

Jerusalem the City of Bloods, Idols, and Gross Immorality

Ezekiel 22

22:1 And YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 22:2 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, Will you stand in judgment, will you stand in judgment of (the) city of the bloods, and will you make known to her all her abominations? 22:3 And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: A city shedding blood in its midst--to come, its time / its time is coming! And she made idols over her, to become unclean! 22:4 By your (feminine singular) blood which you shed / poured out, you became guilty! And by your idols which you made, you became unclean! And you have brought near your days; and you have come as far as your years. Therefore I have given you / made you a reproach to the nations, and a derision to all the lands / countries. 22:5 Those near, and those far away from you, will mock at you: Unclean the name! Great the confusion / tumult! 22:6 Look (at the) princes / chiefs of Israel--each one to / by his arm / strength, they were against you, in order to pour out / shed blood! 22:7 Father and mother they made light of / in you. To the temporary resident / immi-grant they acted with oppression in your midst. Orphan and widow they oppressed in you. 22:8 My set-apart things you (feminine singular) despised, and My sabbaths / days of rest you profaned / defiled. 22:9 Men of slander were in you, in order to shed / pour out blood. and to / on the mountains they ate in you. They did / practiced (sexual) wickedness in your midst: 22:10 A father's nakedness [his wife] he [a son] uncovered in you. Uncleaness of the menstrual woman they humble in you. 22:11 And a man with his neighbor's wife did an abomination; and a man defiled his daughter-in-law with wickedness; and a man humbled / violated his sis-ter, his father's daughter. 22:12 They took a bribe in you, in order to pour out / shed blood. You (feminine singular) took interest and increase, and you cut off your neighbors by the oppression / extortion. And Me, you forgot! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 22:13 And look--I struck My hand to / at your dishonest gain which you made, and upon / at your bloods which were in your midst. 23:14 Will your heart stand (strong), or will your hands be strong (enough) for the days which I am making (for) you? I YHWH, I said (it); and I will do (it)! 22:15 And I will scatter you (singular) in the nations; and I will scatter (synonym) in the lands; and I will comp-lete / destroy your uncleanness from you. 22:16 And you will be polluted / profaned by yourself, in (the) eyes of nations; and you will know that I (am) YHWH. 22:17 And YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 22:18 Son of Adam / Humanity, Israel's House, they have become to Me for worthless remains / dross; all of them (are) bronze and tin, and iron and lead in (the) midst of a furnace--dross / worthless remains of silver they have become! 22:19 Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Because of all of you (plural) becoming dross / worthless remains, therefore look at Me--gathering you to / into Jerusalem's midst-- 22:20 a gathering of silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin in (the) midst of a furnace, to blow upon them fire to melt it--in this way I will gather in My anger and in My wrath, and I will put you (there) and I will melt you! 22:21 And I will gather (synonym) you, and I will blow upon you with (the) fire of My wrath; and you will be melted in its midst! 22:22 Like silver is melted in a furnace's midst, so you will be melted in its midst. And you will know that I, YHWH, poured out My wrath upon you! 22:23 And YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying: 22:24 Son of Huma-nity / Adam, say to her: You (are) a land not cleansed, it (is)--not rained on in a day of indignation! 22:25 A conspiracy of her prophets (is) in her midst--like

the lion roaring, tearing prey they devoured a life! They take treasure and precious possessions; they multiplied her widows in her midst! 22:26 Her priests have treated My teaching with violence, and they have profaned My set-apart things. They have not divided between set-apart to common. And (the distinction) between the unclean to (the) clean, they have not made known! And they have hidden their eyes from My rest-days. And I was profaned in their midst! 22:27 Her princes / leaders in her midst—like wolves tearing prey, to pour out blood, to destroy lives--in order to cut off [and get] dishonest gain! 22:28 And her prophets have smeared for them (with) white-wash, envisioning emptiness, and divining for them a lie--saying, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke--and YHWH has not spoken! 22:29 People of the land practiced extortion, and committed robbery. And poor (people) and needy (people) they oppressed; and the temporary resident / emigrant they extorted without justice! 22:30 And I sought from them a man, one building a wall, and standing in the breach / broken place before Me, on behalf of the land, so as to not destroy it; and I did not find (one). 22:31 And I poured out upon them My indignation; with My fury's fire I finished them off; their way I placed on their head--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!

22:1¹⁰⁷⁰

1070

This chapter constitutes a powerful indictment of Jerusalem and her people--beginning with the princes, and including her priests, prophets, and common people. YHWH has looked for someone from among them who would build up their broken wall and "stand in the gap" (compare **Ezekiel 13:5**)--but he has found no such person--therefore, destruction is inevitable!

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 22** "Grave Indictment of Jerusalem." He comments that "The chapter falls into three sections. The first (**verses 1-16**) deals with the cardinal sins of bloodshed, idolatry, adultery and oppression--crimes which have defiled the holy city. Exile and dispersion are therefore inevitable. The second (**verses 17-22**) compare [YHWH's] judgment to the refiner's furnace. As the fire burns the dross from the ore, so does [YHWH's] punishment consume the wicked. The third section (**verses 23-31**) accuses the whole population, from the highest to the lowest, of corruption and evil-doing. There is no one left to stand in the breach. The doom of Jerusalem is sealed." (Pp. 142-43)

Reimer entitles **22:1-31** "A City Defiled." He comments that "Again, introductory and concluding formulas mark out the bounds of three distinct but thematically related oracles. Each convicts Jerusalem of practicing vile impurities that [YHWH] refuses to tolerate. The first, and longest, characterizes this behavior in detail (**verses 1-16**); the second uses the metaphor of melting for ridding Jerusalem of its impurities (**verses 17-22**); the third surveys the city's inhabitants; but none provides a reason for preventing its destruction (**verses 23-31**)." (P. 1530)

Reimer entitles **22:1-16** "The Bloody City." He comments that "Issues of purity persist throughout the **Scroll**, and come to the fore here. Although guilt is implicated, the issue is not primarily legal. The repetition of forms of the Hebrew *tame* ('impure, unclean')--translated defiled in **verses 3-5** (continued...)

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

¹⁰⁷⁰(...continued)

(also **verse 11**)—points rather to ethical or ritual impurity as also does the distinctive conjunction of blood and idols in **verses 3-4** (only, it seems, in **Ezekiel**; compare **16:36; 36:18**)...

“The catalog of abominations in **22:6-12** bears comparison with the similar lists of virtues and vices in **18:5-18**. They are not identical, however, and it has been pointed out that some of the offenses listed here depend on powerful officials (**22:6-7, 9, 12**) and a functioning Jerusalem, in distinction to the audience of exiles in **chapter 18**. The list has strong parallels in **Leviticus**.” (P. 1530) See **Leviticus 19:16; 18:7, 8; 20:11; 18:20; 18:15; 20:12; 18:9**.

Matties states that “Three oracles bring an indictment against Jerusalem (verses 1-16), level a sentence against Jerusalem (verses 17-22), and offer a detailed rationale based on crimes perpetrated by all segments of society (verses 23-31).” He comments on **verses 1-5** that “Ezekiel is charged with judging the *bloody city* by exposing the reprehensible actions by which it has defiled itself and made itself a public mockery. Idolatry and bloodshed signal archetypal evils against God and humanity, from which all other violations spring.” (P. 1187)

Darr comments that “**Ezekiel 22** juxtaposes three judgment oracles linked by common themes and vocabulary: **verses 1-16, verses 17-22, and verses 23-31**. The first oracle concerns the legal case of ‘Bloodshed City,’ a nefarious [wicked or criminal action] epithet for Jerusalem, Judah’s capital, ruled by violent princes and rife with social, cultic and sexual abominations, is polluted by the bloodshed [and consequent blood guilt] within her and is defiled by idolatry. Her inhabitants abrogate [repudiate, evade] God’s laws in every sphere of life. Her sentence entails the dispersion of the city’s population among the nations.

“In his second oracle, Ezekiel employs tropes [figurative uses of language] drawn from metallurgy to describe the worthlessness of his people and their punishment. Israel is dross, the impure residue that remains after metal has been refined. Just as the smelter gathers silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into a fiery furnace, so also Yahweh will gather the people into Jerusalem and subject them to the liquefying heat of God’s wrath.

“Finally, the prophet justifies God’s punishment by pointing to the failure of Judah’s leaders (princes, priests, officials, prophets, and privileged classes) to discharge their duties responsibly. If God had found even a single worthy person among those groups, the destruction would not occur. Instead, Yahweh has poured out Divine indignation upon the people, consuming them with the fire of wrath.” (Pp. 184-185)

22:2 וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity

הֲתִשְׁפֹּט הֲתִשְׁפֹּט

Will you stand in judgment, will you stand in judgment¹⁰⁷¹

אֶת-עִיר הַדָּמִים

of (the) city of the bloods,¹⁰⁷²

וְהוֹרַעְתָּהּ אֶת כָּל-תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיהָ:

and will you make known to her all her abominations?¹⁰⁷³

1071

Compare **Ezekiel 20:4**, where the same question is asked of Ezekiel, whether or not he will judge Israel. Darr thinks that here, Ezekiel is called to “bring Jerusalem to trial in the court of Yahweh, Who assumes the roles of Accuser, Judge, and Executioner. The following **רִיב** (a judgment oracle whose structure and contents reflect judicial proceedings) consists of three subsections: a general indictment and anticipation of doom (**verses 1-5**); a detailed indictment of Jerusalem’s leaders, especially its ‘princes’ (kings; **verses 6-12**); and a pronouncement of the sentence (**verses 13-16**).” (P. 185)

She thinks that the twofold “Will you arraign / stand in judgment,” conveys “intense affirmation (i.e. ‘You will assuredly arraign / stand in judgment’).” (P. 185)

1072

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-16** “The Sins of Jerusalem.” He comments that “Though guilty of other sins, stress is laid on the heinous crime of bloodshed.” (P. 143)

And we notice that while the commentators are quick to name the bloody city “Jerusalem,” Ezekiel himself is very reluctant to do so. It is only as we see the faults that he mentions that we gradually realize that it is Jerusalem. Read again the chapter, and see if you do not agree with this. In **verse 6** he mentions the princes of Israel that are in her, but still he does not call her Jerusalem. It is not until **verse 19** that the city is actually named, and that is its only mention in the chapter.

