Should a person like me run away?
וּמִי כְמוֹנִי אֲשֶׁר-יָבוֹא אֶל-הַהֵיכָל
And who like me, who would come into the temple,
וְחָיָה
and he will live?
לֹא אָבוֹא:
I will not come!

Jeremiah 38:2,

- כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה
In this way YHWH spoke:
הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת
The one dwelling in this city will die,
בַּחֶרֶב בַּרָּעֵב וּבַדָּבָר
by the sword, by the famine and by the pestilence.
וְהֵינָצָא אֶל-הַכַּשְׂדִּים
And the one going forth to the Chaldeans—

[יחיה] (יחיה)

and he will live;

וְהִיתָה-לוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלַל

and his innermost-being / life will be to / for him for spoil;

יחִי:

and he will live!

Ezekiel 18:13, (see above)

Ezekiel 18:24,

וּבָשׁוּב צְדִיק מִצְדִּיקְתּוֹ וַעֲשָׂה עוֹל

And when a righteous person turns from his righteousness, and does injustice,

כָּל הַתּוֹעֵבוֹת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הַרְשָׁע יַעֲשֶׂה

like all the abominations which the wicked person did, shall he do (them),

וְחִי

and he will live?

כָּל- (צְדִיקְתּוֹ) [צְדִיקְתּוֹ] אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לֹא תִזְכָּרְנָה

All his righteousnesses which he did will not be remembered;

בְּמַעֲלוֹ אֲשֶׁר-מָעַל

by his unfaithfulness which he did unfaithfully,

וּבַחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-חָטָא

and by his sin by which he sinned,

בָּם יָמוּת:

by them he shall die!

Ezekiel 20:11,

וָאֶתֵּן לָהֶם אֶת-חֻקֹּתַי

And I gave to them My statutes (feminine plural),

וָאֶת-מִשְׁפָּטַי הוֹדַעְתִּי אוֹתָם

and My commandments I made known to them,

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם

which the human / man shall do,

וְחִי בָהֶם:

and he will live by them.

Ezekiel 20:13,

וַיִּמְרוּ-בִי בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר

And Israel's household rebelled against Me in the desert / wilderness.

בְּחֻקֹּתַי לֹא-הָלְכוּ

By My statutes (feminine plural) they did not walk,

וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי מָאָסוּ

and My commandments they rejected / refused,

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם הָאָדָם

which a human / man will do,

וְחַי בָּהֶם

and he will live by them.

וְאֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ מְאֹד

And My sabbaths they polluted / profaned exceedingly.

וְאָמַר לְשַׁפֵּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם

And I said / determined to pour out My wrath against them

בַּמִּדְבָּר לְכַלּוֹתָם:

in the desert / wilderness, to finish them off!

Ezekiel 20:21,

וַיִּמְרֹדוּ־בַי הַבָּנִים

And the children / sons rebelled against Me.

בְּחֻקוֹתַי לֹא־הָלְכוּ

By My statutes (feminine plural) they did not walk,

וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטַי לֹא־שָׁמְרוּ

and My commandments they did not keep,

לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם

to do them--

אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם

which the human / man will do them,

וְחַי בָּהֶם

and he will live by them.

אֶת־שַׁבְּתוֹתַי חָלְלוּ

My sabbaths they polluted / profaned.

וְאָמַר לְשַׁפֵּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם

And I said / determined to pour out My wrath upon them,

לְכַלּוֹת אֶפְרַיִם בָּם בַּמִּדְבָּר:

to finish off My anger against them in the desert / wilderness.

Ezekiel 47:9,

וְהָיָה

And it will happen--

כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה | אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׂרֹץ

every living creature that swarms--

אֵל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר יָבוֹא שָׁם נַחְלִים יִחְיֶה
to all—wherever its two wadis / torrent-valleys come—it will live!

וְהָיָה הַדָּגָה רַבָּה מְאֹד

And it will happen—the fish—exceedingly many!

כִּי בָאוּ שָׁמָּה הַמַּיִם הָאֵלֶּה

Because they came there—these waters,

וַיִּרְפְּאוּ

and they were healed,

וְחָי

and it will live—

כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יָבוֹא שָׁמָּה הַנַּחַל:

everything wherever the wadi / torrent-valley will come!