1073

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In pronouncing judgment upon the corrupt city, the prophet is told to inform its inhabitants of the details of the indictment.” (P. 143) Darr states that “Ezekiel’s arraignment of the bloody city consists of making known to ‘her’ all her abominations...Zimmerli defines ‘abomination’ as a ‘comprehensive term for all sins of cultic impurity.’ Heretofore, Ezekiel has applied
(continued...)

22:3¹⁰⁷⁴ וְאָמַרְתָּ כֵּן אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

עִיר שֹׁפֶכֶת דָּם בְּתוֹכָהּ

A city shedding blood in its midst—¹⁰⁷⁵

לְבוֹא עִתָּהּ

to come, its time / its time is coming!¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷³(...continued)

the noun especially to idolatry and sexual misconduct (as defined in Israel’s law codes). Now, as following verses demonstrate, he employs it even more broadly to include not only cultic offenses (three charges) and prohibited sexual activity (five charges), but also social malfeasances (eight charges).” (P. 185)

¹⁰⁷⁴

Darr states that “With **verse 3**...Jerusalem is summoned before the court. Although the formal announcement of charges will appear in **verses 4-5**, this verse already discloses her corruptions. The locus of bloodshed (violent crimes), ‘her time’ (i.e., the time of her doom...has come (the pollution resulting from bloodshed threatens Yahweh’s ongoing Presence with Israel in its land...She is defiled by the ongoing manufacture of ‘dung’ idols (Ezekiel’s characteristic and coarse term for the images of other Deities). **Verse 4a**, with its shift to direct address (second-person feminine singular), reiterates and expands upon **verse 3**. As a consequence of ‘her blood’ (i.e., the spilled blood of her victims), she has become polluted...(true to Ezekiel’s epithet for Jerusalem, ‘Bloodshed City,’ this oracle reverberates with references to shedding blood (**verses 3-4, 6, 9, 12-13**...

“The city is, in effect, a defiled vessel filled with blood and consequently rife with blood guilt). As a consequence of her idolatry, she has become unclean...while in **verse 3** she was threaten-ed with the approach of ‘her time’ of judgment, in **verse 4** she is said to have brought near (hastened) her days of judgment, the appointed time (of punishment) for her years of sin. Therefore, Yahweh is Personally giving her over as a disgrace to the nations and a mockery to all the (other) lands...Those who are far away and those who are near (an expression indicating ‘all peoples’) will mock her...on account of her defiled name (reputation) and the greatness (abundance) of the tumult (lawless disorder) within her.” (Pp. 185-186)

¹⁰⁷⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The inhabitants were guilty of bloodshed openly in the midst of the city, an indication of moral debasement more serious than when murder is committed in secret.” (P. 143)

¹⁰⁷⁶

(continued...)

וַעֲשֶׂתָּה גִּלּוּלִים עָלֶיהָ לְטִמְאָה:

And she made idols over / in her, to become unclean!¹⁰⁷⁷

22:4 בְּדַמְךָ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפַכְתָּ אֲשַׁמָּתָּ

By your (feminine singular) blood which you shed / poured out, you became guilty!

וּבגִּלּוּלֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ טִמְאָתָּ

And by your idols which you made, you became unclean!¹⁰⁷⁸

וַתִּקְרַבִּי יָמֶיךָ

And you have brought near your days;

¹⁰⁷⁶(...continued)

Translations of this phrase, לָבוֹא עִתָּהּ, literally “to come its time,” vary, from “that her time may come,” to “so that your hour is approaching,” to “its time has come,” to “that brings on herself doom,” to “to hasten your doom,” to τοῦ ἐλθεῖν καιρὸν αὐτῆς, “for the coming of its time.” **NETS** has “so that its time might come.” We understand “its time” to mean the time for YHWH’s visitation in punishment on Jerusalem. Rabbi Fisch comments that “Their doom is sealed on account of their acts of violence which resulted in the loss of innocent lives.” (P. 143)

1077

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “you make idols unto yourself to defile yourself.” He comments that “The highest degree of ritual and moral impurity is contracted from idolatry. Hence the mention here of the defilement caused by the worship of idols. Instead of ‘unto yourself’ the **Revised Version** renders more literally: ‘against herself’ (the Hebrew has the third person feminine throughout); i.e. the idols which are worshiped are Jerusalem’s enemies, the cause of the coming downfall.” (P. 143)

We note that **New International** gets the translation right: “You city that brings on herself doom by shedding blood in her midst and defiles herself by making idols.” Hilmer notes that “Two categories of sins are developed: social injustices and idol worship.” (P. 1256)

1078

Rabbi Fisch comments that “While bloodshed determines guilt and punishment, idolatry corrupts the soul and contributes to the state of mind which leads to crime.” (P. 143)

וַתָּבוֹא עַד־שָׁנוֹתַיךָ

and you have come as far as your years.¹⁰⁷⁹

עַל־כֵּן נִתְּתִיךָ חֶרְפָּה לַגּוֹיִם

Therefore I have given you / made you a reproach to the nations,¹⁰⁸⁰

וְקָלְסָה לְכָל־הָאָרְצוֹת:

and a derision to all the lands / countries.

22:5 תִּקְרְבוּת וְהִרְחַקוּת מִמֶּנִּי

Those near, and those far away from you,

יִתְקַלְסוּ־בְךָ

will mock at you:

טִמְאַתְהָ שֵׁם

Unclean the name!

רַבַּת הַמְּהוּמָה:

Great the confusion / tumult!¹⁰⁸¹

1079

Rabbi Fisch comments that “By their misdeeds they have hastened the time of retribution [the word retribution is not used in the text; we would say ‘the time of Divine visitation for punishment’]... They have also brought upon themselves the years of dispersion and exile which are to follow the overthrow of the state (Malbim).” (P. 143) We think the statement may mean both the days and years of their life-times have reached their end; we see nothing in the text concerning “years of dispersion and exile.”

1080

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The verb is in the prophetic perfect which views what is to be as though it has happened. God will make Jerusalem an object of mockery among the nations.” (Pp. 143-44) We agree. Do you?

1081

(continued...)

¹⁰⁸¹(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "you (singular) defiled of name and full of tumult." He comments that "The distant peoples will despise them because of their evil reputation, and their near neighbors taunt them because of the confusion and turmoil created in Jerusalem by famine, pestilence and massacre." (P. 144)

1082

Darr entitles **verses 6-12** "Jerusalem's Misconduct." She comments that "In these verses, Ezekiel presents evidence against Jerusalem and her political leaders. He begins with 'the princes of Israel in you' (Ezekiel routinely refers to Judah's kings as princes) who stand accused of violent abuses of power ('shedding blood') perpetrated against the very society whose order and justice they are charged to protect (**verse 6**). The following list of specific, but only representative, crimes (**verses 7-12a**) is aptly associated with these princes, who not only commit them, but who also fail to prevent their subjects from following suit." (P. 186)

Reimer comments on the recurring phrase "in you," that it means "in Jerusalem, all the sins on this long list occur. Every area of life is defiled, for these sins violate [YHWH's] laws for the protection of worship, parental authority, human life, marriage, property, and truth (in other words, all of the matters contained in the **Ten Commandments**; see **Exodus 20:1-17**). (P. 1531)

Matties states that "The princes, and all who wield power, are tainted with the blood of the innocent (**verses 6, 9, 12**). The list of other violations draws on Israel's legal traditions: treatment of parents (**Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Deuteronomy 5:16**); the outsider / alien (**Exodus 22:21-22; 23:9; Leviticus 19:33-34**), orphans and widows (**Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 16:11**); violation of Sabbaths (**Leviticus 19:30; Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15**; perhaps including the Sabbath year and year of release, **Leviticus 25; Deuteronomy 15**); slanderous murder (**Leviticus 19:16**); pagan meals; sexual violations including incest (**Leviticus 18:7-20; 20:11-14**; and economic crimes of bribery, excessive interest-taking and extortion (**Exodus 23:8; Leviticus 25:36-37; 19:13**; see also **Ezekiel 18:8, 13, 17**). These activities are symptomatic of exiles who have amnesia about the law (**verse 12b**)." (Pp. 1187-88)

However, notice that the phrase "excessive interest taking" is not found in the text. In fact, the text forbids "interest taking," period. The Jews were allowed to take interest from non-Jews, but not allowed to take interest (bites) from fellow Jews, especially the poor, so much in need of help. We suspect that those translating by "excessive interest taking" or some similar phrase, may be in the business of lending money to make money, and don't want the biblical teaching interfering with their business. What do you think?

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(continued...)

הִנֵּה נְשִׂיֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Look (at the) princes / chiefs of Israel--¹⁰⁸³

אִישׁ לְזִרְעוֹ הָיָה בְּךָ

each one to / by his arm / strength, they were against you,¹⁰⁸⁴

לְמַעַן שִׁפְךָ דָּם:

in order to pour out / shed blood!

¹⁰⁸²(...continued)

of power (‘shedding blood’) perpetrated against the very society whose order and justice they are charged to protect (**verse 6**). The following list of specific, but only representative, crimes (**verses 7-12a**) is aptly associated with these princes, who not only commit them, but who also fail to prevent their subjects from following suit.” (P. 186)

¹⁰⁸³

Rabbi Fisch comments that by the princes of Israel is meant “the members of the royal household and leading officials of the state.” (P. 144) Hilmer states, “Leaders generally, not kings.” (P. 1256)

The princes of Israel are mentioned in **19:1; 21:12; 22:6, 25; 45:8** and **9**. That is, the very ones who should have been leading Israel, setting the proper example before and teaching the people, were doing the exact opposite! And is so doing, instead of being “for Israel,” they were in fact “against” the city, contributing to its destruction.

¹⁰⁸⁴

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “according to his might,” and he comments that the phrase is literally “a man to his arm”; each according to the opportunities afforded by his exalted rank. Davidson renders: ‘have been high-handed in you, to shed blood’; they were arbitrary so that their power was law.” (P. 141) However, nothing is said in the text concerning “high-handed.” We suggest the translation “according to his arm’s length”—i.e., taking advantage of every opportunity that came his way, as much as he could reach.

22:7 אָב וְאִמּוֹ הִקְלִיפוּ בְךָ

Father and mother they made light of in you.¹⁰⁸⁵

לְגֵר עָשׂוּ בְעֶשְׂקָךְ בְּתוֹכְךָ

To the temporary resident / immigrant they acted with oppression in your midst.

יְתוּם וְאַלְמָנָה הוֹנִי בְךָ:

Orphan and widow they oppressed in you.¹⁰⁸⁶

1085

Rabbi Fisch states that the plural “they” “does not refer to the princes of Israel, but the people of Judea generally. They were faithless to the *Torah* which repeatedly enjoined the honoring of parents and fair treatment of the stranger [temporary resident / emigrant], orphan and widow.” (P. 144) Perhaps ...but there is no indication in the text of a change of reference from the princes to the people in general. Notice that in **verse 8** there is a return to the singular.

Darr states that “Injunctions concerning the proper treatment of fathers and mothers by their offspring, especially adult children, are variously expressed in the **Hebrew Bible**. **Exodus 21:17** and **Leviticus 29:9** state that ‘cursing’ father and mother is a capital offense. **Deuteronomy 27:16** curses anyone who treats parents contemptuously. The Decalogue commandment (**Exodus 20:12**; see also **Deuteronomy 5:16**), by contrast, is cast in positive language (‘Honor your father and your mother’) and is accompanied by a ‘reward’ for its fulfillment (‘so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you’). Greenberg compares the sentiment in **Ezekiel** to a Sumerian text in whose prologue King Lipit Ishtar of Isin (early second millennium B.C.E.) describes how he set right social wrongdoings in his city: ‘I made the children support their father; I made the father stand by his children, (and) I made the children stand by their father.’” (P. 186)

1086

We have often said, and repeat it here, that the touchstone for the ethics of any nation or people is the way they treat temporary residents / emigrants, widows, and orphans. These are the weakest people in society, those least able to protect themselves. It is the role of the king—the government—to see that they are protected! See **Exodus 22:21; 23:9, 12; Deuteronomy 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6; 22:3**.

Darr comments that “Here, too, Greenberg cites a Sumerian text (from the mid-third millennium B.C.E.) that speaks to the regulation of power vis a vis the powerless. A list of reforms enacted by Erukagina of Lagash includes the following item: ‘Urukagina made a covenant with [the God] Ningirsu that a man of power must not commit an (injustice) against an orphan or widow.’ In this respect also, Jerusalem’s monarchs have failed to carry out a royal responsibility attested throughout the ancient Near (continued...)

22:8 קִדְּשֵׁי בַיִת

My set-apart things you (feminine singular) despised,¹⁰⁸⁷

וְאֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתַי חָלַלְתָּ:

and My sabbaths / days of rest you profaned / defiled.¹⁰⁸⁸

22:9¹⁰⁸⁹

¹⁰⁸⁶(...continued)

East.” (P. 186)

¹⁰⁸⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “They [the subject is singular, not plural] had shown contempt for the temple by bringing blemished animals for sacrifice.” (P. 144) Nothing in the text is as specific as this, and we think Rabbi Fisch is reading what he has learned from **Malachi 1:8** into the text of **Ezekiel**.

Darr comments that “Thus far, Ezekiel’s ‘evidence’ has consisted of crimes of violence (‘shedding blood’) within the sphere of social relations. **Verse 8**, by contrast, speaks in a general way of Jerusalem’s cultic violations. She has despised Yahweh’s ‘holy things’ (e.g., the temple and its various appurtenances, the sacrifices offered there) and profaned God’s sabbaths (**20:13, 16, 21, 24**; see also **Leviticus 19:30**, where Yahweh commands the Israelites to ‘keep my sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary’). Sabbath observance was Yahweh’s gift to Israel, a sign of their covenant bond (see **Exodus 31:13-17**; **Ezekiel 20:12, 20**) and a weekly reminder of God’s roles as Creator (**Exodus 20:11**) and Deliverer (**Deuteronomy 5:15**). When Jerusalem profanes the Lord’s sabbaths, she flagrantly denies Yahweh’s particular claim upon her life.” (Pp. 186-187)

¹⁰⁸⁸

There are some 15 references to the שַׁבָּת, **shabbath**, “sabbath” in the **Scroll of Ezekiel: 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; 22:8** (here), **26; 23:38; 44:24; 45:17; 46:1, 3, 4** and **12**. See footnotes 730 and 731. We are amazed at the way Walther Eichrodt, our renowned **Old Testament** theologian has deleted almost all references to the sabbath as later additions to the text of **Ezekiel**, up to and including **22:8**. But from **22:26** on, he keeps the references to the sabbath in the text. We do not understand such arbitrary treatment.

¹⁰⁸⁹

Darr comments that “**Verse 9** juxtaposes social, cultic, and sexual misconduct. Among Jerusalem’s inhabitants are ‘slanderers’ (אֲנָשֵׁי רְכֵיל, literally ‘merchant men’ [we say, literally, ‘men of slander’]. Within the **Pentateuch**, only **Leviticus 19:16** refers to the רְכֵיל (see also **Jeremiah 6:28; 9:3**), who are

(continued...)

אֲנָשֵׁי רִכְלִי הָיוּ בְּךָ

Men of slander were in you,¹⁰⁹⁰

לְמַעַן שִׁפְךָ דָּם

in order to shed / pour out blood.¹⁰⁹¹

¹⁰⁸⁹(...continued)

associated with bloodshed, killing in order to ‘get rid of persons obnoxious to those in power by means of false accusations.’ (P. 187)

¹⁰⁹⁰

Reimer notes that “The prohibition of slander is linked to blood in **Leviticus 19:16**... To eat on the mountains (compare **Ezekiel 6:3; 16:15; 18:6, 15**) is to participate in forbidden sacrificial rites.” (P. 1531)

¹⁰⁹¹

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “talebearers to shed blood.” He comments that “Talebearing in itself is forbidden by the **Torah (Leviticus 19:16)**; but their slanders which aimed at the death penalty upon innocent persons were doubly hideous.” (P. 144)

The Hebrew phrase is אֲנָשֵׁי רִכְלִי, “men of slander.” For occurrences of this noun רִכְלִי in the **Hebrew Bible** see the following passages:

Leviticus 19:16,

לֹא-תֵלֵךְ רִכְלִי בְּעַמִּיךָ

You (singular) shall not walk / go around (as a) slanderer among your people.

לֹא תִעַמְדַּם עַל-דָּם רֵעֶךָ

You (singular) shall not stand (still, or silent?) over the blood of your neighbor.

אֲנִי יְהוָה:

I (am)YHWH!

Jeremiah 6:28, where Jeremiah, the tester / assayer of metals is told:

כָּל־ם סָרְוּ סוֹרְרִים

All of them turned aside, being stubborn

הֹלְכֵי רִכְלִי

walking (in) slander.

נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרִזָּל

Bronze and iron--

(continued...)

וְאֶל-הַהָרִים אָכְלוּ בָךְ

and to / on the mountains they ate in you.¹⁰⁹²

¹⁰⁹¹(...continued)

כֻּלָּם מִשְׁחִיתִים הֵמָּה:

all of them, they are spoiling / ruining (everything)!

Jeremiah 9:3^{Heb} / **4**^{Eng}

אִישׁ מִרְעֵהוּ הַשְּׂמֵרוֹ

Let each man / person be guarded from his neighbor;

וְעַל-כָּל-אָח אֶל-תִּבְטָחוּ

and do not trust any brother!

כִּי כָל-אָח עָקוֹב יַעֲקֹב

Because every brother certainly bites (his brother's) heel;

וְכָל-רֵעַ רָכִיל יִהְיֶה:

and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer!

(This verse is an excellent example of the “all-fallacy.”)

Ezekiel 22:9a, b (here),

אֲנָשֵׁי רָכִיל הָיוּ בָךְ

Men of slander were in you,

לְמַעַן שִׁפְּדוּ-דָּם

in order to shed / pour out blood.

Proverbs 11:13,

הוֹלֵךְ רָכִיל מְגַלֵּה-סוֹד

One going about (as a) tale-bearer / gossip uncovers counsel;

וְנֶאֱמָן-רוּחַ מְכֻסָּה דְבָר:

and one faithful / trustworthy of spirit covers up a word / matter.

Proverbs 20:19,

גּוֹלֵה-סוֹד

One who reveals / uncovers counsel—

הוֹלֵךְ רָכִיל

one who walks about, a gossip / tale-bearer;

וּלְפִתּוֹ שִׁפְתָיו

and to one opening his lips—

לֹא תִתְעַרְבּ:

you shall not associate / exchange pledges!

זָמָה עָשׂוּ בְּחֹכְדָּךְ:

They did / practiced (sexual) wickedness in your midst:¹⁰⁹³

¹⁰⁹²(...continued)

For this matter of eating on the mountains, see **Ezekiel 18:6** with its footnotes. For the last phrase in this line, “in you,” we take to mean “in Jerusalem,” and therefore meaning on Mount Moriah or the Mount of Olives.

Darr comments that “In Jerusalem also, meals are eaten upon the mountains (high places?). Here, as in **18:6**, we encounter an obscure phrase appearing only in the **Scroll of Ezekiel**. Negative references to sacrifices atop mountains in honor (or in the Presence) of Deities appear, however, in **2 Kings 16:4; Isaiah 65:7** and **Hosea 4:13** (see also **Ezekiel 6:13**). The prophet clearly regards this cultic practice (whatever its precise nature) as illicit.” (P. 187)

¹⁰⁹³

Translations of this line vary:

King James, “in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.”

Tanakh, “and they have practiced depravity in your midst.”

New Revised Standard, “who commit lewdness in your midst.”

New International, “and commit lewd acts.”

New Jerusalem, “and act licentiously”;

Rahfs, ἀνόσια ἐποίουσιν ἐν μέσῳ σου, “non-set-apart things they were doing in your midst.”

The Hebrew noun here is זָמָה, defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as “plan,” “device,” “wickedness.” It is especially used for sexual immorality, including such things as

incest, **Leviticus 18:17, 20:14**

licentiousness, **Leviticus 19:29, Judges 20:6**

adultery, **Job 31:11**

frequently (mostly in **Ezekiel**) it is used as a metaphor for idolatry of people, under the figure of prostitution and adultery, **Jeremiah 13:27; Ezekiel 16:27, 43, 58; 22:9, 11; 23:21, 27, 29, 35, 44, 48, 49; 24:13**. We assume that this was the case, since sacred prostitution oftentimes accompanied idolatry.

Darr comments that “**Verses 10-11** cite five examples of the immorality of Jerusalem’s (male) inhabitants:

(1) they engage in sexual relations with their fathers’ wives. To ‘uncover their fathers’ nakedness’ means to have intercourse with a woman (wife or concubine) whose sexuality (‘nakedness’) is legally the property of the father—that is, one’s mother or ‘stepmother,’ broadly defined (see **Leviticus 18:7-8**). In **Leviticus 20:11**, this crime is a capital offense; both parties are to be put to death.

(continued...)

22:10 עֲרוֹת־אָב וְגִלְה־בֶּן

A father's nakedness [his wife] he [a son] uncovered in you.¹⁰⁹⁴

¹⁰⁹³(...continued)

(2) They engage in sexual intercourse with women who are impure on account of their menstrual flow (see **Leviticus 18:19; 20:18; Ezekiel 18:6**)...

(3) The men 'commit abomination' (adultery) with their neighbor's wife, an act prohibited in **Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; 20:10**. Jeremiah charges his people with adulterous acts; see **Jeremiah 5:7; 7:9; 9:1; 23:10; 29:23**).

(4) They lewdly defile (engage in sexual intercourse with) daughters-in-law (see **Leviticus 18:15; 20:12**, where this capital crime also is punished by the execution of both parties).

(5) Finally, they demand incestuous sexual relations of their sisters (banned in **Leviticus 18:9, 11; 20:17**).

"The prophet's list of the violent crimes perpetrated in Jerusalem ends with a damning summary statement: 'You have forgotten me' (see also **23:35**). Blooshed City, polluted by violent crimes and saturated with blood-guilt, harbors a society that is the very opposite of that which God desires for / demands of this people. Ezekiel's catalog of cultic, sexual, and economic offenses represents, but does not exhaust, the nation's transgressions. They signal the collapse of their theo-ethos ['God-ethic'] by which Israel might have lived as Yahweh's faithful covenant partner. In God's laws, Hals observes, 'He laid claim to every area of His people's lives, and the expression of allegiance was to be measured not just by affirmations, but by implementation...The meaning of 'I am Yahweh your God and you are My people,' was to find expression much more in how one treated others than in what sacrifices one offered. In fact, to mistreat others was to enter into the sphere of guilt and uncleanness which prevented ritual contact with God.'" (Pp. 187-188)

¹⁰⁹⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that "The reference is to incestuous marriage [sexual intercourse] with a stepmother, prohibited in **Leviticus 18:7-8**. The text has the verb in the singular, and Kimchi explains that the allusion is to king Amon who, according to Rabbinic tradition, had intercourse with his mother. The ancient versions, including the Targum, presuppose a plural verb. Perhaps the singular was used because *fathers*' is also singular in the Hebrew." (Pp. 144-45)

Leviticus 18:7-8,

7 עֲרוֹת אָבִיךָ וְעֲרוֹת אִמֶּךָ

Nakedness of your father, and nakedness of your mother,

לֹא תִגְלֶהּ

you shall not uncover;

אִמֶּךָ הִוא לֹא תִגְלֶהּ עֲרוֹתֶיהָ:

she is your mother; you shall not uncover her nakedness (sexually)!

(continued...)

טִמְאַת הַנְּדָה עֲנוּבֶיךָ:

Uncleanness of the menstrual woman they humbled in you.¹⁰⁹⁵

22:11 וְאִישׁ | אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ רֵעֵהוּ עָשָׂה תוֹעֵבָה

And a man with his neighbor's wife did an abomination,¹⁰⁹⁶

¹⁰⁹⁴(...continued)

8 עֲרוֹת אִשְׁת־אָבִיךָ לֹא תִגְלֶה

Nakedness of your father's wife you shall not uncover;

עֲרוֹת אָבִיךָ הִוא:

she is your father's nakedness (sexually)!

1095

Rabbi Fisch comments that "They not onloy committed rape, but at a time when the woman's condition [her menstrual period] rendered intercourse forbidden." (P. 145) See:

Leviticus 18:19,

וְאֶל־אִשָּׁה בְּנִדְתָּ טִמְאַתָּהּ

And to a woman in her menstrual uncleanness,

לֹא תִקְרַב לְגִלּוֹת עֲרוֹתָהּ:

you shall not draw near to uncover her nakedness!

Leviticus 20:18,

וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־אִשָּׁה דְּוָהּ

And a man who will lie down with a woman in her menstrual period;

וְגִלָּה אֶת־עֲרוֹתָהּ

and will uncover her nakedness--

אֶת־מְקַרְהָ הָעֵר

he made naked her fountain;

וְהִיא גִלְתָּהּ אֶת־מְקוֹר דַּמְיָהּ

and she uncovered her blood's spring;

וְנִכְרְתוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם

and they shall be cut off, (the) two of them,

מִקֵּרְב עַמָּם:

from their people's midst.

1096

Rabbi Fisch comments that "Adultery is abhorrent to God." (P. 145)

(continued...)

וַאִישׁ אֶת־כַּלְתּוֹ טָמְא בְזִמָּה

and a man defiled his daughter-in-law with wickedness;

וַאִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיתוֹ בֶּת־אָבִיו עָנָה בְּדָ:

and a man humbled / violated his sister, his father's daughter.¹⁰⁹⁷

¹⁰⁹⁶(...continued)

And many today ask, Why? Why shouldn't two consenting adults be allowed to play sexually, and pleasure themselves? The biblical answer is that YHWH wants human beings to build solid homes, with husbands and wives who genuinely love each other joyfully and exclusively, where their children know who their parents are, and are able to grow up in a safe and secure environment. Sexual immorality destroys that covenanted relationship, and introduces all manner of misgiving and destruction into the home, confusing the children and upsetting the secure environment. See:

Exodus 20:14 (7th commandment),

לֹא תִנְאֻף:

You shall not be sexually immoral!

For related biblical teaching, see the “Holiness Code” in **Leviticus 18:1-20:27**, where the laws concerning sexual boundaries that are not to be broken are given. The people of YHWH cannot have the same attitudes towards and practices of sexuality that characterize the neighboring nations around them; they must be different!

In the Hebrew language there are two verbs which are used to describe sexual intercourse outside the covenant of marriage: זָנָה, **zanah** and נִאֲפָה, **n)aph**—and both of these are forbidden for the people of YHWH. The verb זָנָה, **zanah** is used especially for the act of sexual intercourse engaged in by the prostitute, without any concern for marital faithfulness, or for covenant relationships. The verb נִאֲפָה, **n)aph** is used for the act of sexual intercourse engaged in by married persons, whether wives or husbands, with others than their covenanted mates. Both of these verbs are used over and over in biblical literature, as forbidden activities for anyone interested in fulfilling the will of [YHWH]. And I say, If you are not interested in fulfilling the will of your Creator, go ahead and destroy your life and your family's life!

Hilmer notes that “All of the sins mentioned in this verse were specifically forbidden in the law (**Leviticus 18:7-20; 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22-23, 30; 27:22**).” (P. 1256)

¹⁰⁹⁷

For this matter of sexual molestation of a daughter-in-law or sister, see: **Leviticus 18:9**,

(continued...)

22:12 שָׁחַד לְקַח־בָּךְ

They took a bribe in you,

לְמַעַן שִׁפְךָ־דָם

in order to pour out / shed blood.¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹⁷(...continued)

עֲרוֹת אַחֻתְךָ בֵּת־אָבִיךָ אוֹ בֵּת־אִמְךָ

Nakedness of your sister, daughter of your father, or daughter of your mother,

מוֹלְדֶת בַּיִת אוֹ מוֹלְדֶת חוּץ

born at home or born outside (your home),

לֹא תגִּילָה עֲרוֹתָן:

you shall not uncover their nakedness (sexually)!

(But, the male will say, They are so beautiful, so attractive to me! Yes, they are. But their beauty and their attractiveness are meant by God for someone else, not for you! Don't touch them! If you do, you will be planting the seed of destruction in your family!)

Leviticus 18:15,

עֲרוֹת כַּלְתְּךָ לֹא תגִּילָה

Nakedness of your daughter-in-law you shall not uncover--

אִשֶּׁת בְּנִי הִיא לֹא תגִּילָה עֲרוֹתָהּ:

she is your son's wife; you shall not uncover her nakedness!

1098

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "taken gifts to shed blood." He comments that "Judges accepted bribes to condemn the innocent to death [see the story of Naboth's vineyard in **1 Kings 21**]. The acceptance of bribes by judges even in less serious cases is condemned." (P. 145) See:

Deuteronomy 16:19,

לֹא־תטִּיף מִשְׁפָּט

You shall not thrust aside a legal decision;

לֹא תכִּיר פָּנִים

you shall not recognize faces;

וְלֹא־תקַח שָׁחַד

and you shall not take a bribe--

כִּי הַשָּׁחַד יַעֲוֶר עֵינֵי חֲכָמִים

because the bribe blinds (the) eyes of wise people,

(continued...)

נִשְׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית לְקַחַתָּ

You (feminine singular) took interest and increase,¹⁰⁹⁹

וְתִבְצַעְתְּ רֵעִיךְ בְּעֶשֶׂק

and you cut off your neighbors by the oppression / extortion.¹¹⁰⁰

וְאֵתִי שָׁכַחַתָּ

And Me, you forgot!¹¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁹⁸(...continued)

וַיִּסְלַף דְּבָרֵי צְדִיקִים:

and perverts rightly-related words / matters.

(Today, we very commonly hear it said that “Money paves the way” in our law-courts. The poor either have no lawyer, or are given the least successful lawyer—and justice is “for sale.” Everyone in the legal profession, and all citizens, need to fight against this like the plague. Bribery and letting money make the decision is bound to undermine the foundations of our nation!)

1099

See **Leviticus 25:36-37**, which is speaking about a brother (fellow Jew?) who has become poor:

36 אַל־תִּקַּח מֵאִתּוֹ נִשְׁךְ וְתִרְבִּית

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

וִירָאָתָּ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ

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

וְחֵי אָחִיךָ עִמָּךְ:

and your brother shall live with you.

37 אֶת־כֶּסֶפְךָ לֹא־תִתֵּן לוֹ בְּנִשְׁךְ

Your silver / money you shall not give to him with interest;

וּבְמִרְבִּית לֹא־תִתֵּן אֹכְלֶךָ:

and you shall not give (him) your food for profit.

(Don't take advantage of the poor brother; help him! Don't make a profit from him!)

1100

Rabbi Fisch comments that Jerusalem's “deeds of extortion were not restricted to strangers, but also included their friends. The prophet began his indictment with bloodshed (**verse 2**); and after referring to other grave sins, he reverts to bloodshed and violence, because these major crimes sealed their fate.” (P. 145) See **verse 3**.

1101

(continued...)

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

22:13¹¹⁰² וַהֲנִהּ הַפִּיתִי כַפִּי

And look—I struck My hand¹¹⁰³

אֶל-בְּצַעַךְ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתָ

to / at your dishonest gain which you made,

וְעַל-דָּמְךָ אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בְּתוֹכְךָ:

and upon / at your bloods which were in your midst.¹¹⁰⁴

22:14¹¹⁰⁵

¹¹⁰¹(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that Jerusalem had forgotten the One “Who ordained laws against the acts committed by the Judeans. The shocking picture of national depravity drawn by Ezekiel is confirmed by other prophets.” (P. 145) See **Jeremiah 5:7ff; 6:13; 7:5-6; 22:3**. Yes, in this condemnation of Jerusalem there is a striking similarity between **Ezekiel** and **Jeremiah**. And that condemnation should ring in our ears, still today!

Reimer comments on **verse 12** that it “provides a sitting summary to the list of ethical vices: but Me you have forgotten. A holy God cannot tolerate such actions.” (P. 1531)

¹¹⁰²

Darr entitles **verses 13-16** “Jerusalem’s Sentence.” She comments that “With **verse 13**, Ezekiel initiates the sentencing phase of Jerusalem’s case. A summons to attention (“See!”) is accompanied by a sign act: The prophet claps his hands in anger...on account of Jerusalem’s illicit profiteering (**verse 12**) and the blood shed in her (with its consequent bloodguilt).” (P. 188)

¹¹⁰³

For the striking of the hand, compare **Ezekiel 21:14, 17**. Hilmer states that it means “strike the hand in anger.” (P. 1256)

¹¹⁰⁴

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The Rabbis, commenting on this verse, make the observation: Ezekiel enumerated twenty-four sins of which Israel [Jerusalem / Judea] was guilty; but the one with which he concluded his indictment is robbery, signifying that violence outweighs them all.” (P. 145)

¹¹⁰⁵

(continued...)

הִיעָמַד לִבִּי׃

Will your heart stand (strong),

אִם־תִּחְזַקְנָה יָדַי׃

or will your hands be strong (enough)

לְיָמִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אֹתְךָ׃

for the days which I am making (for) you?¹¹⁰⁶

אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי וְעָשִׂיתִי׃

I YHWH, I said (it); and I will do (it)!

22:15 וְהִפְצֹתִי אֹתְךָ בְּגוֹיִם׃

And I will scatter you (singular) in the nations;

וְזָרִיתִיךָ בְּאַרְצוֹת׃

and I will scatter you (synonym) in the lands;

וְהִתְמַחְתִּי טְמֵאתְךָ מִמֶּנִּי׃

and I will complete / destroy your uncleanness from you.¹¹⁰⁷

¹¹⁰⁵(...continued)

Darr comments that “Two rhetorical questions follow: ‘Can your courage (literally ‘heart’) stand firm / can your hands remain strong in the days of My (punitive) dealing with you?’ (verse 14a). Firm heart and strong hands are the antithesis of ‘melting heart’ and ‘feeble hands’ in 21:7. The Lord’s queries admit only a negative response. Verse 14b grounds the certain fulfillment of God’s judgment in Yahweh’s Own identity.” (P. 188)

1106

Rabbi Fisch comments that the question means “Will your fortitude stand the strain, and will you have the strength to defend yourselves against the imminent attack of your enemies? The intended answer is, of course, negative.” (P. 145)

1107

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “I will consume your filthiness out of you.” He comments that “The forthcoming exile in Babylon will have a purifying effect upon the nation.” (146)

(continued...)

22:16 וְנִחַלְתָּ בְךָ

And you will be polluted / profaned by yourself,

לְעֵינֵי גוֹיִם

in (the) eyes of nations;

וְיָדַעְתָּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and you will know that I (am) YHWH.¹¹⁰⁸

22:17¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰⁷(...continued)

We say, Yes! YHWH's visitations in punishment are meant to purify, to cleanse—not to destroy. Observe the following section, **verses 17-22**, concerning the “smelting furnace,” in which metals are heated to the melting point, in order to get rid of impurities, “dross.”

1108

Rabbi Fisch comments that “When the prediction is verified by events, the nation will realize that it is [YHWH's] doing.” (P. 146)

We ask, Where did the pollution come from in the first place? It came from you (and today, from you and me)! You / we did it! You're / we're the one that didn't care, or didn't want to know the Teaching of your / our God! That's where the pollution of society has come from! Quit blaming it on someone else! We American Christians today must confess our nation's involvement in murdering native Americans so we could take over their homes and lands, as well as involvement in slave-trade that has had and continues to have ripping effects upon our so-called “Christian nation.” Let us all genuinely repent and pray for forgiveness, and then open up our hearts to welcome and love all people—whatever their race or background--into the good news of God's love, and His teaching that will give us all life!

1109

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 17-22** “The Smelting Furnace.” Darr entitles these verses “Israel Is Dross, Not Silver.”

Darr comments that YHWH has a complaint to make: “‘The house of Israel has become dross to Me,’ all of them, bronze, tin, iron, and lead. In the midst of a furnace, ‘dross of silver they have become.’ This trope, whose vehicle derives from the sphere of metallurgy, signals that Ezekiel is again about the business of making metaphors (see **20:49**). Unlike most modern readers, he is familiar with the method of refining silver, and he employs it creatively in order to convey to his audience the worthless nature and impending punishment of all who, fearing Nebuchadnezzar's troops, seek protection

(continued...)

¹¹⁰⁹(...continued)

within the walls of Judah's capital. This oracle should probably be dated to 589 B.C.E., near the onset of the siege of Jerusalem.

“Israel has become the worthless and impure residue that remains after the silver has been collected...In the following interpretation of **verse 18**, the people are addressed directly. Because they have all become dross, God will gather them into the midst of Jerusalem. This process is illumined by two similes also derived from metallurgy. The first appears in **verse 20**: ‘As one gathers silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the smelter, to blow the fire upon them in order to melt them; so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath, and I will put you in and melt you.’...

“Smelting imagery is found in Israel's traditions about its enslavement in Egypt. In **Deuteronomy 4:20**, for example, Moses is said to remind the people that they are the exclusive property of the God Who has brought them out of the ‘iron-smelter’ (Egypt). King Solomon includes the metaphor in his prayer of dedication of the Jerusalem temple (**1 Kings 8:51**), and it appears in Jeremiah's indictment of the covenant-breaking people of Judah (**Jeremiah 11:4**). Elsewhere, Jeremiah adopts smelting imagery in an impassioned indictment of his fellow Judeans. They are bronze and iron, and although the bellows blows furiously and the lead is oxidized in the fire, the refining process fails, leaving the silver impure and unfit for use (**Jeremiah 6:27-30**). **Isaiah 1:22, 25** speaks more optimistically. Although Jerusalem's silver has become dross, Yahweh will refine it—a harsh process that nonetheless results in the elimination of her impurity. In a text that shares Ezekiel's concern for God's reputation, Deutero-Isaiah calls the Babylonian exile a ‘furnace of adversity’ in which God has refined Israel (**Isaiah 46:10**).” (Pp. 189-190)

Reimer entitles these same verses “The City of Dross.” He comments that “The metaphor of smelting is found elsewhere in the Old Testament: **Jeremiah 6:29** makes similar use of it, while **Isaiah 48:10** provides a literal application. Here, however, the point is not to get purified silver but to be rid of the dross, i.e., Jerusalem's inhabitants (compare **Isaiah 1:22, 25**). Jerusalem is seen as a slag heap of useless dross.” (P. 1531)

Hilmer comments that “For references to Jerusalem as a furnace see **Isaiah 1:21-16; Jeremiah 6:27-30**. Typically, imagery used by other to represent purifying was used by Ezekiel to picture total destruction.” (P. 1256) We think the **Isaiah** passage depicts the furnace as accomplishing purification, but think the **Jeremiah** passage does not—like Ezekiel.

Matties comments on **verses 17-22** that “Israel has become nothing but dross, the by-product of working metals through a smelting process. The emphasis on *all of them* (**verse 18**) and the special mention of silver (**verses 18, 20, 22**) as part of the dross, cautions against any of the addressees thinking too highly of themselves (as though they have become purified metal). Recognition of [YHWH] comes only in self-recognition as dross (**verse 22b**).” (P. 1188)

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

22:18 בְּנֵי־אָדָם הַיּוֹלֵי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל (לְסוּג) [לְסִיג]

Son of Adam / Humanity, Israel's House, they have become to Me for worthless remains /
dross;¹¹¹⁰

כָּלָם נְחֹשֶׁת וּבְרִיל

all of them (are) bronze and tin,¹¹¹¹

1110

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” לְסוּג; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” לְסִיג. It is just a matter of correct spelling / pointing.

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Israel is no longer comparable to pure metal, but to base metal containing a large proportion of dross.” (P. 146)

1111

Here, once again, we think Ezekiel is guilty of the “all fallacy.” I am reminded of a church I once served, which had a large family in it. Among the sons and daughters of the original family were alcoholics and drug-addicts. Their children turned out, very much like their parents, with a couple of exceptions. One twin-boy rejected the life-style of his parents, became a good student and excellent basketball player—while his twin brother and a younger brother became murderers, rapists, and were sentenced to double life-sentences in the State Penitentiary in Raleigh, North Carolina. The grandmother of that family was still alive. She was very humble, deeply grieved over her family. She would be in church every Sunday, and would come to the front of the sanctuary, bowing upon the steps at the front, praying quietly. It became like a call to worship for the normally noisy congregation. I knew her for years, and when she died, shared in her funeral. I am quite sure that anyone who knew her family would say the family was “all dross,” looking only at the worst examples, forgetting about that one grandson of hers, and herself. It is mighty easy to commit the “all fallacy.”

Surely, I think, there must have been at least one grandson in all Jerusalem, who was more like silver than dross, and there must have been at least one grandmother, who had held onto her faith, and not gone along with the city's sinfulness. What do you think? Paul would say that there is “none righteous, no not one.” Jesus would say that he had come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. What do you say? I say it is mighty easy to paint with too broad a brush!

וּבְרִזָּל וְעוֹפֶרֶת בְּתוֹךְ כּוֹר

and iron and lead in (the) midst of a furnace—¹¹¹²

1112

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The people are like crude ore, a mixture of various minerals, which has to undergo the process of smelting.” (P. 146) See:

Deuteronomy 4:20,

וְאַתְּכֶם לָקַח יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵא אֶתְכֶם מִכּוּר הַבְּרִזָּל מִמִּצְרַיִם

And YHWH took you people, and He brought you forth from the iron furnace, from Egypt,

לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְעָם נַחֲלָה כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

to be for Him for a people, an inheritance, like this very day.

Isaiah 48:10,

הִנֵּה צִרְפָּתִיךָ

Look—I refined / proved you (singular),

וְלֹא בַכֶּסֶף

and not with silver / money;

בְּחַרְתִּיךָ

I chose / tested you,

בְּכוּר עֲנִי:

in a furnace of affliction!

Daniel 3:19-20,

3:19 בְּאֲדָרִין נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר הַתְּמֹלִי חָמָא

Then Nebhukhadhnettsar was filled with rage,

וּצְלָם אֲנַפּוּהִי (אֲשַׁתְּנוּ) [אֲשַׁתְּנוּ]

and his faces / face / image was changed

עַל-שְׂדֵרְךָ מִיֶּשֶׁךְ וְעַבְדְּךָ נִגּוּ

against Shadrhak, Meyshak and Abhedh Negho.

עָנָה וְאָמַר לְמַזָּא לְאַתּוֹנָא

He answered and he said, to make a furnace hot,

חֲדָשְׁבָעָה עַל דֵּי חֲזָה לְמִזְוִיָּה:

seven time(s) more than it was custom to heat it.

20 וְלִגְבָרִין גְּבַרֵי-חַיִל דֵּי בְּחִילָה

and to mighty men, mighty army men, who were in his army,

אָמַר לְכַפְתָּה לְשְׂדֵרְךָ מִיֶּשֶׁךְ וְעַבְדְּךָ נִגּוּ

he said / commanded to bind Shadrhak, Meyshak and Abhedh Nego;

(continued...)

סָגִים כֶּסֶף הָיוּ:

dross / worthless remains of silver they have become!¹¹¹³

22:19 לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

יֵעַן הָיוּת כְּלָכֶם לְסָגִים

Because of all of you (plural) becoming dross / worthless remains,

לָכֵן הִנְנִי קֹבֵץ אֶתְכֶם אֶל-תּוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם:

therefore look at Me—gathering you to / into Jerusalem’s midst—¹¹¹⁴

22:20 קִבְּצַת כֶּסֶף וְנְחָשֶׁת וּבְרִזָּל וְעוֹפֶרֶת וּבְדִיל אֶל-תּוֹךְ כּוּר

a gathering of silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin in (the) midst of a furnace,

¹¹¹²(...continued)

לְמַרְמָא לְאַתּוֹן נוֹרָא יִקְרָא:

to throw (them) into the burning fire.

(Of course, this was not a “smelting furnace”—it was a “destroying furnace.”)

1113

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Israel [Jerusalem / Judea] is no longer comparable to pure metal, but to base metal containing a large proportion of dross [no, not ‘a large proportion of,’ but ‘all of them!].’... The people are like crude ore, a mixture of various minerals, which has to undergo the process of smelting...The Hebrew construction is difficult and is literally ‘dross silver they were.’ The two nouns may be construed as in apposition and interpreted as ‘dross of silver.’ Alternatively, *sige*, the noun in the construct state, is to be understood, ‘dross, dross of silver’; or the meaning is: they who are now dross were once pure silver.” (P. 146) And this is to go to the opposite extreme. They were not once “pure silver.” We want to say either / or, not both / and. No one is totally bad; not one is totally good. The ancient Judeans, and we too, are at best, mixtures. But given that mixture, the good can outweigh the bad, or the bad can outweigh the good. What do you think? All of us need to come to God / Jesus Christ, seeking forgiveness and help! Some may need it more than others, but all of us need it!

1114

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Jerusalem is to be the furnace. The allusion may be to the gathering of most of the inhabitants of the land into this city for the final stand against the enemy, and the horrors of the siege will be part of the refining process.” (Pp. 146-47)

לְפַחֲתֵ-עַלְיוֹ אֵשׁ לְהַנְתִּיךָ

to blow upon them fire to melt it--

כֵּן אֶקְבֹּץ בְּאַפִּי וּבַחֲמָתִי

in this way I will gather in My anger and in My wrath,¹¹¹⁵

וְהִנַּחֲתִי וְהִתְכַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם:

and I will put you (there) and I will melt you!

22:21 וְכִנְסֵתִי אֶתְכֶם

And I will gather (synonym) you,

וְנִפְחַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם בְּאֵשׁ עֵבֶרְתִּי

and I will blow upon you with (the) fire of My wrath;

וְנִתְכַתֶּם בְּתוֹכָהּ:

and you will be melted in its midst!

22:22 כְּהַתְּוֹךְ כְּסֶפֶר בְּתוֹךְ כּוֹר

Like silver is melted in a furnace's midst,

כֵּן תִּתְּכּוּ בְּתוֹכָהּ

so you will be melted in its midst.

וְיָדַעְתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And you will know that I, YHWH,

שָׁפַכְתִּי חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם:

poured out My wrath upon you!¹¹¹⁶

1115

Rabbi Fisch states that it is the Divine anger and fury that “will be the fire which will heat the furnace in which the nation is to be smelted. The next verse speaks of *the fire of My wrath*.” (P. 147)

1116

(continued...)

22:23¹¹¹⁷ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

22:24 בֶּן־אָדָם אָמַר־לָהּ

Son of Humanity / Adam, say to her:

אַתְּ אֶרֶץ לֹא מְטֻהָרֶת הִיא

You (are) a land not cleansed, it (is)--¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁶(...continued)

Yes, the end result of all the smelting / burning, will be the knowledge of YHWH! If the end result was their annihilation, or complete destruction, there would be no “knowledge of YHWH” on their part!

1117

Reimer entitles **verses 23-31** “Systemic Failure.” He comments that “Here, rather than surveying behaviors (as in **verses 6-12**), Ezekiel surveys personnel. The issue is still impurity (a land...not cleansed, **verse 24**). This oracle serves as a commentary on **Ezekiel 7:23-27** where prophet, priest, elders, and king mislead the city, although an even earlier ‘model’ is found in **Zephaniah 3:3-4**. The sum is a web of deceit, as these pillars of the community are seen as colluding.” (P. 1531)

Matties likewise notes that “All classes of leaders, including the people of the land, are arraigned in the rationale for the judgment of Jerusalem (see also **Zephaniah 3:3-4**). Positions of power and influence have become particularly accountable for the flood and the fire of Divine judgment.” (P. 1188)

Darr entitles **verses 23-31** “Justifying God’s Judgment.” She comments that “The third of Ezekiel’s triad of oracles in **chapter 22**, addressed to Israel’s land, includes scathing denunciations of the nation’s civil and religious leaders. Similar indictments appear in **Micah 3:11** (rulers, priests, prophets) and **Jeremiah 5:31** (Prophets, priests), but this oracle so resembles **Zephaniah 3:3-4** that most scholars believe Ezekiel adopted his seventh-century predecessor’s oracle as the basis for his own, lengthier composition to further his own purposes...

“Ezekiel is justifying God’s judgment by pointing to the utter failure of Judah’s leaders to act responsibly. In describing their behavior, Ezekiel in effect offers a negative ‘job description’ for the posts of prince, official, priest, prophet, and ‘people of the land.’ (P. 190)

1118

Rabbi Fisch comments that “the **Bible** often speaks of the land being defiled by the iniquities of its inhabitants (compare **Ezekiel 36:17-18**; **Numbers 35:34**; **Deuteronomy 21:23**). The Judeans made
(continued...)

לֹא גִשְׁמָה בְּיוֹם זַעַם:

not rained on in a day of indignation!¹¹¹⁹

22:25 קִשְׁרַת נְבִיאֶיהָ בְּתוֹכָהּ

A conspiracy of her prophets (is) in her midst¹¹²⁰

כְּאַרְיֵה שׂוֹאֵג טָרַף טָרַף נִפְשׁ אֲכָלוּ

like the lion roaring, tearing prey they devoured a life!¹¹²¹

חֶסֶן וּיְקָר יִקְחוּ

They take treasure and precious possessions;

¹¹¹⁸(...continued)

no effort to purify their land.” (P. 147)

1119

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as writing, “In the East, rain is the great giver of plenty and fertility. Judah is both defiled and parched up as her punishment falls upon her.” (P. 147) And we ask, Is this not also true in the West, the South, and the North?

Darr comments that “Ezekiel is commanded to speak to Israel’s land. It is a land not purged, not rained upon in ‘the day of indignation’...Israel counted adequate rainfall among the covenant blessings bestowed by Yahweh (**Leviticus 26:4**). Drought was the consequence of failure to honor that covenant ... Block finds here a declaration that despite the land’s defilement, it has never undergone ‘the cleansing force...of a torrential deluge...a metaphor rooted in the Noachic flood account, where *geshem* designates the downpour that rid the world of human wickedness, corruption, and violence...If something of that sort is intended here, Ezekiel does not develop the usage further.” (P. 190)

1120

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The false prophets made a pact among themselves that they should all predict peace and security for the nation.” (P. 147)

1121

Rabbi Fisch comments that “As the lion roars to frighten his prey and then rends it, so do the false prophets employ loud oratory to confuse the people and gain their confidence, thereby causing disaster to them and their families (Kimchi)...They allied themselves with the autocratic princes and venal judges who for personal gain condemned the innocent to death and confiscated their property.” (P. 147)

אֶל־מְנוֹתֶיהָ הִרְבּוּ בְתוֹכָהּ:

they multiplied her widows in her midst!¹¹²²

22:26 כַּהֲנֵיָהּ חָמְסוּ תוֹרָתִי

Her priests have treated My teaching with violence,¹¹²³

וַיִּחַלְּלוּ קִדְשֵׁי

and they have profaned My set-apart things.¹¹²⁴

1122

Darr comments that “No less than its priests [see **verse 26**], Israel’s prophets betray their calling in the most fundamental ways. Ezekiel’s indictment, longer and less general than Zephaniah’s [see **Zephaniah 3**], returns to accusations and imagery appearing in **chapter 13**. They mislead their clients by ‘whitewashing’ the truth...Their visions are false, their divinations lies...for though they prophesy in Yahweh’s name, God has said nothing to them.” (P. 191)

1123

Rabbi Fisch comments that the priests have done this “Either by failing in their duty to instruct the people in the *Torah* (compare **Malachi 2:7**), or by violating its teachings. The latter seems more probable in the light of the next clause.” (P. 148)

Reimer states that “The priests were meant to be guardians of moral discernment (compare **Leviticus 10:10; Malachi 2:4-7**).” (P. 1531)

Hilmer comments that “Ezekiel...speaks plainly concerning the ‘dross’ of **verses 18-22**. All of Jerusalem’s leaders and people were included: princes (**verse 25**), priests (**verse 26**), officials (**verse 27**), prophets (**verse 28**), people (**verse 29**).” (P. 1257)

Darr states that “Ezekiel targets Israel’s priests (**verse 26**). Within **chapters 1-39**, this verse alone portrays the priesthood negatively, asserting its utter disregard of its most vital professional responsibilities. They have done violence to the *Torah* (a striking phrase found elsewhere in Hebrew Scripture only in **Zephaniah 3:4**) and desecrated God’s holy things (the sanctuary and its contents, donations, etc.; see **verse 8**). They have not distinguished between the holy and the common, and they have failed to teach the people the difference between the unclean and the clean (see **Leviticus 10:10; 11:47; 20:25**). Finally, they have disregarded (literally, ‘hid their eyes from’) God’s sabbaths, neither observing them nor pursuing other offenders. As a consequence, Yahweh is profaned in their midst.” (P. 91)

1124

(continued...)

בֵּין-קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹלֹל לֹא הִבְדִּילוּ

They have not divided between set-apart to common.

וּבֵין-הַטְּמֵא לְטָהוֹר לֹא הוֹדִיעוּ

and (the distinction) between the unclean to (the) clean, they have not made known!¹¹²⁵

וּמִשְׁבַּתוֹתַי הֶעְלִימוּ עֵינֵיהֶם

and they have hidden their eyes from My rest-days.¹¹²⁶

¹¹²⁴(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch states that “They ignored the regulations which had as their purpose safe-guarding the sanctity of the temple and its services.” (P. 148)

1125

Rabbi Fisch notes that “This was a duty specifically imposed upon the priests...Various limitations were placed on the use of what came within the category of holy [our ‘set-apart’], and it was necessary for the people to know them and so avoid the sin of ‘trespass’...Laws concerning animals fit or unfit for consumption, and the ritual purity of the individual and the family.” (P. 148) Compare:

Leviticus 10:10-11, where the responsibilities of the priests include:

10 וְלִהְבְּדִיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹלֹל

And to divide between that which is set-apart and that which is common;

וּבֵין הַטְּמֵא וּבֵין הַטָּהוֹר:

and between that which is unclean and that which is clean.

11 וְלִהְוֹרֹת אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל-הַחֻקִּים

And to teach Israel’s children all the statutes

אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה:

which YHWH spoke to them by (the) hand of Moses.

Ezekiel 44:23, where Ezekiel says concerning the duty of priests in the new temple:

וְאֶת-עַמִּי יוֹרוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹלֹל

And they shall teach My people (the difference between) set-apart to / and profane,

וּבֵין-טְמֵא לְטָהוֹר יוֹדְעִים:

and between unclean to / and clean they shall make known (to) them.

1126

(continued...)

וַאֲחַל בְּתוֹכָם:

And I was profaned in their midst!

22:27 שָׂרֵיָהּ בְּקִרְבָּהּ

Her princes / leaders in her midst—¹¹²⁷

¹¹²⁶(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The priests looked on indifferently at the desecration of the sacred days by the people.” (P. 148) Compare **Jeremiah 17:21-23**,

17:21 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke:

הִשְׁמְרוּ בְּנַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם

Guard yourselves with your innermost-beings,

וְאַל-תִּשְׂאוּ מִשָּׂא בְיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת

and you people shall not lift up a burden on the Sabbath day,

וְהֵבֵאתֶם בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:

and bring them through (the) gates of Jerusalem!

17:22 וְלֹא-תוֹצִיאוּ מִשָּׂא מִבֵּיתֵיכֶם בְּיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת

And you shall not bring forth a burden from your houses on the Sabbath day;

וְכָל-מְלָאכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ

and all work you shall not do;

וְקִדַּשְׁתֶּם אֶת-יְוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת-אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם:

and you shall set-apart the Sabbath day, just as I commanded your fathers!

17:23 וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ וְלֹא הִטּוּ אֶת-אָזְנָם

And they did not listen, and they did not bend their ear;

וַיִּקְשׂוּ אֶת-עַרְפֹּם לְבַלְתִּי (שׁוֹמְעַ) [שְׁמוֹעַ]

and they hardened their neck, so as not to listen;

וְלִבְלְתִי קָחַת מוֹסֵר:

and so as to not take correction.

1127

Reimer notes the “princes” here is the plural שָׂרִים, **sariym**— “not the same term as that used at **19:1**, נְשִׂאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, [literally ‘lifted up ones of Israel’] where the reference is to royal sons; here the wider nobility is intended, or perhaps simply officials in the royal service. Wolves are lesser predators than ‘lions’ (see **Ezekiel 22:25**).” (P. 1531) Perhaps lesser, but nonetheless predators!

כְּזֹאֲבִים טֹרְפֵי טֶרֶף

like wolves tearing prey,

לְשִׁפְךָ־דָם׃

to pour out blood,

לְאַבֵּד נַפְשׁוֹת

to destroy lives--

לְמַעַן בַּצֵּעַ בַּצֵּעַ׃

in order to cut off [and get] dishonest gain!¹¹²⁸

22:28 וּנְבִיאֶיהָ טָחְוּ לָהֶם תְּפִלָּה

And her prophets have smeared for them (with) white-wash,¹¹²⁹

חֲזִוִּים שְׂוֵא

envisioning emptiness,

וּקְסָמִים לָהֶם כִּזְב

and divining for them a lie--

אֹמְרִים כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

saying, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke--

וַיְהִי הִוא לֹא דִבֶּר׃

and YHWH has not spoken!

1128

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The men of authority [in Jerusalem and Judea] abused their power to enrich themselves. Even the crime of judicial murder was perpetrated to achieve this end.” (P. 148)

1129

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After referring to the misdeeds of the priests and the princes, Ezekiel reverts to the false prophets whom he holds responsible for their base conduct. Not only did they not check them, they even abetted the evil deeds by putting a ‘worthless whitewash’ over their tottering structure.” (P. 148) See **Ezekiel 13:10-16**.

22:29¹¹³⁰ עַם הָאָרֶץ עֲשָׂקוּ עֵשֶׂק

People of the land practiced extortion,¹¹³¹

וַגְּזָלוּ גְזֹל

and committed robbery.

וְעַנֵּי וְאֶבְיֹן הִזְנוּ

and poor (people) and needy (people) they oppressed;

וְאֶת־הַגֵּר בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט:

and the temporary resident / emigrant they extorted without justice!¹¹³²

22:30¹¹³³

1130

Darr comments that “Finally, Ezekiel condemns the ‘people of the land,’ here a designation for a land-owning social class of considerable political, economic, and social importance (see **7:27**). They, like the wicked son of **18:12, 18**, have committed extortion and robbery, oppressing the poor and needy, as well as the aliens residing in Israel’s land (see **verse 7b**).” (P. 191)

1131

Rabbi Fisch comments that “All classes of the population will find themselves helpless on the day of judgment. The term *am haarets*, ‘the people of the land,’ has undergone several changes in meaning. Originally it denoted the mass of the people. In Talmudic times it was used for an ignorant man who was not versed in the *Torah*, or a person not scrupulous about the laws of ritual purity. Still another usage of the phrase has been suggested by Sulzberger who defines it in many biblical passages, including this verse, as ‘members of the national council.’” (P. 40)

Hilmer says that here, “people of the land” refers to “Full citizens of Judah who owned land and served in the army (compare **12:19; 45:16, 22; 46:3**).” (P. 1237)

For the phrase “people of the land” see **Ezekiel 7:27** with its footnote.

1132

Again we observe that the touchstone for evaluating the righteousness of a nation is found in the way it treats those without power—poor people and emigrants!

1133

(continued...)

וַאֲבַקֵּשׁ מֵהֶם אִישׁ

And I sought from them a man,¹¹³⁴

גִּירָר־גִּירָר

one building a wall,

¹¹³³(...continued)

Matties comments on **verses 30-31** that “Since [YHWH] has not been able to find anyone to raise a cry against injustice and oppression (see also **Jeremiah 5:1-6**), the Divine fire consumes them. That judgment, however, can also be explained as their own actions coming back to haunt them.” (Pp. 1188-89)

Darr likewise states that “**Verse 30** is reminiscent of **Jeremiah 5:1-5**, wherein God commands Jeremiah to scour the streets of Jerusalem for a single just and truth-seeking person on whose behalf Jerusalem might be pardoned. Jeremiah alleged that his search was in vain. Ezekiel’s God claims Personally to have sought someone who would ‘repair the wall and stand in the breach before Me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it.’ The metaphor is militaristic: If a hole...in a city wall is neither repaired nor guarded by soldiers, the enemy is sure to enter it (see also **13:5**). For Ezekiel, Yahweh is that enemy. In the absence of a single worthy person, God’s indignation...is poured out upon the people, and they are consumed by the fire of Yahweh’s wrath (see **Psalms 106:23**). **Verse 30** is at odds with the prophet’s previous assertion that the righteous cannot save others, even their own children (**14:12-20**).” (P. 191) We disagree with Darr—thinking that metaphors should not be compared in this way, as contradicting one another. They are only metaphors, and should not be taken so literally. What do you think?

“Judah’s destruction is justified by Ezekiel’s oft-asserted claim that God has brought down upon the people’s heads the consequences of their own conduct (see 9:10; 11:1; 16:43). This oracle, like the first 9verse 12), concludes with the formula, ‘says the Lord God.’” (P. 191)

1134

Compare **Isaiah 51:18; 59:16** and **63:5**. YHWH is looking for strong men to “stand in the breach” (compare **Ezekiel 13:5**), to “intercede on behalf of others,” to stand with Him in the battle against evil.

Hilmer notes that “To intercede with [YHWH] on behalf of the people was part of a prophet’s task (**Genesis 20:7; 1 Samuel 12:23; Jeremiah 37:3; 42:2**). Some interpret the task here as teaching, particularly calling the people to repentance. Compare the task of the prophetic ‘watchman’ (**Ezekiel 3:17-21; 33:1-6**).” (P. 1256)

וְעֹמֵד בַּפְּרִץ לְפָנַי

and standing in the breach / broken place before Me,

בְּעַד הָאָרֶץ

on behalf of the land,

לְבַלְתִּי שְׁחַתְתָּהּ

so as to not destroy it;

וְלֹא מָצָאתִי:

and I did not find (one).¹¹³⁵

22:31 וְאֶשְׁפָּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי

And I poured out upon them My indignation;

בְּאֵשׁ עֲבָרְתִי כִלִּיתִים

with My fury's fire I finished them off;

דְּרָכָם בְּרֹאשָׁם נָתַתִּי

their way I placed on their head—

1135

Reimer comments that “There is no one to stand in the breach—compare **Ezekiel 13:5; Psalm 106:23**) who might avert the destruction. Sometimes it takes only one courageous, righteous person to stop great evil, but there was no one.” (Pp. 1531-32)

The text says there is no one to stand in the breach, but we think Ezekiel was just such a person—who spoke the truth of YHWH without sugar-coating it, calling both the exiles and those remaining in Judea to repentance through his acted out vision-stories, boldly warning of the coming destruction by Divine visitation. The **Scroll of Ezekiel** is powerful testimony to this fact!

And then, when the city and temple fell, Ezekiel began speaking powerful messages of hope to the people, again in the form of acted out vision-stories, enabling them to have hope in the midst of the darkness (the valley of dry bones, the river of life flowing from the new temple to the deadest place on earth, bringing new life wherever it went]. No white-washing in Ezekiel! He stood in the breach (like Moses long before, and like Isaiah and Jeremiah his near contemporaries—pointing the way to Israel’s future as the life-giving people of YHWH! Thanks be to YHWH for Ezekiel! What a prophet!

נֶאֱמַר אֲדַבְרֵי יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!¹¹³⁶

1136

Darr, in her “Reflections,” states that “Bloodshed City, Ezekiel’s epithet for Jerusalem, could justifiably be applied to many contemporary cities where violent crimes are epidemic and corruption is the name of the game. In two of his three oracles, the prophet identifies Judah’s leaders as those most responsible for his people’s impurity. That is not the whole story, of course, for abuses of power, deceit, and brutality exist at all levels of society. Nevertheless, leaders in every sphere—political, economic, and religious—must contend with temptations to misuse their authority, to feather their own nests at the expense of others, to place themselves above the laws of justice and morality, to ‘play the system,’ because, after all, that is the way it has always been done. The corrupting propensity of power is proverbial.

“Like many an author of Hebrew Scripture Ezekiel insists that Israel’s covenant with Yahweh has direct implications for every aspect of its life. The modern distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ has no place in his thinking, for God demands fidelity in every arena of experience. The eighth-century B.C.E. prophet Amos knew well that cultic observances alone did not suffice (**Amos 4:4-5**), for the very folk who ‘religiously’ brought their sacrifices, tithes, and offerings to the temples were, at the same time, profiting at the expense of the poor. ‘Sunday-only’ Christians, no less than the pilgrims to Bethel and Gilgal, deceive themselves if they think that they are fulfilling God’s claim upon their lives. Recall Hals’s comment: ‘The meaning of ‘I am Yahweh your God and you are My people’ was to find expression much more in how one treated others than in what sacrifices one offered.’ Hence, Ezekiel does not hesitate to juxtapose cultic acts with social atrocities, public life with private relationships. Life is a seamless whole, everywhere testifying to one’s most fundamental commitments.’

“Religious leaders do not escape the prophet’s censure. They also are vulnerable to the temptations that accompany power and authority. Ezekiel knows all too well that prophets can learn to ‘go through the motions,’ yet be devoid of God’s Word to their times. He recognizes that the pomp and circumstance of priestly ritual can conceal self-serving appetites for prestige, profit, and laxity. Jesus shares that knowledge. In **Luke 11:43-44**, for example, he criticizes the Pharisees, who ‘love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces,’ but who in fact are sources of social defilement. They exemplify those who put their own interests ahead of the Kingdom of God.

“Israel’s *Torah* too often dismissed by Christians as the antithesis of ‘gospel,’ in fact testifies to existence lived out in utter awareness that life is sacred—not only one’s own life, but equally the lives of others. Faithful partnership with God is not a consequence of private piety alone. Abundant life is quite different from life surrounded by abundance. Ezekiel challenges Judah’s leaders, the exiles, and his readers to embody Yahweh’s holiness, justice, and love.” (Pp. 191-192)

